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of Ontario

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

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des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 20 February 2014

Jeudi 20 février 2014

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 20 février 2014

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CHILD CARE
MODERNIZATION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA MODERNISATION
DES SERVICES DE GARDE D'ENFANTS

Mrs. Sandals moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 143, An Act to enact the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2013, to repeal the Day Nurseries Act, to amend the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007 and the Education Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / *Projet de loi 143, Loi édictant la Loi de 2013 sur la garde d'enfants et la petite enfance, abrogeant la Loi sur les garderies, modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les éducatrices et les éducateurs de la petite enfance et la Loi sur l'éducation et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. Sandals.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I stand in the House today to speak in support of the Child Care Modernization Act. I rise in support of Bill 143, which, if passed, will modernize our child care and early years system and replace the outdated legislation that currently governs child care in this province. If passed, this legislation will make our system more responsive to parents' and children's needs, and better reflect the realities of our modern world. It will also ensure Ontario's families have better access to safe and high-quality care that gives children the best possible start in life, and it will also strengthen oversight in the child care sector.

Speaker, this proposed legislation is transformative—by changing child care and early years programs and services in this province—for the better. It will build on the improvements we have made by positioning Ontario as a leader in child care and early years programs and services. Our ultimate goal is to build a child care and early years system that is high-quality, seamless and meets the needs of parents and children.

Our government has already taken a number of steps in this area. Most notably, we are implementing full-day kindergarten, which will serve approximately 265,000 children annually as of fall 2014. In addition, we have a

new child care funding formula in place that is based on current demographic and population trends. We also have an Ontario Early Years Policy Framework. This framework sets out a vision and direction for early years programs and services for children up to six years of age.

Despite these improvements to the child care and early years system, these services are currently governed by a patchwork of rules and regulations, which can create confusion for families. These rules and regulations are outdated and need to meet the needs of children and families in our modern world.

In last year's speech from the throne, our government reaffirmed our commitment to a strong child care and early years system. We pledged to create a comprehensive early learning and child care system, including the successful extension of full-day kindergarten and child care. Speaker, this proposed bill shows our government is making good on that promise. That is why I'm pleased to be in the House today to speak to my fellow members about the Child Care Modernization Act, which I introduced in December of last year. This bill, if passed, will repeal and replace the Day Nurseries Act, the legislation that currently governs child care in Ontario, which was first enacted in 1946 and has not fundamentally changed since 1983. But our world has changed considerably over the last 30 years, and the DNA, or Day Nurseries Act, no longer reflects today's realities and our deepening understanding of the research on early human development.

The DNA would be replaced with the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2013, a new legislative framework that would govern child care and early years programming services. If passed, the Child Care Modernization Act would support the government in working with partners to establish a system of integrated, responsive, high-quality and accessible child care and early years programs that support parents and families. It would improve safety and foster learning, development, health and well-being of children, and provide a framework for the regulation of the provision of child care and operation of child care and early years services. It would establish a licensing and compliance framework for child care and set out funding requirements for child care and early years programs and services. It would facilitate and support local planning and implementation of child care and early years services and provide access to information to support parents in making informed decisions about child care options, and improve our ability to evaluate the effectiveness of child care and early years programs.

In addition, Speaker, a key objective of Bill 143 is to improve oversight in the child care sector. This is

because the safety of our children is of paramount importance. To strengthen oversight, our government would have a range of new enforcement tools to protect the province's children and safeguard their well-being, because currently our only option is to take serious issues of non-compliance to court, and that is something that we can no longer wait for. We need more direct ways of enforcing, so our new proposed enforcement tools would apply to both licensed and unlicensed providers and include: the authority to issue administrative penalties, which could be up to \$100,000 per infraction; the authority to immediately stop a child care provider from operating in circumstances where a child's safety is at risk; the ability to issue compliance orders and enforce rules in the unlicensed sector; and the increase of maximum penalties for successful prosecution of offences in the court system from the current \$2,000 up to a maximum of \$250,000.

Additional measures to support the safety of children include, firstly, the prevention of individuals from providing child care when convicted of certain crimes. This also applies to individuals who have been convicted of certain offences under this proposed act and individuals whose membership has been revoked from a regulatory body, such as the College of Early Childhood Educators, over professional misconduct. And it would require certain people who, in the course of their employment, have reasonable grounds to suspect an imminent threat to a child's health or safety when in care to report this to the Ministry of Education.

Child care plays a role for Ontario's families, communities and the health of our economy. This proposed legislation shows that our government is committed to building on our success and safeguarding the well-being of our province's children.

0910

Bill 143 includes measures to help parents make informed decisions about child care options by ensuring parents understand whether a provider is licensed or unlicensed, and providing parents with information about whether a provider has contravened the act previously. While we are currently providing information voluntarily, we want to see this put into law and no longer remain a voluntary measure on the part of the government.

These measures would include:

- prohibiting unlicensed providers from using such terms as “child care centre,” “licensed child care” and “licensed daycare”—they are not;

- prohibiting unlicensed providers from claiming to be licensed explicitly or by implication;

- requiring unlicensed providers to disclose their unlicensed status to parents and retain proof of such disclosures;

- requiring licensed providers post a licence or any other required information or signage in a visible location, and prohibiting copies from being made unless required by law;

- requiring people who are paid for child care services to provide a receipt for payment, if requested by parents;

- requiring providers to publicly disclose any contraventions of the act, or its regulations, including compliance orders, protection orders, administrative penalties and convictions; and

- requiring the Ministry of Education to publish information about contraventions of the proposed act or its regulations.

It would also prevent any child care provider from stopping a parent from accessing their child, or the child care premises, unless the provider believes the parent has no right to access, or may be dangerous or disruptive. We have seen cases where, in fact, parents have been prohibited from visiting their children during the day. That would no longer be legal.

Once again, our government's top priority is the safety and well-being of Ontario's children. If passed, Bill 143 will help strengthen oversight in child care settings and allow the government to respond promptly to non-compliant child care providers, whether licensed or unlicensed.

In addition to expanding the government's powers of oversight, Bill 143 would also increase access to licensed home-based care. This would translate to additional child care spaces in licensed home-based settings. Under the proposed act, the number of children that licensed home-based providers could care for would go up. This number would increase from five to six. This means that if all current licensed home child care providers took on one additional space, they would create approximately 6,000 new child care spaces.

We recognize the role that unlicensed child care providers play in offering child care options for families. In the case of unlicensed providers, they would still be allowed to care for a maximum of five children, which is currently the law. However, unlicensed providers would now have to follow the same rules as licensed providers for relevant age groupings and count their own children under the age of six towards the maximum number of children permitted to be in care. This means that unlicensed providers can only care for two children under the age of two. This restriction is consistent with research on brain development and safety provisions needed to protect very young children.

The proposed legislation also prohibits a person from providing unlicensed child care at more than one location without a licence. That is, it must truly be home child care. Bill 143 also includes the regulatory authority to further reduce the number of children unlicensed providers can care for in the future, and it stipulates that the number of children permitted in licensed home-based care must always be at least one child greater than the number allowed in unlicensed care. These measures are intended to provide incentives for unlicensed providers to join the licensed sector. It would now be to a provider's advantage to become licensed. We want to help increase access to licensed home-based options.

Likewise, a child's safety is of the utmost importance, and this legislation is strong in that regard.

This proposed legislation, if passed, would also help parents make informed decisions about their child's care

by clarifying what programs require a licence and what programs are exempt. In some cases, Speaker, that's currently a little bit grey. Our goal is to place an emphasis on the standards and protections of the licensed system for children under four years of age, as they are a more vulnerable group, and allow some flexibility for older children where parents can make informed choices about their child's care.

In addition to clarifying when a licence is required, the proposed legislation also sets out greater criteria for individuals applying for a licence to support high-quality and viable child care options. The grounds for refusing, renewing or revoking a licence would include:

The applicant is not competent.

Past conduct indicates the applicant will not operate within the law.

The accommodation in which the child care would take place does not comply with the requirements.

The applicant has made a false statement.

There has been no change in circumstances where a licence was previously revoked or refused.

Advice from a service manager, First Nation or local authority indicates that the licence would authorize child care in an area inconsistent with the local service plan.

There is a failure to comply with a protection order and/or prescribed requirement, or a failure to pay an administrative penalty.

You can see that there's quite an explicit list.

Mr. Rob Leone: Point of order: Mr. Speaker, I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can we check quorum, please?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

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

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

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you, Speaker.

As I was saying, we want providers to clearly understand when a child care licence is required, and we want it to be clear when a licence will be granted or renewed, or when it can be refused or revoked. Again, our top priority is ensuring the safety and well-being of Ontario's children, and a robust licensing regime will help us to do just that.

Building on these licensing requirements, another way we can increase oversight in the child sector is by empowering inspectors. If passed, this legislation would allow for the appointment of inspectors who are employees of the province. The legislation would set out the powers and duties of inspectors, including the authority to enter a location without a warrant in certain circumstances. As employees of the province, inspectors would also have powers and duties that include the power to examine records, demand documents and remove or copy records, and to use data storage equipment on the prem-

ises, take photos and video recordings, and question people on matters relevant to the inspection.

They would have the power to request criminal reference checks from the licensee or a person who has applied for a licence, their employees, a person who provides home child care and persons where there are reasonable grounds that an individual has committed certain violations.

A requirement to provide a report to the child care provider would also be made of the inspector.

Speaker, whether it is creating new enforcement tools, increasing access to licensed care, increasing oversight or clarifying when a licence is required, this proposed legislation is necessary. It is necessary to modernize the child care and early years system in Ontario and it is necessary to ensure parents have access to a responsive, high-quality and accessible child care and early years system.

But this legislation goes even further. In 2011, our government made a commitment to make sure all schools offer after-school programs for children aged six to 12 once full-day kindergarten is fully in place. As I said, that will take place this fall.

0920

To support this, in addition to repealing and replacing the outdated Day Nurseries Act, Bill 143 would also amend the Education Act. The proposed amendments to the Education Act would place a duty on school boards to ensure programs are offered for children six to 12 years old, where there is sufficient demand. This is similar to the current requirement for schools with full-day kindergarten to offer before and after child care for four- and five-year-olds. Currently we find that 62% of schools with full-day kindergarten are in fact providing this sort of care at the request of parents, and that 62% number is on the rise as more and more programs are introduced. This act would enable boards to offer developmentally responsible before- and after-school programs either directly, if they wish, or, what tends to happen more commonly, through a third-party provider. This would build on the success of full-day kindergarten and would help meet the needs of children as they grow and progress through school.

In addition to amending the Education Act, this legislation would also amend the Early Childhood Educators Act. The proposed amendments are based on feedback we received last fall as part of the five-year statutory review of the Early Childhood Educators—or ECE—Act. This aligns with the proposed changes to the Ontario College of Teachers Act as we introduced in Bill 103, the Protecting Students Act.

The proposed amendments to the Early Childhood Educators Act include clarifying the requirements for registration as a member of the College of ECEs. This means mandatory membership for all qualified persons working within a defined scope of practice. It would include providing the college with the authority to accredit ECE programs in post-secondary institutions and other bodies, and to accredit ongoing education pro-

grams. It would strengthen information sharing and reporting between the College of ECEs, employers and the ministry to support enforcement and oversight. These proposed changes to the ECE Act would help the College of Early Childhood Educators protect the public interest. The amendments would enhance the college's ability to support our common goals for child care in the early years system.

Another essential part of this legislation is that it reflects valuable input from our stakeholders. We began consultations in 2012 and received over 400 submissions during our consultation period, from municipalities, child care providers, First Nations, child care advocates, other child care and early years partners, and of course from parents. This was an extremely important step in the development of this transformative bill. We wanted to hear directly from stakeholders and they also wanted to be heard. They're the caregivers, the families, the communities and the advocates that play an essential role in the care of Ontario's children. Speaker, we listened to stakeholders. We valued their input and we heard what they were asking for. Without their feedback, this bill would have been incomplete.

Ontario's child care and early years system has served us well, but it hasn't fundamentally changed since the 1980s. That is why we need this important legislation to pass quickly: to modernize and build a high-quality system that is seamless and more responsive to parents' needs. This has been our commitment all along.

In the 2013 speech from the throne, we committed to a more comprehensive and integrated child care and early years system. In our 2011 election platform, we pledged to modernize Ontario's child care system, as well as ensuring schools had before- and after-school programs for children aged six to 12 once FDK was fully implemented. In the summer of 2012, we held public consultations on our proposed vision, through the discussion paper *Modernizing Child Care in Ontario*. And in January 2013, we released the Ontario Early Years Policy Framework. This outlined a vision and strategic direction for a high-quality early years system that better meets the needs of Ontario families.

In Ontario, we are recognized for our world-class education system, and the proposed Child Care Modernization Act is a testament to how far we have come and how we can lead in child care and early years programs.

I've outlined why we need this legislation, what it will do and how it will help improve child care and early years services in our great province. That's why I encourage all members of this House to support the Child Care Modernization Act. Ontario's children and families cannot wait any longer. They cannot wait for a system that is more responsive to their needs. They cannot wait for a system that better reflects the realities of our modern world. They cannot wait for us to strengthen oversight in the child care sector. They cannot wait for access to safe, modern care that gives children what they need most.

The Child Care Modernization Act is transformative, and it will build on the proven success of our education,

child care and early years systems. It will position Ontario as a future leader in these essential areas, and it will eliminate the problems caused by the current patchwork of rules and regulations.

It is critical that this bill pass quickly, so I look forward to the support of all members in this House on this very important piece of legislation, and I look forward to continuing the great work we have already done to modernize the child care and early years services in Ontario. By passing this important bill, we can deliver on a promise that will benefit everyone in this province and contribute to our future prosperity.

In the spirit of partnership, I urge all MPPs to stand up and do what is best for our children. Without question, we need a child care and early years system that gives children the best possible start in life, and the Child Care Modernization Act will help us do just that.

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

Mr. Rob Leone: I listened intently to the minister's lead on this important piece of legislation, Bill 143, the Child Care Modernization Act. I noticed, at the end of her comments today, she had stated three, four or five times that we cannot wait for further changes to child care. I will note, with particular emphasis, that we've waited quite some time for these changes to occur.

I remember when I was first elected to the Legislature in October 2011. Shortly thereafter, I met with child care providers in my riding and in the region of Waterloo, because they had a particular issue with the rollout of full-day kindergarten. At that time, they were looking for a response to modernizing child care, and the response that they received was that the modernization was going to occur through regulation and not through legislation. So I'm pleased that the government has finally listened to folks in the sector who have highlighted certain problems with the legislation.

Of course, we all lament the tragic deaths of three infants, in the care of others, that occurred in the province of Ontario in our recent memory. I think that is certainly a tragedy we want to avoid. Safety has to be one of our foremost concerns when we're talking about children in care. It certainly will be something that I'll be talking about in my lead following the comments today.

I listened intently to the minister. I accept that these are broad-based changes that she has proposed. I will continue this conversation in a few minutes, when I get to do my lead.

I've never had a piece of legislation that provides so much feedback from parents and providers. I think that we should take stock of what they're saying and the effect that this legislation is going to have on them.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I rise to say a few words about this bill, thank you. As a grandparent of two granddaughters currently in child care, this bill certainly has my attention.

0930

But at this point, I'm not sure that the bill addresses the overarching problem, namely the lack of affordable, accessible and safe child care. It also doesn't ensure that each and every complaint received about child care will be investigated, and it does nothing to ensure that there are enough inspectors to do the job.

I know when we bring forth legislation such as this, it can be embellished and improved upon. I would hope at some point that we can all get together and look at the inadequacies of the bill so far and do our best to try and improve it.

I think, on this side of the House as well, we're also a little concerned about the increasing group sizes in child care. The bill increases the number of kids in licensed child care from a maximum of five to six, or even 12 if two providers are working together.

We're also very concerned about concurrent changes this Liberal government is making through regulation. The effect of these proposed regulatory changes to child-staff ratios is to allow younger children to receive care in even larger groups. Those proposed regulation changes are causing great concern in the child care advocacy community.

Those are just a few of the concerns that we have on this side of the House. I hope we can address them as we continue the dialogue, and I look forward to the member from Cambridge, to hear his comments and reaction to this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I just wanted to comment on the minister's opening comments about the Child Care Modernization Act. I think, at the end of the day, everybody in this House wants to strengthen the oversight of the province's unlicensed child care sector. It's certainly something that comes to mind, particularly when there's the potential of a child being at risk. I think that certainly if this legislation was passed, it would provide some comfort to families across the province that the province has got the administrative powers and penalties to put in place, the encouragement to do the right thing and to take care of our children.

I think the penalties certainly are a deterrent, and certainly we want to make sure that people who run an unlicensed daycare—that the families know what the rules are going in and they know the right questions to ask. This proposed legislation would provide some clarification about what programs and activities are exempt from licensing requirements, whether it's babysitters or nannies or camps, and it would require that all private schools that care for more than five children under four be licensed.

Also, it provides some flexibility. It helps address amending the Education Act to ensure that school boards that offer before- and after-school programs for six- to 12-year-olds could be delivered directly by boards or by third-party providers.

At the end of the day, we want to ensure that families have access to safe and modern child care. It's part of our

government's plan to invest in people, and, at the end of the day, we want to give our children and our families the best possible start in a safe environment.

I think that this proposed legislation builds on steps we've already taken with regard to the oversight of child care, including the creation of a dedicated enforcement team to investigate complaints against unlicensed providers and the development of an online searchable database to validate companies. This is about making our families safer and our children safer, and we think it's part of a plan to invest in families and children across the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a significant bill technically, Bill 143. In a lot of respects, I think we'll find some kind of agreement on many of the issues raised. Safe, modern access to care is very important.

Now, the whole thing is access; that's got to be important for families. Can they afford it, as well? Respecting the rights of the family is important, as well, to have choice. As a parent myself, with 10 grown children, of course, and 10 grandchildren, I'm very proud to say that my wife is a retired teacher, but she made the choice, the decision, to stay home and make sure our children had care.

The families themselves, I think, need to step up to those responsibilities as well. They should be included in this dialogue.

When you look at the five different schedules, it amends the Child Care and Early Years Act in schedule A. Schedule B amends the Day Nurseries Act, and schedule C, the Early Childhood Educators Act from 2007. Schedule D is the Education Act itself.

These are broad and sweeping changes. I'm very confident—and I'm looking forward to listening to our member from Cambridge, our critic, also a parent. He and his wife are both professional people; he is a professor, a teacher at university. I suspect that choice will be an important thing.

Now, let's not become too soaked in motherhood statements in all of this. All of us want choice and, most importantly, safety. Safety is important. In the response to some of the things the minister—the context is important as well, to make sure that there are regulations with respect to operators, and disclosures with respect to who is providing the care. All of that is quite acceptable to our side. Access to affordable, safe child care and choice for families is important.

I look forward to the member from Cambridge's remarks.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Minister of Education, you have two minutes for a response.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the members for Cambridge and Windsor–Tecumseh, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and the member from Durham, for their comments.

I wanted to touch briefly on something that the member from Cambridge said, because he talked about some

of the pressures that have occurred in child care with the introduction of full-day kindergarten.

I think some of the requests he was referring to were that people who were currently in the business of providing child care said, “We’d like to be able to be child care providers in school with the before-and-after programs in schools.” In fact, our government did respond to that and made the changes in the Education Act and the regulations that allowed third-party providers to be the providers of before-and-after child care. As I noted in my speech, 62% of the schools with full-day kindergarten are providing before-and-after programs for four- and five-year-olds, and those are largely provided by third parties. So that’s actually an example of our government listening to what people in the sector had to say.

I also wanted to comment on the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. We certainly understand that it is absolutely crucial that we provide follow-up to every complaint that we receive. Starting in January 2013, when you look at our record of doing that, it is very much better than it used to be. When we go back and look at the records, there has been a dramatic improvement in follow-up.

The legislation also allows for the hiring of additional inspectors whose sole role would be inspecting child care. Right now, those people who do those inspections have other duties as well as following up complaints, so it actually allows us to up our workforce in that area.

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

Mr. Rob Leone: I’m going to try to get through my hour-long lead with the Darth Vader voice. I seem to have lost it. I don’t really know why or how, because my throat actually doesn’t hurt. But for some reason, I have a little bit of an issue with the tone of the voice, so I’m going to try my radio voice here, Mr. Speaker, and I hope that members of the Legislature will, hopefully, not fall asleep with what I’ve been saying.

I mentioned in my comments to the minister that this piece of legislation has perhaps received more attention than any other piece of legislation I’ve actually seen in this Legislature, which I think is an incredibly positive story. I want to say that, because people are interested.

As a parent—I have kids aged six, three and almost one—I think that child care in the age bracket that I’m in is a very important concern for families, so it’s important that we actually spend the time—not rushing through this debate, but actually spending the time—to make sure that the massive modernization that this bill interjects and injects into our system is done at precisely the right pace and in the right context as well.

I know that the minister and the ministry have begun a public comment phase on their website on this particular piece of legislation and the regulations that came into effect, I believe, last December with respect to ratio changes in our child care centres. I want members of the public to understand that they still have an opportunity to provide that public feedback on this piece of legislation, and I would encourage them to do so. Obviously, I’m

saying that in the context that the deadline, I believe, is at the end of this month, which is at the end of next week, so I encourage them to do so.

0940

We’re not going to be debating it with the benefit of reading that public feedback, but thank goodness that hundreds of moms and dads, hundreds of child care providers, hundreds of ECEs have taken the liberty to write their personal thoughts on this particular piece of legislation and how it affects their perspective on child care and the provision of child care in this province. I think it’s important to take stock of what they’re saying. They’re raising some specific issues, some of which have been mentioned, particularly with safety. I know the minister is very preoccupied by that, as I think all members of this Legislature are.

I know the member for Durham touched on a few others in terms of choice and trust. These are very critical elements to why parents choose particular modes of care, whether it’s licensed, non-profit care, whether it’s a parent or a relative providing care, whether it’s the neighbourhood child care provider who the family has grown to love and to trust. I think all those aspects have to be considered in the context of what we’re talking about today.

Of course, all members of this Legislature want to ensure the health and well-being of our children. As a parent, that is my primary concern. I think I can speak for most, if not all, parents; that each and every day they try as hard as they can to pursue an environment where their kids can thrive, and I think that is a very important element. Certainly, with this bill, we get to have that debate about what that can contain.

If I look at what my friends, the people in my age bracket who have kids who are similar in age to my own kids, are doing, there is—I think I have covered all the bases, perhaps, with the exception of for-profit child care, with families that are actually using different modes of child care.

I have to say that my family is alone in the fact that we actually use a licensed non-profit child care centre, among my friends and siblings who use child care, so I obviously come to this debate with a little bit of bias. I really love and enjoy and trust the licensed child care provider for my children, but I have to also say that the availability of such child care centres is very limited in rural Ontario. I live in a village of about 3,000. I have to drive my child to an urban centre to get the care that I think is adequate for my child, and I do that willingly; I’m not asking for a difference.

But we have to acknowledge some of the constraints, that changes in our legislation have an effect on rural Ontario. I think it’s very important to bring that up, and I expect particularly members of the official opposition to reflect upon how this piece of legislation might impact rural Ontario, particularly for members who have a far more rural jurisdiction than my own; I have about a 95% urban population and about 5% is rural. So I think we have to consider the context with that.

The question is, why are people choosing the different modes of child care that they're choosing? I think that's important. I want to begin the discussion by explaining or exploring a little bit about why people are making the choices in care that they're making. I know a family that doesn't trust a whole lot of people except mom and dad, so the grandparents are caring for their children. That one is actually my brother. He's not choosing that because of monetary reasons. He certainly can afford child care, but he trusts mom and dad to provide child care for his kids, and so they do. We have to obviously understand that is certainly a choice that parents make.

I have one of my best friends. He's using a child care provider for his kids that essentially was his child care provider when he was a kid, so there was a trust that was developed. He thrived in that environment and he wanted his kids to thrive in that environment as well, so he chose the neighbourhood child care provider that cared for him when he was a kid. She's still doing it. She's an amazing lady. That's an important aspect. I think people develop these relationships and this trust.

Others will cite as their primary motivation for using what has been termed "informal child care" as based upon those relationships and based on that trust, that friends who now have one parent who's staying home trust that family because their values are similar to theirs.

Or perhaps there's a variety of other reasons, location and so on and so forth, and the flexibility and time, because child care sometimes requires standardized care between certain hours of operation, which may be different than what average individuals are working. If you're working particularly later at night, sometimes licensed child care is not going to provide the flexibility for you and your family.

So we have to be concerned about all of these aspects of care when we're analyzing this bill. Of course, I know the government really wants to rectify some of the lax conditions in our child care centres, and the substandard safety provisions that exist therein. I applaud the government for applying some of those ideas in this piece of legislation, but we can't ignore what is happening in our communities with people that I know who are accessing child care.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I'm the only one in my peer group who is using a licensed child care centre. That's because the statistics actually show that 80% of kids in care are actually being taken care of in the informal child care sector. This piece of legislation affects 80% of kids, so we have to take care and concern for what we are going to speak about.

I wanted to begin my discussion today by highlighting the fact that people make their child care choices with a number of different considerations and we have to take stock of what those considerations are when we're deliberating about this piece of legislation.

I will state very clearly that our priorities in child care are first and foremost for the safety, the health and well-being of our children. We have to be concerned about that. But we're also concerned about three other principles and values.

The first is choice. It's not in any particular order; I'm just going to state precisely what they are. Choice is one of those concerns. There are a number of different reasons, as I've just mentioned, why someone would choose to use one form of care over another. I chose a licensed child care centre because it was the centre that I could trust the most. It's not the same for everybody else. The availability of spaces in licensed child care centres, as the member for Windsor–Tecumseh has already outlined, are not necessarily there for everyone who wants to use them. But for me there was a choice and I was able to use it, and I love the child care centre that we are a part of. We have a very good relationship with not only our care providers but the administrators of the child care centre and of the whole organization.

People have different reasons for choosing. People don't necessarily trust the idea that they're going to send their child to a strip mall to be cared for. They like the idea that their child is going to be in the care and love of a family, in a family's home, in a setting that is conducive for that. That's certainly somebody's choice, and we should be enabling that choice and not curtailing that choice. There's some degree of the latter with respect to this bill, that this push is certainly to incentivize, as the minister has suggested, the push for licensed child care, which is certainly going to be a concern.

Which raises another point, Mr. Speaker, the third after the safety and choice principles that we are very concerned about, and that's affordability. There are a lot of families in the province of Ontario who choose informal care because they can afford it. If you can pay \$25 or \$30 a day for care in a home-based setting versus \$40 or \$50 a day for care in a licensed child care setting—there is certainly a cost associated that's prohibitive for families. If we're pushing more children into the licensed sector, it's obviously going to have an economic impact on the families.

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So affordability—we have to be very concerned about what's happening with respect to that, because even though you're in a home-based environment, once you associate yourself with a licensing agency, there are fees that are going to have to be transitioned from that home-based care centre to actually be accredited and licensed by an agency. There's a cost associated with that. That cost is not going to be absorbed by the child care provider; it's going to be absorbed by the families themselves. So we have to be concerned about the effect this piece of legislation is going to have on the affordability of child care in the province of Ontario.

Lastly, Mr. Speaker, I would also suggest that accessibility of child care has to be a concern. I mentioned already that there is an issue between availability and accessibility of child care in urban versus rural settings. I'm sure members of our caucus are going to elaborate more with particular reference to what's happening in their own constituencies. But if we are tinkering with ratios and if we are tinkering with the viability of child care in the informal sector, we're actually going to re-

duce the number of places that are going to be available for children to be cared for.

I realize the government's trying to increase the licensed spaces, trying to provide more licensed spaces—and I applaud them for trying that—but the effect is that we're going to have a reduction that far exceeds that increase in the informal care sector. Remember, four in five kids are being cared for in the informal sector today. If that's the case, we might be heading into, with this particular piece of legislation, a shortage of spaces in child care, if what folks are telling us is true, which is that the viability of informal care will no longer be there. Those are some of the principles that guide our assessment of what we're going to be doing and debating through the course of this particular piece of legislation.

But I have to say, Mr. Speaker, one of the things that has concerned me is that this isn't the first time that we've seen tragic events transpire in Ontario society that may have been averted if the government had been simply doing their job to begin with. I have serious concerns with the fact that we've had children that have tragically died in care in the province of Ontario, and, on the basis of that, the basis of the government's neglect to investigate certain complaints, we've had these tragedies emerge. I'll point to some articles in the newspaper.

I want to say that I remember when I was a professor—actually, when I was a teaching assistant prior to receiving my PhD—I was involved in a course. There was an experiential learning component to it, which actually studied the tragedies that were happening in our nursing homes. We were doing this probably about eight or nine years ago. Those tragedies—the abuse, the mental health abuse—actually parlayed itself into legislation, which was Bill 140, an act with respect to long-term care, which happened in 2007.

I know that regulations were reinforced in 2011 with respect to nursing homes when we talked about some of the tragic conditions that our seniors were living in in these nursing homes. The fact that their diapers weren't being changed and the inadequacies of the food rations that they were receiving and the medications that weren't being properly distributed—these are certainly tragedies that become exposed through cases that are brought to the attention of the media or the Ombudsman or individual members of this Legislature.

I recognize that these tragic events that happened in the last year have certainly provided increased stimulus on the part of the government to act on something that has not been changed in almost 30 years in terms of the provision of child care in the province of Ontario. So with the greatest respect, Mr. Speaker, I will disagree with the minister's suggesting that the government actually has acted, when we haven't really seen the regulatory or legislative changes necessary to avert crises like this.

I will say, too, that I think the greatest thing that we can offer as a Legislature is to educate parents on what they should be doing and what they should be asking when they're looking for appropriate care for their

children. The fact that a parent would actually be okay with leaving their children in a centre that they themselves cannot enter, I think, speaks volumes about the work we need to do to educate parents to say that you should have access to your child 100% of the time, and access to the premises where your child is being cared for whenever you want. You are the parent of that child. I think we have a lot to do in terms of educating, and I appreciate the aspects of the legislation that we're talking about today that specifically focus on this.

We have to look at the context of what this bill is being made of. I know there has been a series of articles that have been addressing this particular issue. For example, there was the one death in Vaughan that occurred, where inspectors “found garbage with dirty diapers in the kitchen; expired or rotting food in the fridge and freezer; unsanitized toys; evidence of inadequate hand-washing or dishwashing capacity; and other sanitation concerns” at the home. This was the result of a freedom-of-information request.

As the article states—this article is dated September 20, 2013, published in the *Toronto Star*—“one family is alleging their three-and-a-half-year-old daughter, who was toilet-trained, was made to wear diapers and belted into a car seat while watching TV unsupervised in the basement of the daycare. The family said their child often smelled like a dog when she came home.”

You read stories like this and, certainly, as a parent, you feel for individuals who are faced with those kinds of conditions. If the allegations are in fact true, there are serious problems with not only the legislation but the investigative capacity of the ministry.

This article, dated July 19, 2013, states: “Ontario's Ministry of Education keeps the complaint history of unlicensed home daycares secret from the public unless they file a freedom-of-information request....” I have a concern about that, because if the government is in fact retaining this information and not doing anything about it, then there are certainly serious concerns. I appreciate the fact that this legislation tries to rectify that in terms of making some of these complaints public and a registry available for people to consider some of the concerns.

This actually prompted the provincial Ombudsman to launch an investigation on the complaints-based system and the oversight of child care in Ontario.

The article goes on to state that “when complaints are filed against unlicensed daycares, the ministry issues a letter ordering the operator to stop breaking the child-limit rule,” which was the only regulation imposed, according to the legislation. I know that this legislation, of course, tries to rectify that particular issue, which is, I think, long overdue.

This article, dated November 26, 2013, in the *Toronto Star*, states that “the province inspected nearly 300 unlicensed daycare businesses between July 2012 and July 2013. The inspection reports obtained by the *Star* detail a series of health and safety concerns noted by inspectors, including soggy bedding, unfenced pools and lax supervision—even at daycares deemed legal”—which I found very surprising.

Obviously, we have to do a whole lot better of a job, whether that's an instance where people simply don't know what the regulations are—common sense doesn't dictate that, and we have to do a better job educating those folks that are providing that care.

It's completely unacceptable that we actually have retained these pieces of information and nothing really gets done about it. That is a very big concern for me, because what this piece of legislation, Bill 143, does is say that we have a number of criteria we have to assess in terms of ensuring safe and healthy environments for our kids. But who exactly is going to inspect them? Those inspections: If they get details, what are they going to do? How many more inspectors is the government going to employ? What is the budget of these extra inspectors, and where can we find that kind of information? I think those details are important, because they provide parents with the security that something's going to be done if a complaint is made or if a proactive inspection turns up some particular issues.

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The history to date isn't very welcoming. I believe the government is quite embarrassed by what has transpired in child care centres with inspections that they have done, and have done very little to rectify.

This article dated November 23 states, "Ministry of Education files ... show in about 40% of cases, caregivers were looking after more than five children under age 10, not including their own," which is a violation of the Day Nurseries Act. So, again, there are instances where the regulations actually were in place, but not enough was done to fix those problems. Incredibly, "The violations ranged from caregivers with six kids, eight kids, 11 kids, and as many as 14 children" in one Toronto home, which happened last April.

Again, we're highlighting some issues with the current system and the inadequacies of it but, more importantly, there are instances where the government has investigated and stepped in and little has changed. So how can we have the confidence that things will change with this particular piece of legislation? I'm not given the confidence, based on the fact that the government hasn't been able to do their job with the minimal regulations that were in place before. Now we're adding more, and we need the confidence that the government is going to be able to do its job, provide those investigations and move forward.

Finally, the last article I'm going to highlight—there's obviously lots to talk about here, but this is another Toronto Star article, on January 16, 2014, which outlines that "Ontario Education Ministry Wants Daycare Death Lawsuit Tossed" out of court. It states that it "does not owe the plaintiff"—the dead toddler's family—a 'duty of care....'"

I'm kind of concerned about that statement with respect to the provision of child care in our communities, and if the government feels it has a duty to provide care or it doesn't. Certainly, as late as January of this year, we have some comment that it doesn't, in that particular

case, have a duty to provide care. I wonder if this legislation is going to change that, because obviously the legislation is intended to be much more proactive with its inspections. It sets out further regulation with respect to the kinds of things inspectors can write up a provider of child care for with an offence, and severely stiffens the penalties that will be placed upon violators of Bill 143, should it be enacted into law. Mr. Speaker, once again, I would like to say that we have some concerns that the government's not doing the work that we have asked it to do to begin with.

I don't want to be overly negative about the legislation. There are aspects of the legislation, of course, that we do support. As I mentioned, I think, a couple of times at least, we are going to be in favour of any way that we can strengthen the health, safety and well-being of our children. I'll continue to say that because it obviously is what we're here to do.

Let me talk a bit about some of the positive things that I think are important but nevertheless should be debated.

Obviously, one of the things this piece of legislation does is empower an inspector to inspect, without a warrant, a premises where child care is being provided or any premises where the inspector, on reasonable grounds, suspects that child care is provided.

I do know that there are going to be certain folks who are going to question the indiscriminate nature of having access to a private premises "on reasonable grounds" without outlining what those reasonable grounds may consist of. I think that debate is warranted. We should actually talk about that, because it is important. But I think that we do have to have some balance at some point in terms of a person's property and the health and well-being of children who are under their care. I think we are going to have a debate on that.

I do understand the legal rationale for inserting this into legislation, to make sure that if someone is at risk, we do everything we can to rectify the situation, but I do say that acknowledging that there are concerns that I think individuals may have with the potentially indiscriminate nature of these inspections. I'll let those folks make those points as they wish.

An inspector or director who believes on reasonable grounds that there is an imminent threat to a child can order the child care provider to stop providing child care. I think that obviously is going to severely improve the care and the safety of our children. If there's an imminent threat, whether it's some of those disgusting sanitary conditions that we saw, particularly with the home in Vaughan that was investigated—I think that we have an obligation to make sure that our kids are in a safe environment, and if that environment is not that child care centre, that we make sure that we get in there, stop the issue from getting worse, and try to remedy it as quickly as possible.

Of course, I know some folks are going to say that indiscriminately closing child care centres may affect families because they're going to have to find care for those kids who are now left without care, but, again, if our

interest is to make sure that safety is a priority, we obviously have a duty to at least stop bad places from operating. Obviously, I think there are provisions in here for a registry of sorts to emerge.

The third point: I think the publication of information section in this piece of legislation is a very good way to help parents make informed choices about child care providers. It could be an alternative to regulation, of course; instead, creating a marketplace that publishes information about the child care provider's qualifications, the age ratios, experience etc. in an easily comparable way. We can use the Internet to publicize this—that's easily accessible to families—to provide that kind of information.

It prohibits a person from providing care if they've been convicted under this act or a variety of criminal charges, or if they have been part of disciplinary hearings of another regulatory body like the association regulating early childhood educators. I think that's obviously a positive piece of legislation.

One that I will note that contrasts a little bit with what we didn't see in the Ontario College of Teachers Act is the ability to reinstate folks five years after being convicted of a criminal offence, which is a concern we have with that particular piece of legislation, so I'll note the inconsistency. I much like and much prefer having a person who has been convicted or has been removed from a regulatory body to have no access to the care of children, because I think that's certainly something that will improve the safety of children.

Going in with the first part, the provider cannot prevent a parent from accessing his or her child: I think this is just basic common sense as a parent. I wouldn't leave my child in any place I didn't have access to. Again, I think there's an educative component here, whereby parents should know what their rights are. They should know they should have access. They should know they should receive a receipt. These particular elements of this legislation—I call them parental rights or family rights—are good elements to this bill that I think we would consider very positive aspects as well.

Having said that, I do have some concerns with the legislation that I will share. I know I won't have a whole lot of time to share these concerns before we break before question period, but this bill proposes a licensing scheme that we believe would reduce parental choice. Informal child care providers, which provide the majority of care, 80% of care, are concerned that the legislation will mean that they can provide fewer spaces, especially to children under the age of two, and will be subjected to having to obtain a sublicence from a home care agency, which will increase costs. Those two elements—again, accessibility of space and cost—are certainly elements that we are concerned about.

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Mr. Speaker, this provision for children under the age of two is one that we shouldn't neglect. It is a challenge to find child care from the ages of zero to two for families. We have families who are self-employed, and if

they're self-employed and they haven't been contributing to their employment insurance, they don't have maternity benefits like everybody else, and therefore may not be able to take a whole year off from work for simply providing for their family.

Care for children under the age of 18 months, now under the age of two, is already at a shortage. There aren't spaces available. For licensed child care centres, the cost is so prohibitive that they actually don't offer licensed child care; not many facilities offer licensed child care for those between the ages of zero and 18 months. I will note that the minister has changed the regulations on ratios for these centres to suggest that the ratios will change for children ages zero to one and one to two, which may have some effect on the availability of spaces—and I'll get to that in a few moments. But our concern here is for those children under the age of two. If there is going to be a limited number of spaces for them, then availability of space is going to be curtailed, and we have serious reservations with respect to that.

The increased cost and decreased space issue will force many families to shut down rather than seek a licence, causing a reduction in care or increasing costs, or both. What this means, Mr. Speaker, is that by licensing, you're going to have to raise your fees. Licensing means that the child care provider will take in less money.

Reducing the number of kids that are going to be in the care of those providers makes the viability of informal care very difficult. Again, we're talking about a sector of child care that provides care for the vast majority of children in the province of Ontario: 80% of kids, four in five children, are in the care of the informal sector. We have to be concerned and very careful about what we do to alter that.

Yes, there might be some more persuaded to license, and so there might be a slight increase in the availability of licensed child care spaces. We are changing the ratio from 1 to 5 for licensed home-based child care centres to 1 to 6. I recognize that that is an increase, but if the viability simply isn't there for everybody else, then there is concern.

If members of this Legislature have been listening to and reading the information being provided by their informal child care providers in their own ridings—and I appreciate all those child care providers in other ridings who have also included me in their very thoughtful analysis of this piece of legislation. If we're listening to them, we have to be concerned about the viability of child care in our informal sector. I think this problem is going to be more acute in rural Ontario than it is going to be in urban Ontario. We have to be concerned about that as well.

There are many families who take the time, who make the economic decision, to stay at home with their kids—many families. In order to make that decision easier for them, they take on other children in their neighbourhood to provide care. I want to state that the vast majority of these child care providers are very good at what they do. Families trust them. They become an extended part of a

family. That child care provider is as important to the child, in many cases, as the parent. So choosing that child care provider is a painstaking task for parents. If we're now going to say and make that economic decision for people to stay at home with their own kids more difficult, we are going to limit the availability of space in child care right across the province of Ontario.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Newmarket—I mean, from Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Oak Ridges—Markham.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oak Ridges—Markham. Joe threw me off.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Please help me welcome, in the east members' gallery, Manuela Di Re. She was legal counsel for many years at the York region health services department.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to introduce two people from my riding. Dawn Miskelly is the manager of the Elgin County Railway Museum. The railway capital of Canada is St. Thomas. Ian Raven is the curator of the Elgin Military Museum, which purchased a submarine last year. I invite all the MPPs to visit Port Burwell and visit our sub.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm very pleased to welcome Nicole Goodbrand, who is with us here today in the gallery. She is a student at Huron University College and is job-shadowing me today. Her family is from the good riding of Brant.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I would like to welcome members of the Ontario Museum Association to Queen's Park today. I'm pleased to welcome Henriette Riegel and Megan Lafrenière from the Diefbunker Museum in Ottawa, and Alexandra Badzak from the Ottawa Art Gallery.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I would like to welcome everyone here today for the Ontario museums day at Queen's Park. They're going to have their reception tonight downstairs from 5 to 7. I have Darren Levstek, the museum and Nature's Place curator from Minden Hills Museum in my riding. Darren, stand up. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'd like to welcome Matthew Lopez here, a young man who lives in my riding, a fourth-year student interested in policy and politics. He's here to observe the proceedings of the day and see how we work.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'm here today to introduce Slobodan Grmsu from my riding, a wonderful volunteer, very interested in politics. Welcome.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd also like to welcome Julia Fielding, who is the executive director of the Clarington

Museums and Archives. Welcome, Julia, and thank you for the work in our community.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to welcome as well, from Huron County Museum and Historic Gaol, Emily Beliveau; and from Bruce County Museum, executive director Cathy McGirr.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'd like to introduce two people who came to visit me this morning from the Ontario Museum Association: Jenn Nelson, social media and public history, Ontario; and Dr. Terri-Lynn Brennan from the city of Kingston, who was also the LA for Noble Villeneuve back in 1998. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome David Marskell from THEMUSEUM in Kitchener, a very successful museum. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to welcome Kelley Swift Jones, curator of the Simcoe County Museum in Midhurst, Ontario.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'd like to extend a special welcome to Catherine Richards. Catherine Richards is the manager and curator for the Aurora Historical Society and Hillary House National Historic Site. Welcome to Catherine.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to introduce Heather Hughes, assistant curator of the Tom Thomson Art Gallery in Owen Sound. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Mike Colle: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to move unanimous consent that the Legislature wishes the best of luck to our Canadian athletes who are representing Canada this weekend, especially our women's and men's hockey teams and our women's and men's curling teams, and especially Ontario's own Brad Jacobs from Sault Ste. Marie, who is going for the gold. I'd like to get the Legislature to wish them unanimous consent for best of luck from Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton—Lawrence is seeking unanimous consent to offer our best and thanks to the Olympic teams mentioned and the individual mentioned. Do we agree? We have unanimous consent of congratulations. That's wonderful. Thank you.

The member from Sudbury.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: Thank you, Speaker. I want to introduce four young people. They represent 4MY Canada and they're meeting with MPPs. They met with me this morning and they are incredible individuals. I'd like to introduce Lia Milousis, Mia Thomas, Neville Brown and Jonathan Gale. Welcome and thank you for the work you do.

Mr. Michael Harris: I too would like to welcome David Marskell from Kitchener—Waterloo's own THEMUSEUM, as well as Tom Reitz from Waterloo Region Museum in the great riding of Kitchener—Conestoga. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to introduce Scott Gillies. Scott is the curator of the Ingersoll Cheese and Agricultural Museum in the great city of Ingersoll. Thank you very much.

Mr. Todd Smith: I see a couple of members from the Ontario Museum Association here as well this morning: Terri-Lynn Brennan and Jenn Nelson. Welcome to Queen's Park and question period.

EVENTS IN UKRAINE

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each caucus to address the situation in Ukraine.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to offer an opportunity to speak about the situation in Ukraine. Do we agree? Agreed.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will be sharing my time with the member from Etobicoke Centre.

Like all Ontarians, I am deeply disturbed and saddened by the events that have been unfolding in Ukraine. Over the past few months, the world has been witness to increasing violence against peaceful demonstrators seeking democracy and a better quality of life.

The past few days have been particularly brutal due to an escalation of violence in Kiev which has shocked us all. Despite media reports yesterday that President Viktor Yanukovich pledged to end the violence, today the situation has escalated further and more demonstrators have been killed. Already enormous damage has been done; many lives have been tragically lost.

On behalf of the government of Ontario and my colleagues, I would like to express my deepest sympathies to the families and friends of the victims of these tragic events and to the people of Ukraine.

Ontario is a very diverse province, which includes a strong and vibrant Ukrainian community, a community that has a large presence in many of our ridings. Last night, I had the opportunity to speak with some of the leaders in Ontario's Ukrainian community to pass along our heartfelt support for their efforts. We all know a member of the Ukrainian community who is watching these events with mounting concern and anguish. Our hearts go out to those families and friends in the region.

I'm pleased to see that the Canadian government has been engaged with Ukrainian non-governmental organizations to provide medical supplies. However, I'm mindful that there is more that could be done to help the situation. I hope that the federal government will enact immediate targeted sanctions toward those responsible and that the federal government will use its considerable international influence to convince international partners, in particular the countries of the European Union, to likewise implement sanctions against those responsible for the killings and human rights abuses.

In addition, I call on the federal government to deploy Canadian observers to Ukraine's hospitals and clinics, its courts and morgues. Ontario is ready to work in partner-

ship with the federal government on this front. This will help ensure the fair treatment of the demonstrators and the accurate reporting of the injuries and fatalities. These actions will serve as a reminder to those precipitating the violence that the world is not only watching but will act and will hold them responsible.

We, as community advocates, as leaders, as MPPs, have a responsibility to speak up when human rights are violated. This is why we stand today in solidarity with the members of the Ukrainian community and all Ontarians who seek a peaceful and democratic path for Ukraine and its people, who are striving with such courage for their dignity and freedom.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Etobicoke Centre.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm grateful to have the opportunity to rise in the House today and speak to this important issue.

As the Premier has indicated, the violence that is taking place in Ukraine has far-reaching effects. Many Ukrainian Canadians in Etobicoke have family and friends that are being directly impacted by the situation that is unfolding in Ukraine, but so many more are concerned about freedom, democracy and opportunity, and they are concerned about Ukraine's future. I want them to know that our thoughts and our prayers are with them. While I'm hopeful that news of a potential truce may be a positive sign, there is still more work to do.

I join the Premier in calling for the federal government to take further action to ensure the safety of those in Ukraine. The simple steps that the Premier suggested could have a real and legitimate impact on the lives of those in need of protection. Because, as I have said, these events not only impact those who are living in Ukraine, but they also impact many of the people we all represent at Queen's Park. When events such as these occur, they impact all of us, but it's also an opportunity for us to reflect on the state of our own democracy and how blessed we truly are to live in Ontario and in Canada, a place where we have the privilege to sit in this House and to debate our different political views peacefully, respectfully and without fear of repercussions.

Indeed, this is a circumstance that we should remember more often, and that we should be very grateful for. That is why we have the obligation to speak out against violence and aggression of any kind and stand together today with the people of Ukraine. As a person of Ukrainian descent, I'm very grateful that the Premier has allowed me an opportunity to express this in solidarity, not only with my community, but with all of us who are of Ukrainian descent throughout Ontario.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: For over 100 years, Ukrainians have been coming to Canada and Ontario as a way of building a life free from oppression and free to make a better life than was possible in Ukraine. They've come to this country and become building blocks for a nation that grew westward. They helped Canada build railways for the west to become the breadbasket for a continent. This

nation and this province would not exist as it does today without the contributions of the thousands of Ukrainian Canadians who have made it home.

Ukrainian Canadians like Roy Romanow and Ernie Eves have led provincial governments in this century, and in this century two Ukrainian Canadians, Ed Schreyer and Ray Hnatyshyn, have served as Her Majesty's representatives in Canada. The community has become entwined with the fabric and the future of Canadian society, but it has always done so with a careful and loving eye to events back in the old country. In the last century, Ukraine has struggled to make its own identity and forge its own future. Subject to Soviet domination, the extermination offence of the Holodomor, pogroms and invasions, they have held on to what it means to be Ukrainian.

We are now seeing daily images of violence and rioting in the streets of Kiev. Many Ukrainians have lost their lives, and hundreds more are injured. I would like to offer my condolences, and those of the entire PC caucus, to the families who have lost family members to the violence that's currently happening in Ukraine.

The people in the square in Kiev represent every faction of their country. They speak Russian and Ukrainian. They are young and they are old. They are Catholic; they are Orthodox; they are Jewish. But they are united by the fact that they believe the time is now for a free and independent Ukraine.

Riots that started out as a protest driven primarily by a young activist have evolved into a growing symbol of a national dream that has, for centuries, been deferred rather than realized. Through the protests, Canada has played a role. Our embassy has served as a safe haven for protestors fleeing violent crackdowns by riot police. The federal government has threatened sanctions against the government if the violence in Kiev does not stop. The federal government, following the lead set by Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Minister Baird, has issued a statement saying that Canada continues to call on the government of Ukraine to work with the opposition and achieve a peaceful solution. Peace, freedom and the ability to assemble freely are at stake every day in the Euro-maidan in Kiev.

In December, Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak joined thousands of Ukrainian Canadians as they protested the violence with a rally in Dundas Square. We share a common belief in freedom and that, for too long, the future of Ukraine has been decided by someone other than the Ukrainian people.

Despite a truce being called late Wednesday night by President Yanukovich and opposition leaders, we've seen an escalation of violence claiming at least 100 lives, and the numbers are growing. I want to echo the call of the federal government in demanding a permanent end to this ongoing violence and tragedy.

On behalf of the PC caucus, I would ask that the flag at Queen's Park be lowered in memory of the murdered innocent young activists, as we recognize today as an official day of mourning. It's time for the people of Ukraine to have what so many of their relatives have

found here in Ontario: peace, security, freedom and a future that they decide for themselves.

Slava Ukraini. Slava Ukraini. Slava Ukraini.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my honour to rise in this House and to speak about this issue. It's also my honour and privilege to represent so many Ukrainian Canadians in my riding. It's been my honour and privilege to be the only MPP to have co-authored both Ukrainian heritage month and also the bill that recognized the Holodomor as a genocide, and I'm honoured by that.

I've also been honoured to be at those demonstrations at Dundas Square, at city hall and outside of the consul, and to stand shoulder to shoulder with those constituents of mine who have family in Ukraine and who mourn the events of Ukraine.

Let's just go over them: Over 30 people have been killed. This is a peaceful protest. The very rights that we recognize in Canada, as has been so eloquently stated already, are being trespassed. People are being shot in Maidan square in Kiev, and every day in my office I get an up-to-the-minute report of what's happening in that square.

One Professor Wynnyckyj has said that now they're using the "terrorist" word to describe the protestors. It's not just in Kiev; it's across Ukraine that this revolution is happening. He described it: "I spent a few hours on Independence Square today. Honestly—I couldn't find a single terrorist! I saw lots of young and middle-aged determined people who were genuinely trying to show brave faces, but in reality are fully cognizant of the futility of their fight against several thousand armed interior ministry fighters...." He said everyone in Kiev is coming to that square and supporting them with food. In fact, he said, "Please don't bring any more ... sausages; we have more meat than we can eat!"

That is the state of the affair in Maidan. He closes off, this Professor Wynnyckyj, by saying to pray for them: "God help us!" They are frightened of martial law being imposed.

In light of all of that, what we are calling for, and what we are calling for federally, is targeted sanctions. We need more action on this issue. We need the government to step up, to actually do something, and that something is to have targeted sanctions against those who are responsible.

So that's what we're calling for in the New Democratic Party, on behalf of Andrea Horwath, and I'm sharing my time with someone who is of Ukrainian descent, our member from Essex, Taras Natyshak. I will give the floor to him now.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you to all of my colleagues in the House for dedicating and agreeing to unanimous consent to address the crisis that is happening in the Ukraine. I certainly echo the sentiments expressed by my colleague from Parkdale–High Park, and, of course, I stand here as a member of Ukrainian descent.

I want to thank all members of the Legislature for making this a priority, for sending a clear message to those in the Ukrainian community, in our province and

across the country that we stand with them to support the rule of law, to support democracy, to denounce violence and to support human rights.

I have family members who live in the Ukraine. They are a proud and passionate people, and they are frightened. They're frightened that the continued violence that we have seen in Independence Square in Kiev could escalate and continue, given the inaction by the ruling government to address the concerns of those peaceful protesters. It is incumbent upon us as a Legislature to stand with those who speak for peace and tolerance and to use every resource that we can, whether it be sanctions or otherwise, to de-escalate the situation.

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I am so proud to stand in a Legislature that supports human rights, that continues to promote our values and our system of democracy. It is a message and a tribute to what can be possible in a functioning Legislature, and I know that is at the core of what those protestors desire. They want to see a functioning Legislature, a functioning government that listens to their concerns in a peaceful way. Today is certainly a contribution to that effort, and I want to thank all of my colleagues for making this moment something that I hope will resonate to our Ukrainian communities across the province and certainly into the hearts of those protestors, who seek only a peaceful resolution to this volatile crisis.

Hon. John Milloy: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order from the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the PC speaker, in her speech—I think very appropriately—asked if the flag could be lowered to half-mast for the remainder of the day to signify the statements that have gone on here about the Ukraine. I'd like to put that formally as a motion before the House, to ask for unanimous consent to follow up on her suggestion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is asking for unanimous consent to fly the Canadian flag at half-mast for the rest of the day as a symbol to the people of Ukraine of our thoughts and prayers. Do we agree? Agreed.

I thank all members for their co-operation. Just so that everyone knows, for clarity purposes, the Canadian flag has its own flagpole, and other flags are flown on another flagpole. For members, in case they receive any concerns about the Canadian flag not being flown, it is always flown, and under these circumstances, unanimous consent will allow for the lowering at half-mast and nothing else—clarity purposes.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, I might start by saying how wonderful it was to hear everybody speak and to see such unanimity on such an important cause.

This morning, my question is for the Premier. Premier, we held round tables in almost 30 cities this year so far. We've heard from small business owners, social organizations and families. A common theme occurred: high taxes, skyrocketing hydro rates and crippling red tape. People everywhere told us, "We need jobs," "We need opportunities," and "We want to work here in Ontario." Not one family or small business said, "Gee, I'm really hoping the Liberals and NDP raise my taxes again."

So yesterday, we filed an opposition day motion calling on this House to commit not to raise taxes—gas taxes, business taxes or other taxes. Premier, will you support our motion and commit not to raise taxes?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Since I became Premier, I've actually been to all of the ridings across the province, save two, and I Skyped into those two. So I have touched every riding—107 ridings I have been in, and many of them more than once—and have talked with people in every corner of the province.

So here's what we support: We support investment in those communities. We support investment in infrastructure. We support investment in people and partnerships with people in those communities so that young people can get the training that they need so that they can have the skills to take part in the 21st-century economy. We support creating an environment where small business—and large business, quite frankly—can thrive, and investment can come to this province and create jobs.

We are climbing out of an economic downturn, there is absolutely no doubt about that; 440,000 net new jobs have been created since June 2009. But we know that there's more to be done, and cutting programs and slashing across government—which is actually what the member opposite is advocating—is not what we will agree to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'll say to the Premier, I'll remind her again—I'll pass that on to the 40 nurses in North Bay that you fired.

Premier, it was clear during the hearings that your province-wide 10-cent-a-litre gas hike is reviled amongst Ontarians. Social planning councils, food banks, chambers of commerce, mayors, seniors all spoke loud and clear: No new taxes.

You won't fund transit out of existing revenues, which have nearly doubled in 10 years, but you'll fund a billion dollars to cancel gas plants. Why should anyone trust you with even one more cent of their hard-earned money?

Already, Ontario has the highest payroll taxes in Canada, the highest energy prices in North America, and with the proposed half-a-cent tax, we will have the highest business taxes of all of the large provinces in Canada. Will you commit today to not raising existing taxes or implementing new taxes in Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, Mr. Speaker, you know, there are a lot of irons in the fire that the member from Nipissing has got, but let me just talk about what we believe is necessary at this juncture.

Let's just check in on the accuracy of some of the commentary. If we talk about nurses, in 2003, there were

111,218 nurses employed and nursing in Ontario. That's the number. In 2013, there were 131,728 nurses employed and nursing in Ontario. That's more than 20,000 more nurses in 2013 than in 2003. That's the reality; those are the facts, and we'll continue in the supplementary.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I am looking for order. Thank you.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I will share that with the 40 nurses that you did fire last year in the city of North Bay.

Premier, if you won't listen to me, listen to the rest of Ontarians. Here's the Retail Council of Canada, through our pre-budget hearings: "The government needs to find additional ways to reduce taxes."

"Do not raise taxes and do not implement new taxes"—the Canadian Federation of Independent Business.

Here's just a citizen: Art Smith showed up and said, "Ontario's manufacturing sector has suffered thousands of job losses in the recent past and clearly illustrates the results of lost competitiveness in a world of global trade."

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce said, "Lowering corporate income taxes has a significant negative impact on investment."

Premier, if you won't listen to me, will you take their advice and support our motion to not raise taxes? Or will you and the NDP stick Ontarians with the bill for your out-of-control spending?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite talked about the negative impact of lowering taxes, so I think he needs to check what his actual message is.

Mr. Speaker, what we know is that it is extremely important at this point in our history in Ontario to make sure that the investments that are needed are investments that are made. Whether that is investment in roads and bridges—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Rural Affairs is now going to come to come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —in Nipissing or whether it is transit in the GTA or whether it's bridges in Kenora, we need to make sure that those investments are in place.

We know from the track record of the party opposite that making infrastructure investments is not what they do. It is not what they believe in. But we know from all of those businesses that we've talked to across the province that investing in hospitals like the one in North Bay, and investing in highways like Highway 69 is the work that needs to be done, and we are going to continue to make those investments.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is, again, to the Premier. She likes to talk about a track record. Let's talk

about her track record over the past year. Her office has been subject to two OPP investigations.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All right. That's enough.

Finish, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Her office has been subject to two OPP investigations.

Hon. Jeff Leal: So has the PMO.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Rural Affairs is now warned.

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Ms. Lisa MacLeod: A search warrant was issued last night by the OPP. They have posted record job losses in the province. People in Ontario can't pay their hydro bills. All she's done is set a paralysis in her own government by appointing 37 panels, yet she ignores the Drummond report that her government spent a lot of money on. On the only occasion that this government has been tested since she's been Premier, she lost five out of seven by-elections.

It's very simple: The only person who has confidence in this government is Andrea Horwath. So I ask the Premier: Will she put our confidence motion to the test? Will she face the music and will she face the people?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm not sure that the member opposite really wants to have a full discussion about by-elections, given their record, but the reality is that we have been working very hard over the last year. The plan that we—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): This goes both ways. I personally am getting a little tired of the shouting each other down.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. The plan that we are putting before the people of Ontario, and that we are implementing, is one that is based on investing in the success of the people in this province. We're investing in infrastructure, which creates good jobs now and is an investment in the future. We're investing in skills and training for young people and for people who have been in the workforce and need to get back into the workforce. We've got a youth jobs strategy. More than 7,000 young people have placements. We are building on our knowledge economy, working in partnership with businesses. We will continue to do that work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The only investment that the people of Ontario see this government making is the investment to cling to power, and it ain't pretty, Speaker. This Premier's predecessor held on to power by saving—

Interjection.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —seats in the GTA in the last election because of the cancelled power plants. The OPP is investigating. A search warrant was issued last night.

At this rate, our province cannot afford for this government to cling to power simply because the Premier wants to keep her picture on the second floor here in this assembly. If the by-elections are any signal, she has lost the confidence of the province. If the search warrant is any indication, this government is corrupt.

It is time that this government put a vote on a confidence measure in this House. Jim Wilson tabled it. Will the Premier—

Interjections.

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

Understanding the question, I would ask the member to withdraw.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's make sure that's done properly, please.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Sure. Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. On the issue of the committee work that has been done and the issue of the relocation of the gas plants, questions which I have answered many, many, many times here and in front of committee—I've been in front of committee twice—I just want to say we have provided all the information that the committee has asked for. We will continue to do that.

In terms of the issues that the member has raised that are being looked at right now, I just want the member opposite to know that we have worked completely and closely with the privacy commissioner. Dr. Cavoukian has noted that we've been fully co-operative. She said in August, she, meaning me, "has been fully co-operative with me and my office. In fairness to Premier Wynne, she said, 'You have my full co-operation, whatever you want from us.'" That's what I said to the privacy commissioner. That's what we have done. We have changed the rules and made clear what the rules are in terms of retention of documents. We've done everything in our power to move on from that, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The problem with that is no one believes this government anymore. Even Liberal organizer Tom Allison is jumping ship to go support our former leader John Tory to become mayor of Toronto. The only people with confidence in this Liberal government are the New Democrats. They're the ones who want to move on from the OPP investigation and the gas plant probe to continue to prop them up.

So I ask again: Given the serious nature of the OPP search warrant, the massive job losses we have seen in this province, the high hydro rates that people cannot afford in this province and the scandals at OPG and at

Hydro One, will the Premier do the right thing? Will she call this confidence motion for a vote? Will she debate it so the people of this province can have their say in an election, so they can vote for a Premier that they elect, and so that somebody, whoever is the Premier, will actually have a mandate to do what they want to do with this province?

Interjections.

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

Be seated, please. Thank you.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The reality is that we are operating in a minority Parliament, and I have been clear from the time I came into this job that I believed that it was the responsibility of all of us in this Parliament to make the Parliament work. We were sent here by the people of Ontario to a minority government, and we are working to make this minority Parliament work, and I will continue to do that.

The member opposite knows full well that a budget is being developed. As we discussed previously, the budget is a confidence motion. We will do our utmost to bring a budget to the House and to get that budget passed, but if that does not happen, then we know that we're into a general election.

On the issue of the relocation of the gas plants, I just want to be clear: We have provided 311,000 pages of documents to the committee, 30,000 from the Premier's office. The committee has heard from 77 witnesses and had 117 hours of discussion. We will continue to provide the information that the committee asks for.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, my question is to the Premier. The OPP anti-rackets squad is investigating the Liberal government over the gas plants scandal and an attempted cover-up. Yesterday they executed a search warrant in order to seize evidence of possible criminal activity. Can the Premier tell Ontarians whether the OPP anti-rackets squad received a search warrant for the Premier's office?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Quite frankly, I'm a little surprised by that question. I think the honourable member is aware, as are all members of this Legislature, that we allow the police to do their work. If the honourable member has questions of the police, he can ask the police. We're not going to comment on it or delve into it. We will allow them to work independently.

The fact of the matter is, as the Premier just outlined, it was under her leadership that we reconstituted the committee; that the committee has heard from some 77 witnesses. They've received over 300,000 pages of documents. Mr. Speaker, we have worked very closely with the committee to respond to the requests that have come forward. Senior members of my ministry and I, as Minister of Government Services, have appeared in front of the committee to talk about the process that they

followed, and we continue to work with the committee to deal with this investigation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, a non-denial denial is not a promising start to this session.

Has the Premier or any member of her staff or cabinet spoken with the commissioner or OPP leadership about the investigation by the anti-rackets squad?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, Mr. Speaker, I think the member should take a very close look at what he's asking. We are talking about an issue that is with the police. I would think that all members of this Legislature would think it would be very prudent to allow the police to do their work and certainly not to comment on it or to interfere in any way. So quite frankly, I'm shocked that he brought that forward.

There are larger issues here before us and before the committee. The passage of time does not take away the fact that both the Progressive Conservative Party and the New Democratic Party made the exact same commitment going into the last election. They were fully supportive of the move to cancel both those plants. Yet when we have tried to look at it from their perspective and we have tried to bring forward witnesses to talk about the undertakings they took, they have blocked it in every way.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Mr. Speaker, I find the ongoing evasion of answers that are fairly straightforward to give quite troubling.

Will the Premier commit to placing anyone who is being investigated by the OPP anti-rackets squad on leave?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I've answered in an appropriate way. We leave things with the authorities. That's the way it works here in the province of Ontario.

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But again, I take a look at the record of this government and the record of this Premier in terms of striking the committee, in terms of asking the Auditor General to look into it. We have the Premier, who has appeared twice in front of the committee. I myself appeared in front of the committee. It was quite an experience due to the lack of, I would say, substance in what was raised by the opposition. We've seen over 300,000 pages of documents that have come forward, 30,000 of them from the Premier's office.

Again, when we've tried to look at this from the perspective of the opposition—who made the exact same promise, even had YouTube videos touting it—they blocked it at every turn, and they are the ones who have ended that line of questioning.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, it's not every day that the sitting government is the subject of a police investigation by the anti-rackets squad. It's important to proceed prudently.

Does the Premier agree that to ensure there is independence and transparency at every stage of this investigation—should charges be laid, will you ensure the appointment of a special prosecutor from outside Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As the government House leader has said, and will say again, no doubt, I would just reinforce that we are not going to interfere in or comment on a police investigation. We're not going to do it. It's independent from government and I am not going to comment on things that I don't know about, and I will not interfere in any kind of police investigation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I ask you again, Premier: In order to ensure that the investigation and prosecution of this matter by authorities is seen as being independent and above reproach at every stage, will you commit now, should charges be laid, to appoint a special prosecutor from outside of the province if prosecution is needed?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: This is a completely hypothetical question. I am not going to comment on what I would or would not do in a hypothetical situation. I am not going to interfere in an investigation. I am not going to comment on a police investigation. The police investigation has to be allowed to be independent and the police force allowed to carry on in an independent way. I am not going to comment on a hypothetical situation.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There's nothing hypothetical about this. Documents were requested. We were told they didn't exist and then they existed. And now we find there is a special investigation by the anti-rackets squad, which is saying they found documents that supposedly didn't exist.

So I ask you again: In order to ensure the decision about the pursuit of this case is arrived at independently, will the Premier commit now to the appointment of a special prosecutor who will come from outside Ontario should prosecution be needed?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: The fishing season is way off and I think that we've answered the honourable member's question.

But again, let's talk about what this Premier and what this government have done. Mr. Speaker, don't rely on me. Let's look at two officers of this Legislature.

The Auditor General, October 8, 2013, had this to say: "I did have the opportunity to meet with the Premier ... it was good to hear that they are taking the report seriously and they are taking some actions and changing the way things are going to be done in the future so that a situation like this doesn't evolve."

And the Information and Privacy Commissioner, July 26 of last year, had this to say: "I think on a go-forward basis, the government really is looking to change things. The government is dedicated to opening up access to government data."

As I say, I applaud the leadership of the Premier. She has taken this matter seriously and taken steps to ensure that it doesn't happen again.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I didn't want to interrupt the flow of questioning from the NDP, but I do have two things to say.

First, I heard something in heckling that I couldn't assign to someone. The accusation that anyone here is a criminal is not parliamentary and I don't want to hear it again.

The second thing is, I think my spies have told me that the women have won the gold medal for curling.

Now, can't we all just get along?

Okay, back to work. New question. Point of order?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, I'm getting up for a question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, no, no. I saw someone moving here.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, you did?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes, I did.

The member from Newmarket–Aurora.

AGENCY SPENDING

Mr. Frank Klees: Rogue agencies in this government continue to gorge themselves at the expense of taxpayers while their ministers and the Premier stand by and sing their praises.

I want to ask the Minister of Infrastructure about Metrolinx, his favourite spend-hungry and bloating agency. This is an agency where the number of employees on the sunshine list increased by more than 50% last year, where the more than 3,000 employees not only get free Metropasses but get a free guest pass in addition. If you're an executive, along with that free Metropass, you get 10 additional guest passes. What do transit users and taxpayers get in response from Metrolinx? They get fare increases and they get recommendations to increase an arsenal of taxes, including a new 10-cent-per-litre gas tax.

Speaker, what do the minister's speaking notes tell him to say in defence of this agency and why he as a minister has failed in his responsibility to hold them accountable?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: This is the Metrolinx that, for the first time in Canadian history, won the APTA award over all Mexican, American and other Canadian transit authorities as the best-run, best-managed, best public service transit authority in North America and is ranked the best. I am enormously proud of Mr. Prichard and—

Interjections.

Mr. Jim Wilson: How much did that award cost?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe–Grey, the member from Leeds–Grenville and the member from Durham will come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, you whispered it. I caught you.

Interjection: It was confidential.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I caught you.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Let me answer the member from Simcoe–Grey, Mr. Speaker. What did it cost? It cost thousands of hours of work, sweat, time and people who work overtime during floods, during difficulties, when rails get washed out, to ensure that it is safe and everyone gets home. Quite frankly, we have a staff that works overtime and tirelessly, and it costs their families the commitment of public service.

We're darn proud of Metrolinx. We're darn proud of our employees.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: Whether it's Ornge or eHealth, whether it's gas plants or Hydro One or green energy or whether it's the Pan Am Games or Metrolinx, there isn't a file under the watch of this government that isn't blotted with scandal and incompetence. Now we're told that Metrolinx isn't satisfied with its executive suites and is spending an estimated \$40 million on new opulent office suites at Union Station.

I'd like to know from the minister, can he tell us whether he or the Premier or the Minister of Finance will be pleased to cut the ribbon on these new opulent \$40-million-plus office suites? Or will it include the entire cabinet or the entire Liberal caucus, who will then celebrate this kind of incompetence, scandal and waste? Who will it be?

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: On this side of the House, we are very proud of a record in government where we have the lowest per capita spending of any province—the best value for tax dollars in Canada.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham has just earned it.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We're very proud of the billion-dollar renovation partnership we have with the city of Toronto and others and the restoration of the old historic Grand Trunk Railway offices, which are heritage properties, which we committed to do.

We are recovering from the party opposite, which filled in subways and froze GO Transit, underinvested in GO Transit. The member opposite was the Minister of Transportation who oversaw the growth of Toronto's congestion problems and the loss of billions of dollars and now slags public services—and is now joined by the third party in thinking everyone's a taxpayer and no one's a citizen: people who know the price of everything and the value of nothing.

I am proud of our record and the public servants in Ontario.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Can the Premier tell us whether any members of the Liberal government and members of the staff have been inter-

viewed by the OPP about the deletion of emails, and if so, who?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

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Hon. John Milloy: You know, Mr. Speaker, I know that the NDP House leader has Thomas Mulcair envy here, but my answer is going to be exactly the same: We do not comment on police investigations. We do not interfere in police investigations. When the authorities are involved in something, we keep our distance from it and keep an arm's length from it.

But I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, about the good work of the Premier in terms of inviting the Auditor General to look into the Oakville situation, reconstituting the committee and appearing twice in front of the committee. I myself have appeared in front of the committee. The Minister of Energy has, I believe, several times.

Again, we have co-operated fully. Some 300,000-plus documents have been provided, and we're going to continue to work with the committee as they undertake their work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, not an answer. Let's try this one: Is the Premier aware of any other search warrants that are being sought or have been granted in this investigation?

Hon. John Milloy: I've already answered the question that's been put forth, but let me take a moment again to go back to an earlier theme, to talk about the important work that we've done with officers of this Legislature. Again, I remind members that these officers report to the Legislature as a whole, so they are in fact as responsible to the opposition as they are to us, to outline their independence.

So, this is what Dr. Ann Cavoukian, the Information and Privacy Commissioner—again, I'll share some other quotes. On June 25 last year, she said, "This government, with respect to my investigation and the work that we have done with the government, has been very forthcoming," and, "Any co-operation we needed was there."

June 13: "I have commended Premier Kathleen Wynne's government's approach to dealing with this issue, referencing the staff training program she instituted and the memo circulated by her chief of staff."

Again, June 25: "I'm pleased now to report that the new government has acted proactively to address the recommendations made in my report."

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. We recently made history in Ontario when we introduced the proposed Ontario Immigration Act. At its simplest, this proposed legislation is all about giving Ontario more say in ensuring that immigrants who are coming to Ontario have the skills that match the jobs we are creating in Ontario.

Could the minister, through the Speaker, tell this Legislature how important this proposed legislation is?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville. I had the opportunity to go to her riding a little while back. I met with newcomers in her riding, and I know she's doing an excellent job as a strong advocate for her community.

The recent changes to immigration by the federal government have not fared well with Ontario. Currently, economic-class immigrants make up under 50% of all new immigrants here in the province of Ontario. Back in 2001, they made up 64% of all newcomers here in our province. Despite this, Ontario remains the number one destination for immigrants here in this great country. In 2012, more immigrants chose Ontario than all provinces west of Ontario combined.

Our government is showing leadership. We're acting now to ensure that our province is set up for economic success. We need newcomers around the world to continue to bring their skills here to the province of Ontario, so we can continue to build a strong economy for future generations of Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'd like to thank the minister for that very excellent answer. The fact is that newcomers from all over the world have been choosing Ontario for generations. There's a reason they choose Ontario. Some have been here for as little as two weeks, and some have been here for as long as two centuries. Regardless of how long they have been here, they have come here for one reason: seeking a better life.

Mr. Speaker, could the minister please tell us how this bill, if passed, will reinforce the cultural and social importance of immigration to Ontario?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Again I'd like to thank the member for the excellent question. I'd also like to thank my predecessor the Minister of Finance; the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport; and the PA to MCI, who is now the Minister of Children and Youth Services, for committing to taking Ontario in a new direction through the immigration strategy.

Today our government is fulfilling a commitment, and I believe that the proposed Ontario Immigration Act is not only the right direction, but it's a new direction that will bring us to where we need to be here in the province of Ontario.

We want immigrants to come here and to continue to build deep roots in our province and build strong families and become great citizens. We want to make sure that Ontario remains the number-one destination for newcomers here in Canada. Our province has welcomed and relied upon immigrants from its earliest beginnings, and it continues to do so today.

While the economic benefit of immigration is important, so is the society we're building. Communities across Ontario are beacons of hope, trust and freedom with strong pillars in place to allow for opportunities for our great province to continue to build itself.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is to the Premier. Amid the secrecy, the destruction of public records and the politically motivated decisions to cancel power plants lies a simple truth: Your gas plant scandal has increased hydro rates, your gas plant scandal has driven business out of the province and your gas plant scandal has killed jobs.

The Premier's role, from signing the cabinet document to her decisions as campaign chair, has finally caught up with her, and the trail of breadcrumbs led the OPP right to the Premier's door.

Even after Privacy Commissioner Ann Cavoukian wrote of the "routine deletion of emails ... to avoid transparency and accountability," the Premier had to be prodded repeatedly just to own up and take responsibility for the crass political decisions and the fallout thereof.

If your government is so transparent, Premier, why did it take an OPP warrant to get some documents from your government?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to be clear that 311,000 pages of documents have been handed over to the committee, so to suggest that somehow I or my colleagues had to be prodded to pass over documents is just not accurate. It just does not reflect the reality.

We have answered every question that has been asked by committee. We opened up the process. We have given documents that have been asked for—all the documents that have been asked for—to the committee. We will continue to do so. We will continue to co-operate in every way possible. But I am not going to comment on a police investigation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Well, here's a message for the Premier: This is no longer a question about how many documents you released. It's a question about how many documents you've deleted.

Premier, if you're open and transparent, it shouldn't take a search warrant to get some answers that Ontarians deserve. The former Premier disgraced his office when staff were instructed to destroy information, all while the current Premier insists on standing in the line of fire, protecting Liberal interests at all costs.

The answers the government gave in the House have not been satisfactory; we've heard that today. The answers the government gave in committee have not been satisfactory. We're at the point where it takes a team of OPP officers with crowbars just to pry these secrets out of your scandal-plagued government.

If you are truly open and transparent, why not let the people of Ontario have a say in your government? Why not air your 10 years of scandal? Let the people of Ontario have a say. Call a want-of-confidence motion and let's get on with the doing the—

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: There is so much that is quite frankly appalling about that member's question, but let me just pick up on one thing he said at the beginning. He had the gall to stand up here and talk about a politically motivated decision? This from the party across the way that had YouTube videos, that sent out flyers, that sent out pamphlets, that had robocalls saying, "The only way to stop the gas plant is to vote Progressive Conservative. Vote for Tim Hudak."

This was a commitment that was made by the Progressive Conservative Party. They cannot hide behind it. Despite their efforts to block that from their memory, the people of Ontario know that every party in this House had the exact same position. It was a promise they made and a promise we kept.

TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Minister of Labour. When Gate Gourmet, a multinational corporation, bought out Cara Foods, a Canadian company, they laid off over 50 permanent employees, people with many years of experience, and replaced them with temporary workers hired through a temporary help agency.

1130

Across Ontario, many workers are facing precarious employment. More and more workers are hired on short-term contracts, with temporary jobs, no job security and no access to benefits, and the growth of temporary job agencies is playing a major role in this change.

Can the minister explain why this government is allowing multinational corporations to exploit Ontario workers and eliminate good-paying, permanent jobs?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member opposite for bringing that question forward. I stand here very proudly to say that we were the first government in all of Canada to bring in a specific piece of legislation, in 2009, regulating temporary help agencies in this province. We have shown leadership on this important issue, making sure that vulnerable workers are not taken advantage of, making sure that they are not subjected to having to pay recruitment fees, making sure that they are not paying fees to just write CVs or resumé's, making sure that they get paid the wages they so deserve.

I want to thank the member from Brampton West, from our caucus, who worked very hard on this issue. In fact, he brought a private member's bill in 2006 and it was his leadership that resulted in the 2009—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Sorry to burst the minister's bubble, but vulnerable workers are being exploited in this province, and that legislation is not protecting those workers. The Liberal government's Bill 146, which would amend the Employment Standards Act, does not itself go far enough; in fact, this bill does nothing to protect permanent jobs, nor does it prevent the exploitation of salaries for temporary workers.

More and more companies are getting rid of permanent workers and using temporary help agencies to hire contract employees. These employees are ineligible for pensions, for benefits, for raises, for job security—all of this just to save a buck.

Will the minister commit to serious legislative changes that protect permanent, full-time jobs in Ontario, to make sure that Ontarians are protected from being exploited by multinational corporations and temporary help agencies determined to drive down wages in Ontario?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I'm glad the member talked about Bill 146, because we're taking a very significant step through Bill 146 in protecting vulnerable workers by making sure that precarious workers have the protection. If workers work hard, they should get paid for their wages, and that's why extending joint and several liability to work agencies and where people work is extremely important.

I find it ironic that the member opposite talks about vulnerable workers, but he has been quiet when it comes to minimum wage. Where does he stand on making sure that we raise the minimum wage to \$11 an hour and we index it to the cost of living? His party and he, himself, have been very quiet. When it comes to protecting vulnerable workers, the people of Ontario want to know, where does the NDP stand on the issue of minimum wage, and do they support indexing it to the cost of living?

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Though people are relieved to know that Ontario's network of social services is there to help them when they need it, the large majority of people who receive social services benefits want to earn their own money and to live an independent life without needing social assistance.

But getting off social assistance can often be risky as well. People worry that if they do what they feel is the right thing and succeed in getting a job, whether full-time or part-time, they might find their benefits cut off or sharply curtailed before they are in a position to earn a full-time, sustainable wage. This is stressful for people who want to get back in the workforce but still need some time to transition to full-time or part-time employment while receiving social assistance.

Minister, what are the rules for social assistance recipients who may have a full-time or a part-time job?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want to thank the member for the question. The answer, of course, is that, yes, we do encourage those on Ontario Works to work. In fact, that's an incredibly important part of the program. It's essential that people be offered as seamless a way into work—and hopefully full-time work—as possible, and that's our government's commitment.

In our 2013 budget, we presented a number of ways to reduce barriers to employment. We're allowing social

assistance clients to earn, as members of this assembly will know, up to \$200 without touching the benefits that they receive, and this, of course, has had the impact, at least in 57,000 instances, of enabling them to get their foot in the employment door and get the experience they need to move forward to fuller employment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: The minister has explained what the rules are for men and women who receive social assistance and are trying to get back to an independent life while they receive social assistance. What we often hear in our constituency offices when people come in trying to abide by the letter and the spirit of the rules are their stories of people who set out to game the system. It bothers them because they know how Ontario's social assistance fabric has helped them through a tough time, and they don't like to see taxpayers' funds being misused through social assistance fraud.

Minister, what should people do when they suspect social assistance fraud? Who should they call? Is there a toll-free number? And what has our government done in the last 10 years to prosecute those who think they can cheat the province and steal social assistance funds?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Thanks again for the question. Fraud is not a good thing. Fraud is a criminal offence. Those who commit fraud ought to be reported. In the 2,900 cases of suspected fraud that have been reported to our ministry, we've referred them to the police, which is the proper thing to do. If anybody is aware of any social assistance fraud, it ought to be reported to the police, simply put.

You asked about a 1-800 number. I just happen to have one with me. I carry it everywhere in case somebody says they suspect fraud. It's 1-800-394-7867. I'll repeat that number: It's 1-800-394-7867. If there's sufficient evidence of fraud occurring, please do your duty as a citizen and report it.

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, in politics, usually it's good to be popular, but I want to give you a tip: The municipal leaders who are lining up to meet with you at next week's ROMA/Good Roads conference aren't there to give you a pat on the back. They're there to put you on the hot seat, demanding answers to the chaos that's been created by your mismanagement of the OPP billing review process. Whether they stand to benefit or whether they have their costs skyrocket, you've left municipalities in the dark by refusing to tell them how and when you will fully implement the new costing formula.

So spare them the suspense by answering this: With all the OPP-policed municipalities feel the full impact of the new billing formula next year?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm very pleased that the member from Brockville gave me the opportunity to talk about the OPP police costs. What I'm told constantly is

that the current model lacks transparency. It's difficult to read and understand, and it does not bill municipalities fairly.

For example, some municipalities are paying \$9 per household and some are paying \$900. You know who put that very billing method in place? The party opposite. It's them. And it's not only our opinion but the Auditor General's. Yes, I'll repeat: The Auditor General is telling us also that it's not fair and it's not transparent and we need to do something about it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Steve Clark: Based on that answer, I don't want to be the minister next week at ROMA/Good Roads. You foolishly released the costing formula, but you remain silent on how it's going to be implemented. It's like giving directions with a start and a finish line and nothing else. The end result is that you spin around and around and around, which really is what this government has done for the last 11 years.

Minister, municipalities have done the math. Some are counting on major savings, while others are dreading the prospect of passing on huge cost increases to ratepayers. You're either refusing to say whether it's coming in all at once or being phased in because you don't know or because you've got another surprise up your sleeve with your cost-of-policing plan. So which is it, Minister? Are you going to come clean before ROMA or not?

1140

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Do I love that question? You know, this process was not transparent. We had a team of municipal councillors and municipal administrators around the table to develop this model. And then the OPP went around the province. They invited all the municipalities to come to the table to explain to them what is the proposed model. It's not going to be the model; it's the proposed model. Two hundred and twenty-nine municipalities showed up; 70% showed up. We are currently reviewing the feedback from the consultation and we are working with the municipalities to look into—if we need to adjust the model, we will. We are open, but we're not like your government, who did download to municipalities when you were in power. So we're doing the best.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. All right. New question. The member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question this morning is for the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. Good morning, Minister. As I brought to your attention in this House last year, one of the companies under government contract to build the Herb Gray Parkway in Windsor has stopped paying its local suppliers. This European company has left small Ontario business owners on the hook

for hundreds of thousands of dollars. What steps has the government taken to insist that our local suppliers are paid, that they're paid in full and that they will be paid in a timely fashion?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I sadly cannot comment on the specifics of this, given that there is a lawsuit under way, Mr. Speaker, right now. This is a commercial conflict between companies, first off. What can we do? The member for Vaughan has a bill before this House called Bill 69, which is prompt payment legislation. What we could do about this is, our party and your party could actually work together on something progressive for a change, which would be refreshing, and we could actually get Bill 69 passed so we could avoid these problems in the future, because I think this is an unfair situation and we need legislative authority to do it. I am continuing to use my authority as minister to ensure people comply with the law, but we need legislation to get prompt payment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: What's done is done in the past. The legislation will help people in the future; it's not doing anything for these people now. This is a government contract, Minister. We're talking about small Ontario business people, people that have employees. They have banks calling them. They can't afford to keep going on month after month without money coming in. The girder problem on the Herb Gray Parkway demonstrated the lack of government oversight. Will the minister take responsibility today and ensure that these local suppliers will be paid in a timely fashion?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I think I answered that question, Mr. Speaker. It's amazing to me, the anti-transit, anti-transportation, anti-infrastructure response from the third party. This is a \$1.4-billion parkway: no support from the opposition parties and historically no action. Windsor suffered under that party and under the party opposite, because it didn't get that transportation infrastructure.

We are so confident and so driven to ensure the building of the Windsor economy, we built this, and we now have finally won the battle with the United States to get the presidential bridge built, which will be about a \$2-billion investment.

We are now spending 2% of GDP on infrastructure. When that party was in power, it was a quarter of 1% of GDP, and they didn't build anything. We don't need to go back to those days—

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

ARCHIVES OF ONTARIO

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. Speaker, 2014 marks the 100th anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War. This war was a monumental human catastrophe in which Canada, as a dominion of the British Empire, contributed 628,000 soldiers, sailors and aircrew, as well as supplies

and material. At the war's end, November 11, 1918, Mr. Speaker, 66,573 Canadians had been killed and another 138,166 were wounded.

As tragic as it was, the First World War played a major part in Canada's development as an independent nation.

I understand that the Archives of Ontario is presenting three exhibits—online, travelling and on-site—that tell stories of love, duty, heroism and sacrifice during that devastating and yet inspirational time. Could you give me and my constituents more information on this online exhibit?

Hon. John Milloy: I thank the member for the question. I encourage all members and all Ontarians to visit the Archives of Ontario website to see the excellent exhibit that the member referenced, commemorating 100 years since the start of World War I. It's called Dear Sadie. It's an Archives of Ontario online exhibit that was launched Friday, February 14, and it features fascinating letters between soldier Harry Mason and Sadie Arbuckle of Toronto during the war. The letters, accompanied by photos, posters and maps, give a look at the chaos on the battlefield and the concern on the home front.

Harry, who lived briefly in the Toronto area as a teen before moving to Alberta, eagerly enlisted in the Canadian army shortly after the war broke out. Harry served as a front-line soldier in the Flanders trenches before he volunteered to fly with the Royal Flying Corps as an observer and gunner. Harry's letters to Sadie show how over the course of the war his enthusiasm about it changed to bewilderment. Harry was unfortunately killed in action on April 28, 1917, six days after he wrote his last letter to Sadie.

In addition to the online exhibition, cultural and heritage organizations across the province will be able to host the travelling exhibit starting in the summer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Speaker. Through you to the minister again, I have read about this online exhibit. It sounds fascinating. I know the Archives of Ontario has been the premier source of information about the history of the province and its people since 1903.

I also have a classmate from Cumberland whose father fought in the war in the Vimy Ridge campaign. She has written a book on this. I'm interested in going to the archives and seeing if her book is there about her father. He became the clerk of the township of Cumberland for 20 years.

The records held by the archives are true and lasting testaments of the activities, beliefs and principles of those who came before us. It helps provide transparency of government and accountability to its citizens.

Minister, can you provide the constituents of Ottawa-Orléans, and all Ontarians, some information about the services provided by the archives and what they can expect when visiting this excellent Ontario service online or in person?

Hon. John Milloy: I encourage everyone to take advantage of the services at the archives, which, of course,

physically is at York University Keele campus but has a very robust website that they can access as well.

In terms of the physical location, it houses both public and private records. I'll give you some facts: 105,000 metres of textual records; 4.4 million photographs; 350,000 architectural drawings and maps; more than 2,600 artworks; over 30,000 hours of audio, video and film records; and 1,500 gigabytes of electronic records.

In terms of online initiatives such as the Dear Sadie exhibit, the Archives of Ontario has taken many steps to link citizens with its services through its website, including online access to electronic records, a database to archives, library and art collections, digitized collections, 39 online exhibits, and online educational lessons which are geared to Ontario's curriculum.

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POWER PLANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, detectives from the OPP's anti-rackets unit executed a search warrant at the facility where the gas plant emails were archived. The privacy commissioner has already determined that you broke your own law when your party systematically deleted those records.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Come out with your hands up.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Auditor General has also confirmed—

Interjections.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I made reference to this earlier, and I will be very forceful and not impressed if it continues.

Finish your question, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Auditor General has also confirmed that your actions will cost the Ontario taxpayer \$1.1 billion. The costs will have to be paid through even higher hydro rates than we're paying already, for decades to come. It's just another way that you've damaged our economic competitiveness, and 600,000 unemployed Ontarians are paying the price for your incompetence.

Premier, it is time to come clean. Enough of the obstruction. Will you finally take responsibility, call our confidence motion and let the people decide?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have so clearly taken responsibility and answered every question and opened up this process, Mr. Speaker, over and over and over again, in this House and at committee. I have said today I am not going to comment on an investigation that's ongoing. The police investigation has to be independent. I am not going to comment.

What I am going to do is I'm going to read what the privacy commissioner has said over the past months about what we have done.

She said on August 21, 2013: "She has been fully co-operative with me and my office. In fairness to Premier Wynne, she said, 'You have my full co-operation, whatever you want from us.'" That was August 21, 2013.

July 26, 2013: "I think on a go-forward basis, the government really is looking to change things ... the government is dedicated to opening up access to government data." That's July 26, 2013.

June 25, 2013: "This government, with respect to my investigation and the work that we have done with the government, has been very forthcoming...."

June 25, 2013: "... [A]ny co-operation we needed was there."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Premier, the justice committee has spent a lot of time investigating your gas plant scandal. We've seen redacted documents, systematic email destruction, and unco-operative and obstructionist Liberal witnesses following one after another after another.

What has become clear is that at all levels of your Liberal Party, there's a belief that no one should be held accountable for this outrageous waste of taxpayers' money. It is also becoming increasingly apparent that the NDP have no interest in holding the guilty parties responsible either.

Well, the OPP doesn't need their co-operation and they don't need yours. They have search warrants and the threat of criminal prosecution to finally get to the truth.

Why don't you come clean about what you know and finally allow for the guilty parties to be held accountable for their actions? Call the confidence motion today.

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There are two more quotes that I want to read, but I want to just be clear with the people of Ontario that I have answered every question. I have said exactly what I know. I've said it in this House, and I have said it in the committee.

I want to read two more quotes from the privacy commissioner. She said on June 13, 2013, "I have commended Premier Kathleen Wynne's government's approach to dealing with this issue, referencing the staff training program she instituted and the memo circulated by her chief of staff."

On June 25, 2013: "I'm pleased now to report that the new government has acted proactively to address the recommendations made in my report."

Mr. Speaker, we have acted with integrity. We have opened up the process. We have provided all the information that has been asked for by the committee. We will continue to co-operate, and I will not comment on other investigations.

ACQUIRED BRAIN INJURIES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Acquired brain injury is the leading cause of disability for children in Ontario.

On January 3, 2014, the acquired brain injury clinic at McMaster Children's Hospital saw its last patient. This clinic is the only publicly funded interdisciplinary acquired brain injury centre serving children in central southwestern Ontario. This clinic has been in operation for 18 years and is known for its excellence in care.

Can the minister explain why they've closed their doors?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I certainly will look into this particular situation. I would appreciate any details you might have. I will happily look into this.

What I can tell you, Speaker, is that the member opposite is absolutely right: People with acquired brain injuries need significant help from our health care system, and we are here to serve those people. We've enhanced supports for housing for people with acquired brain injuries—supportive housing. When it comes to medical care, I will look into this particular situation, but I can say that, provincially, people with acquired brain injuries get excellent care in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Miss Monique Taylor: My office learned about this closure when mother Gloria White contacted my office. Her 17-year-old son had been in a bike accident and was referred to the clinic, where he received excellent care. Now that the clinic has closed, there is no specialized interdisciplinary and long-term care available to treat children who are recovering from a traumatic accident. It simply makes no sense to close this clinic.

Is the minister prepared to stand by as children lose access to essential care, or is she prepared to do something about it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as I said, I will look into the thinking behind this particular change of service, but I can tell you that funding to help Ontarians with acquired brain injury has increased from \$38 million in 2003 to \$68 million: an 80% increase. There is more that we need to do for people with acquired brain injuries.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton on a point of order.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I ask all the members of this House to join me in welcoming two students from my riding: Gurpreet Kaur, who's in the gallery, as well as Mehma Kaur. They are here as part of the model Parliament. Please welcome them.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I would like to correct my record. When speaking positively about lowering taxes, the exact

quote from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce should have read, “Lowering corporate income tax has a significant impact on investment.”

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The members can always correct their record, and that’s appropriate.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General on a point of order.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I know that the introduction of guests took place before question period, but I wonder if I could introduce Terri-Lynn Brennan, who’s the program coordinator of heritage, community engagement and education for the city of Kingston, who’s here for museum day. They’re having their annual meeting with us today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome all our guests.

Just as a point of information, I spoke to the member from Simcoe North. Sylvia Jones is from his riding.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Jennifer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Jennifer Jones; sorry.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I also curl—just not as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Not as well, but you also curl. That was just one more plug for the wonderful gold.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1158 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I would like to introduce Nicholas Waltenbury and Anthony Caliciuri, two young North Bayites who are here as mock parliamentarians.

Mr. Rod Jackson: I’d like to take an opportunity to welcome my mother- and father-in-law, Jim and Sue Keegan, who are present here today—actually not quite here yet but are in the building. They’re here to see their granddaughter and my daughter, page Abbey, today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That’s wonderful.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

EVENTS IN UKRAINE

Mr. Todd Smith: I’d like to echo the sentiments of the member from Whitby–Oshawa, our deputy leader this morning, in her speech before question period.

Without our Ukrainian-Canadian community, the culture of this country would be sadly different.

As nearly every television in this building is tuned to Team Canada versus Team USA at this hour and to women’s hockey yesterday—they were tuned to Team Canada in their quest for gold at the Olympics in

Russia—you couldn’t help but be reminded of the 1987 Canada Cup team, two fixtures of which were Wayne Gretzky and Dale Hawerchuk, both Ukrainian Canadians.

Contributions of Ukrainian Canadians have added to the rich tapestry here in this country and this province in sports, arts, politics, academia and business. It means that we must stand with them now as they seek a new, free and brighter future for their own country. There must be an end to the violence. There must be a future for Ukraine that’s not dictated by edicts from Moscow. Most importantly, there must be peace on the streets.

Mr. Speaker, it’s my great honour to stand as the PC critic for citizenship and immigration and state that we believe in a free and independent future for the people of Ukraine.

These protesters, these residents of the Ukraine fighting for a free and democratic country, need to know that Canadians from coast to coast are standing with them.

Today, in a symbolic gesture, members of this Ontario Legislature voted unanimously to lower the Canadian flag as Ukraine marks a day of mourning. Today, we stand in mourning for those who lost their lives in this struggle for the future of Ukraine.

Last night, in spite of calls for an end to the violence and a so-called truce, we saw more bodies on the streets in Kiev. Their loss and what they died fighting for cannot be forgotten.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Over the winter break, I was privileged to meet with people living across the north-west to hear about the issues that matter to them. Overwhelmingly, two issues stood out: the dangerous state of our highways and the ever-escalating price of our hydro bills.

Before the Legislature rose in December, the Minister of Energy released this government’s latest long-term energy plan for the province, where it was revealed that the average family’s hydro bills will be raised by 42% over the next five years.

As if that wasn’t bad enough, the minister’s unsympathetic response that high hydro bills are “just a fact of life” is driving people to the edge, as are his claims that economic factors, such as inflation, are to blame. Certainly a 33% increase in our hydro bills over the next three years proves that it isn’t just inflation alone.

Finally, his claim that this government is “taking very significant steps to allow people to better control their consumption and other factors that have impact on their rates” just isn’t cutting it either, because it was recently revealed that, since 2007, this government has increased off-peak rates by 140% while increasing peak rates by 48%, thereby drastically diminishing the gap and therefore consumers’ ability to achieve savings.

This government has made it so that it is literally impossible to receive an affordable bill for this essential service. The reality is, the reason for our skyrocketing hydro rates falls squarely at the feet of this Liberal government and their mismanagement of this file.

I'm calling on the Minister of Energy to show some respect for the hard-working people of this province by reining in these out-of-control rates and making hydro bills affordable.

LOCAL FOOD FUND

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise today and let the House know that recently our Premier visited FoodShare to announce the launch of the new Local Food Fund. That's Ontario's \$30-million investment that creates jobs and supports innovative local food projects. It's going to take place over the next three years. It's part of a much broader local food strategy to increase awareness and demand for foods that are grown and made right here in Ontario.

Chef Scott Bailey of the Compass Restaurant in Oakville cultivates his own vegetables, spices and herbs right at the waterfront location. He spends his mornings at the Toronto food terminal. He sources quality ingredients that are as fresh and as local as he can possibly buy. Scott's philosophy involves trying to shorten the gap between consumers and producers, and he has introduced this practice at the upscale Oakville restaurant where he is head chef. He was recently voted one of the Top 30 Under 30, which is a very prestigious hospitality achievement award.

Chef Scott is a very passionate believer in local and sustainable food practices. You can sample his cuisine any day of the week at the Compass Restaurant, located right in my neighbourhood in Bronte Harbour.

Supporting local food is part of the Ontario government's plan to grow the economy, create jobs and help people with their everyday lives. I'd like to thank the Compass Restaurant for what they are doing to make sure we do eat food that is grown right here in Ontario.

YOUTH SERVICES

Mr. Rod Jackson: I would like to take a quick moment to acknowledge my mother- and father-in-law, Sue and Jim Keegan, again. They're here to visit.

I also want to talk about Bill 88. This government has continually called itself, along with the Premier, a social justice government. And yet Ontario is one of the only jurisdictions in the developed world that does not offer the full extent of its child welfare services to youth who enter the welfare system for the first time at 16 and 17 years old. Instead, these youth are processed like adults and are often directed to homeless shelters and Ontario Works.

This policy is a direct violation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. It leaves vulnerable youth behind at a time when they need our help the most.

It's time we did better. This is why I introduced Bill 88, known as the "youth right to care" bill. This bill will ensure that all Ontario youth in need can voluntarily

access age-appropriate services and will give the youth the best chance for success later in life.

All that's left to correct this injustice is for the Premier and her party to call it for third reading. I urge my friends across the way to do what they say they do best: Be the government and the Premier of social justice. Please call it to third reading. Please make all the corrections we need to do to make sure that 16- and 17-year-olds don't fall through the cracks but have an opportunity to succeed like everyone in this room.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I, too, welcome your parents. Glad you're here. Behave.

FAMILY DAY

JOUR DE LA FAMILLE

Mr. Phil McNeely: This past Monday, February 17, was Family Day, celebrated by families throughout the province of Ontario. First celebrated in 2008, Family Day is becoming a very important day. It gives families across Ontario a chance to take a break from their busy schedules and spend some quality time together.

I would like to highlight two events that took place in my riding of Ottawa–Orléans on Monday for Family Day. My constituency staff and I hosted a Family Day pancake breakfast at Community Pentecostal Church on St. Joseph Boulevard. We were joined by the mayor of Ottawa, Jim Watson, as well as 150 community members. This event also featured a magician, Ian Quick, who performed magic tricks for families. I would like to extend my congratulations to Brianna Lapointe, who won the magic kit draw. The kids really enjoyed the day.

L'association communautaire de Portobello sud a aussi organisé des activités pour la journée de la famille et j'étais fier d'y participer. Les activités ont inclus des promenades en traineau tiré par des chevaux, des jeux hivernaux et du chocolat chaud. Plusieurs ont profité du beau temps pour patiner, jouer au hockey et faire de la raquette.

Les deux événements dans ma circonscription d'Ottawa–Orléans démontrent l'importance de la journée de la famille pour les Ontariens et Ontariennes. Je tiens à remercier tous ceux qui ont fait de cette journée un succès, et j'anticipe que la journée de la famille va continuer à être une journée importante pour les résidents d'Ottawa–Orléans et pour toute la province.

GROVES MEMORIAL COMMUNITY HOSPITAL

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm privileged today to be able to rise in this House as the voice of the people who live in Wellington–Halton Hills, and I want to update the House about the progress being made at one of Ontario's leading success stories in health care, that being the Groves Memorial Community Hospital in the township of Centre Wellington.

Throughout my tenure here as an MPP, through more than 23 years and two complete redistributions of the

provincial ridings in Ontario, I've always been honoured to represent the communities of Centre Wellington. Fifty years ago, I was born at Groves, and our three sons were born there, too, in the 1990s. My family is grateful for the outstanding care we have received at Groves, but we are not alone in this sentiment. I always advocated for Groves, and our entire community is very grateful for Groves.

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Recently, we were pleased to learn that Groves Memorial Community Hospital has officially received approval from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to complete stage 2 of the capital planning process for a new Groves hospital. This allows us to continue to move forward with planning for the new hospital that we need.

Just a few days ago, we received more good news. The ministry has promised Groves up to \$84,200 in one-time funding for the 2012-13 funding year to support the hospital on-call coverage program levels I, II and III.

I want to congratulate everyone involved with Groves—staff, volunteers, board members, foundation representatives, our local elected councils—everyone who plays a part in carrying on the mission that Dr. Abraham Groves left us to embrace: to be a leader in the provision of excellent, compassionate rural health care.

BLAGOJA RISTIC

Ms. Dipika Damerla: He taught me how to speak a few words in Serbian, words like “dobar dan.” I can still picture him patiently coaching me to say it just so. The “he,” Speaker, is Blagoja Ristic, producer of Serbian Television Toronto as well as Serbian Mosaic, who passed away suddenly on February 9.

Blagoja, affectionately called “Bob,” was born in 1950 in Skopje, the Republic of Macedonia. Bob immigrated to Canada with his wife in 1990 and then began to build his life anew, learning to speak English and French and graduating from George Brown College, in Toronto, in graphic design.

But his true passion was photography. Every time I saw him, it was with a camera in his hand, filming something for his beloved Serbian TV show on Omni TV and Rogers. In fact, I'm not sure if I ever saw Bob without a camera.

Bob leaves behind two children, Victor and Mia, both students, who helped their father in the studio to produce the shows. Bob was always trying to better his community. One of his pet projects was to create a cultural centre for the Serbian community, and he came to me for support.

At a personal level, I was always grateful for the wonderful way in which he helped me get to know the Serbian community. He did not have to. I reached out to him, and he generously took me under his wing and never asked for anything in return. I began by saying Bob taught me how to say “dobar dan,” but he actually taught me something much more: the simple gift of being generous.

Thank you, Bob. You will be missed.

MODEL PARLIAMENT

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased that the young students are here today for the statement on the model Parliament that they're experiencing over a three-day period. On behalf of the opposition leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus, I want to welcome the students to the 2014 model Parliament.

I'm pleased that Megan Storey, a former co-op student at my constituency office, is among 107 young Ontarians who are trying out their career as MPPs and cabinet ministers. That was yesterday, today and tomorrow.

These students are from grade 9 to 12 and are chosen for their leadership, maturity, involvement in community, school activities and interest in government. They demonstrate strong interpersonal skills and get along with their peers and adults.

They will learn about the history of the Legislature and the democratic process through tours, workshops and presentations. Tomorrow, with their families and friends watching from the gallery, they will be taking their seats in this very chamber for a simulated session of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

Yesterday, along with other MPPs, I had the opportunity to work in small group discussions with the students in a process called speed dating.

I'm not sure this House can call itself a model Parliament. The Speaker has warned us of that occasionally today, myself included. But I am confident that we can learn a lot from this new generation of future leaders of Ontario. I'm equally confident that they will learn from us and from the entire team at the Ontario Legislature.

Welcome to Queen's Park; welcome to our home. It's all our home. Best wishes for all of your futures.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I—another statement? It can't be done. Was it a statement?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Yes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You've made one. You were assigned another one to your party. You did not take it, regretfully.

I want to thank all members for their statements.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE REPORT

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I believe you'll find we have 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 seeks unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Agreed? Agreed.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move that, notwithstanding the order of the House dated October 3, 2013, the Select Committee on Developmental Services shall present its interim report no later than March 6, 2014.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree to the motion? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Mr. Speaker, I move that, following passage of second reading of An Act to proclaim Major William Halton Day in Ontario in the House this afternoon, private member's bill Bill 142 be immediately referred for third reading and speedy passage into law so that the people of Halton region may soon begin formal preparations to celebrate the 200th anniversary of their founding father, Major William Halton.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we do that, we have one step that we have to do, and that is to seek unanimous consent to put the motion forward. That's the process.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I kind of skipped that one.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Yes. Could we seek unanimous consent, please?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I seek unanimous consent, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member seeks unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree? I heard a no.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

AGGREGATE EXTRACTION

Hon. David Oraziotti: In March 2012, the Ontario Legislature passed a motion calling on the Standing Committee on General Government to review the Aggregate Resources Act. It asked the standing committee to report to the House its observations and recommendations on how to strengthen the act.

As you may recall, the standing committee tabled its report in the Legislature this past October. The committee made 38 recommendations regarding various aspects of aggregate resource management in Ontario. Over the past few months, our ministry has reviewed the report and these recommendations. We have done this in collaboration with our colleagues in the Ministries of Transportation, Agriculture and Food, Rural Affairs, Environment, Municipal Affairs and Housing, Northern Development and Mines, Infrastructure, Finance, Aboriginal Affairs, Tourism, Culture and Sport, and Economic Development and Trade.

Today I am pleased to inform you that we have released the Ontario government's comprehensive response to the standing committee's report and recommendations.

Speaker, I'd like to start by acknowledging the excellent work of the committee, which included representatives from all three political parties. Extensive effort was made by the committee to create a comprehensive review of the current act, with recommendations on how our

government could strengthen and improve the act moving forward. It assures Ontarians that we, as a government, share the same commitment toward the wise management of these essential aggregate resources.

I would also like to recognize the significant contributions made by municipalities, environmental organizations, industry groups, aboriginal communities and the public, through their participation in the committee's hearings and by providing written submissions to help the committee understand this very complex issue.

Our government is now proceeding with the development of policy and regulatory changes that are consistent with the recommendations of the committee. Our priority continues to be finding a balanced and informed approach for the management of Ontario's pits and quarries. Over the coming months, our ministry will be conducting stakeholder and public consultations on the committee's recommendations. During our discussion, we will consider the following: the approval process and requirements for new pit and quarry applications and amendments to existing approvals; potential impacts to agricultural land and groundwater resources; ways to enhance the rehabilitation of pits and quarries; the creation of incentives and removal of barriers to encourage greater recycling of aggregate materials; and approaches to setting future aggregate fees that are fair and equitable and reflect the importance of aggregate resources to society.

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We'll begin by consulting with key stakeholder and aboriginal communities to support the development of solutions. This will be followed by proposed policy and regulatory changes, for which we will seek broader input from the general public and other interested parties. Through this process, we'll establish a clear understanding of future legislative and regulatory needs for aggregate resource management that will create greater predictability and certainty for Ontarians.

Aggregate resources such as sand, gravel and stone are essential to modern society and vital to Ontario's economy. Aggregates play a critical role in the maintenance and construction of our infrastructure. They're used to build our roads, subways, hospitals, schools and the houses in which we live. The aggregate industry is an important part of our economy. The industry supports thousands of direct and indirect jobs in Ontario. On top of that, the aggregate resource sector supports our province's construction industry. In 2012 alone, 152 million tonnes of aggregate were produced to support demand across the province.

Based on projections, Ontario is expected to grow by almost four million people by 2036. The infrastructure needed for this growth will require a steady, consistent and accessible supply of aggregate resources. Speaker, our government is very conscious of the need to properly manage Ontario's limited aggregate resources, while also protecting other important resources, such as our groundwater, our prime agricultural land and our natural and cultural heritage. Our government believes that this can

be achieved. We believe that we can find a way to provide predictability and consistency to the aggregate industry as well as ensure affordable aggregate is available to continue to help build our province.

We also believe this can be done while ensuring the protection of our environment and agricultural lands and that our water continues to be safe to drink. It is our collective responsibility, and I would encourage all interested Ontarians to participate in our consultation process that will take place later this year. These efforts will contribute to a sustainable industry that supports continued economic prosperity for our province, while protecting our environment and enhancing the quality of life for Ontario families now and in the future.

I want to just take a minute and also thank all of the members of the House that have participated in the many hearings and have been reaching out to various individuals and organizations across the province to bring to bear these important recommendations that have come forward, and we're pleased to respond to the committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Now it's time for responses.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's my honour to respond to the minister's statement regarding the tabling of the ARA, as we came to know it affectionately: the Aggregate Resources Act.

In terms of a bit of history, because I think it's important to talk about how we got to this place, it was actually in 2011, just prior to the general election, that a commitment was made by all three parties to review the Aggregate Resources Act. Then, when the government was formed in September 2011, we had a few stops and starts on the Aggregate Resources Act review; one, of course, was the famous prorogation, where all business of the legislative chamber stopped. We re-formed again after that; again did some further study, did some site tours and again had to take a four-month break because we were not allowed to complete our report. Ultimately, we did get it finished last fall. So from September 2011 until now, we finally have a report and a response which I think all members should be pleased with.

In particular, I want to thank Jerry Richmond. He is the researcher that did a lot of the yeoman's work on preparation and background. I can assure you, committee members had a lot of questions, and he did an excellent job trying to educate all of us, because we all come to this with a different level of knowledge.

In particular, my colleagues Michael Harris from Kitchener-Conestoga, Laurie Scott from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock and myself sat on the committee through the entire process, but there were some members who were not so fortunate. Jerry's work allowed everyone to come up to the same level of knowledge and allowed us to come forward with a consensus report, and I think a consensus report was important.

This is an issue that impacts some ridings and some individual communities in a very direct and immediate way. And for others, it's where their product comes from to pave the roads and to build their buildings.

I was pleased that we were able to come forward with 38 substantive recommendations. I'm pleased to hear the minister is going to continue to do further study, because, quite frankly, some of our recommendations went beyond what would officially be considered our mandate to study the Aggregate Resources Act.

We all came to appreciate very quickly that the removal and processing and extraction of aggregates across Ontario does not simply fall under the purview of the Minister of Natural Resources. We were able to sneak in to encourage some further study that impacts and ensures the municipal affairs and housing minister touches on many of the other ministries that are impacted by this legislation, so I'm pleased to hear that. I hope it doesn't take us four years to get to the next round of negotiations and feedback, because it's important and we need to move forward. There are some things that need to be changed very quickly for us to improve the situation in Ontario and make sure that everybody understands the value of aggregates while also protecting our communities and our homes.

I just want to thank the members of the committee who did have the opportunity to participate, and I hope everybody gets an opportunity to review those 38 recommendations because there's a lot of value in them regardless of whether you have stone, sand and gravel in your community.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's my honour to stand in this place and speak on behalf of the NDP caucus and our leader, Andrea Horwath, and respond to the Minister of Natural Resources on his report on the recommendations on the Aggregate Resources Act from the standing committee.

I would like to begin: Basically, aggregates are literally the cornerstone on which Ontario was built. That's "literally," because stone and gravel and sand—we make concrete; they're the base of our roads. Our society cannot continue without aggregates and I think that's where we should start.

What sparked this review, in our opinion, was the controversy about the Melancthon proposal in Melancthon township to create a big quarry. What that sparked was not a quarrel. It sparked a controversy: What is proper land use? It was basically a land use issue. In response to that, this committee was created to look at the Aggregate Resources Act.

The committee became kind of a legislative version of The Amazing Race because some of the people got to go on the—they did a really good job. Some people got to go on the tours, toured the pits. And then, the government stopped—prorogation—and then after prorogation, we had different teams and different people. The only real constant was the team from the legislative research branch. They really deserve some recognition for this. Jerry Richmond was like the guy at the end: "You've gone to here. You can't go much further the next day." That was his job. He really deserves some credit.

This was a consensus report. That's very important. All the parties agreed. I can say there were areas where

some of us wanted to go further, but we felt it was better to agree and give a report that the minister and the ministry and the government can act on. I think that was very important.

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The 38 recommendations, in our opinion, make a lot of sense. They focus on the approval process, so people on both sides, people who want approvals and people who are worried about how the approvals are given—so that can be solidified. At the end of the day, it's still about land use, about protecting agricultural land, protecting ground water, and we need aggregate.

This report—it was a good thing, and I'd like to thank the member from the PC Party. She focused on recycling aggregates. That's a very important part of this report. I'm happy she focused on that.

One thing: It was my interesting moment at this committee when we discovered that the majority of northern Ontario isn't covered by the Aggregate Resources Act. On that point, I'd like to say, because we do have the same conflicts in portions of the north that aren't covered—and it's our hope that all the people involved will follow the spirit of the act, because in places where there is not regulation but regulations exist in the province, and for some reasons—but we hope that they follow the spirit of the act.

I was happy to hear that the minister is going to get the ministry to move as quickly as possible on these recommendations. We will support that.

At the end, the report still doesn't touch—it went as far as it could, but there's still the overarching land use piece. It's bigger than just aggregate resources. We all talk about protecting agricultural land. We have to actually look at how we're doing that and if we're doing that, because we're using agricultural land for a lot of things other than agriculture, and it's also a finite resource. We're not in favour of saying, "You can't build anything on agricultural land," but we need to take a long, hard look at that issue, as long and as hard as we looked at the Aggregate Resources Act, because that one is still not solved.

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

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I've missed this opportunity pretty well all week.

"Whereas the government is considering a 10-cents-per-litre increase in the price of gas to fund public transit" in Toronto; "and

"Whereas a 10-cents-per-litre increase in the gas tax places an unaffordable financial burden on many families, especially those on fixed incomes and those living in northern and rural communities" of Ontario and "who have no access to public transit"—unfair; "and

"Whereas the increase in gas tax would cost the average household over \$260 a year; and

"Whereas the government already taxes gas at 14.7 cents per litre, plus the HST taxes which currently cost approximately 15 cents per litre" for the HST alone;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the proposed new 10-cent-per-litre gasoline tax and to find better ways to fund public transit through alternatives such as the reduction of wasteful spending"—like we heard this morning—"and the introduction of an Ontario transportation trust."

I'm pleased to support this on behalf of my constituents and present it to Emon, one of the pages here.

TOBACCO CONTROL

CONTRÔLE DU TABAGISME

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is an absolute pleasure to be presenting this petition called "Flavour Gone." It comes from all over Ontario and was spearheaded by a group of young people from Ottawa. You just have to see their video; it is worth watching. Go on YouTube: "Flavour Gone."

"Whereas flavoured tobacco products are marketed to youth by the tobacco industry; and

"Whereas these flavoured and easy-to-use products serve to attract and addict youth at an early age; and

"Whereas the tobacco industry is constantly adapting and developing new products with the aim of attracting youths; and

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario is the only group that can stop the tobacco industry marketing to youth with addictive products in Ontario;

« Attendu que l'industrie du tabac vise les jeunes avec le tabac aromatisé; et

« Attendu que ces produits aromatisés et faciles à utiliser servent à attirer et créer la dépendance chez les jeunes à un âge précoce; et

« Attendu que l'industrie du tabac s'adapte et développe constamment des nouveaux produits pour attirer les jeunes; et

« Attendu que l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario est le seul groupe qui peut arrêter l'industrie du tabac de viser les jeunes avec des produits qui entraînent une dépendance;

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

"Remove all flavours from all tobacco products and ban new tobacco products from entering Ontario."

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

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact Bill 53, the Children and Youth in Care Day Act, before” May 14, 2014.

I fully support this petition and give it to page Michael.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O’Toole: I have another petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. This one here is rather relevant as well. It’s for improved post-stroke physiotherapy.

“Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64 from receiving any additional one-on-one OHIP-funded physiotherapy; and

“Whereas these post-stroke patients deserve to be rehabilitated to their greatest ability possible to maybe return to work and become provincial income taxpayers again and productive citizens;

“Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment”—that’s not the way it was; “and

“Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students and other Ontarians to wait until age 65 or over to receive more OHIP-funded physiotherapy;

“Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs and/or sell their houses to raise funds” to pay for medically necessary treatment—shameful;

“Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition” the Premier and “the Ontario Legislature

to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of current treatment practices.”

I’m pleased to sign it on behalf of my constituents and present it to page Thomas and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on behalf of my constituents.

TAXATION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I have a petition which reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the cost of living in northwestern Ontario is significantly higher than other regions of the province due to the high cost of necessities such as hydro, home heating fuel, gasoline and auto insurance; and

“Whereas an increase in the price of any of these essential goods will make it even more difficult for people living in northwestern Ontario to pay their bills and put food on the table;

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

“To reject any proposed increase to the harmonized sales tax, gas tax or any other fees or taxes in the northwest; and instead investigate other means such as increasing corporate tax compliance or eliminating corporate tax loopholes in order to fund transit in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.”

I support this, will affix my signature and give it to page Owen to deliver to the table.

FAMILY SAFETY

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly, sent to me by a group of individuals in Brampton, Oakville and Mississauga. I particularly want to thank and recognize Janet Tymoshuk, Maria Ortiz and Carl Williams. It’s entitled “Safer Families Program in Peel Region” and it reads as follows:

“Whereas the Safer Families Program is a successful partnership of Catholic Family Services Peel-Dufferin, Family Services of Peel and the Peel Children’s Aid Society (CAS), receives year-to-year funding from the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, and is a critical component of social services to families within the Peel community; and

“Whereas the intervention model for Safer Families currently operates with no waiting lists, an important consideration for families experiencing domestic violence and child protection concerns, as they require immediate access to service; and

“Whereas the Safer Families Program is aligned with Ontario’s child poverty agenda, is committed to preventing violence against women, and contributes to community capacity building to support child welfare delivery; and

“Whereas currently, Safer Families serves 14% of all domestic violence cases referred to Peel Children’s Aid Society and has the ability to double the number of cases it handles;

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

“That the government of Ontario adjust its funding to supply ongoing core funding rather than year-to-year funding, and realign funding to double the percentage of cases referred by the Peel Children’s Aid Society and served by the Safer Families Program.”

The Safer Families Program is an important priority within Peel region. I support this petition, and I’m pleased to affix my signature and to ask page Jo Jo to carry it for me.

CANCER TREATMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

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

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I wholeheartedly agree, affix my signature and give it to page Jaelyn.

CHILDREN’S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. John Fraser: A petition to the Legislative Assembly:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I’m affixing my signature to the petition and giving it to page Anne.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Frank Klees: This petition speaks to the misplaced priorities of this government and its Minister of Health. It reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

“That the Ontario Parliament call on the Premier and her health minister to extend OHIP funding of the drug

Avastin, so that Kimm Fletcher, and others like her, can have as much time to enjoy with her family as possible; and to tell the Wynne administration that ‘Our health care system includes Kimm Fletcher.’”

I’m pleased to affix my signature to this petition and hand it to Samer to deliver to the table.

BLOOD DONATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario, but mainly the Toronto and Hamilton area. It reads as follows:

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

“Thirty thousand Canadians were infected with HIV and hepatitis C via tainted blood in Canada and it killed thousands of Canadians and destroyed families.

“We spent \$17 million on a publicly funded federal inquiry, namely the Krever inquiry, that revealed blood from a paid donor system was a key factor in Canadians receiving tainted blood.

“Billions were spent on top of the inquiry in compensation to those who received tainted blood and their families in part due to Canada’s reliance on blood from paid donors.

“The Krever inquiry recommended that blood be treated as a public resource and that Canada should not move to a paid blood donor system.

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

“Your petitioners request the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not issue or approve a licence to Canadian Plasma Resources. Further, we request the Legislative Assembly implement legislation that ensures no new paid blood donor clinics be allowed to open in Ontario. It is the responsibility of Canadian Blood Services to oversee blood collection and plasma collection in our country, and our blood plasma is not meant to be a commodity that is bought and sold.”

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

HEALTH STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT (HEALTHY DECISIONS MADE EASY), 2014 LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT DES LOIS RELATIVES À LA SANTÉ (DÉCISIONS SANTÉ SIMPLIFIÉES)

Mme Gélinas moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 149, An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act and the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to

improve the health of Ontarians / *Projet de loi 149, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection et la promotion de la santé et la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée en vue d’améliorer la santé des Ontariens et des Ontariennes.*

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

1350

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you so much, Speaker. It has been a long day in coming. I’m one of the last ones in the lineup. When you guys draw the names in that big hat next time, I hope I float to the top. But the best is yet to come.

I am so pleased today to be talking about Bill 149, Healthy Decisions Made Easy. What Bill 149 is all about is pretty simple. It combines two bills that I’ve been working on since I was elected. I have been here for six and a half years. Those are ideas that I have been pushing forward since then.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I can vouch for that.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes.

For most of you, it will be a repeat. But for some of the people watching on TV, you may be hearing about it for the first time, but some of the ideas you will recognize.

The first part of the bill has to do with menu labelling, so that when you go into a big chain restaurant—when we say “big chain,” that means you have to have at least five outlets in Ontario; you have to sell at least \$5 million worth of food and drinks—you would be covered by the law. When you go into one of those—think McDonald’s: You would see “Big Mac, \$3.99, 450 calories.” From now on, in Ontario, in the big chains, information that is available—because all of those big chains have set menu items with set portions and set recipes that allow them to do this. They all have those cute little brochures that give you all of that information.

I know that every single one of us in here has been to Tim Hortons before—we’re politicians, after all; Tim Hortons is a must. But how many of us have known that there were Tim Hortons nutrition guides? I will read from the nutrition guide, Mr. Speaker. How many of us could tell that a Timbit can be as high as 90 calories? How many of us know that the muffins can be twice the calories of the doughnuts?

If you were to ask Tim Hortons for one of their little brochures, chances are, they would say, “Let me search for it.” Then a very good-hearted young person would start searching through underneath all of the cash registers, make a trip to the back, ask the oldest person in the place, “Have you guys seen one of those?” Then they ask you to come back. But you know I don’t give up, Mr. Speaker. I did go back, and I got my little brochure. Not an easy way to find out that information, was it?

Now you won’t have to do this anymore. You will come, you will see the different coffees, you will see the doughnuts, the sandwiches, the soups, and it will be there for you to see. The way we have it now with—I have Tim Hortons, but I could show you Subway or I could

show you Swiss Chalet; I have them all, if you're interested, for your next meal. The way we have it now, 4% of Ontarians take the time to go through the trouble that I've gone through. For the rest of them, they don't know. If you have it on the menu board, one out of two will use it to make their purchase. It makes a difference. They use that information to make informed choices for themselves and for their family. On average, it will decrease the calorie intake by 75 calories. While 75 calories may not look like a huge deal, if you apply this times the millions of times that Ontarians go, it makes a big difference. It makes a step in the right direction toward the obesity crisis.

The bill will also flag high sodium. If it has a lot of salt—you know sometimes when you go in the restaurant and you see a little pepper telling you that, "This is spicy"? Well, you will now have a flag, and the flag will be telling you if this has high sodium or not. I know that the Minister of Health will be introducing a bill very similar to mine on Monday, and I will talk further about this.

The second part of the bill has to do with flavoured tobacco. I was really happy when, in 2008—I had only been here for a year—my first private member's bill actually became law. It was a beautiful thing. It was with Dave Levac, who is now our Speaker. It was a joint effort, and we were able to ban flavoured cigarillos.

Everybody knows that the reason the tobacco industry has flavoured cigarillos is that they need the next generation of smokers. And how do you get a kid to smoke a cigarette? The first time you put this thing in your mouth, every cell in your body tells you, "Yuck. What am I doing? This tastes pretty bad." It makes you dizzy, it makes you feel like puking—not a good experience. You add flavour to this and all of a sudden your first drag is not that bad at all. It leads to a second and a third, and it doesn't take long for the nicotine to take over. The nicotine will be doing its work of making sure that it calls back to you 30 times a day for the rest of your life. It will make you a life smoker. This is what they're doing with flavour, so we were really glad that we were able to ban flavoured cigarillos.

The ink was not even dry on that bill that the tobacco industry had found a loophole. They continue selling to kids and they continue putting out more flavours like you can't believe. Why? Because it works. Why? Because kids are using them and they know that if they get kids to start smoking, they will become adults who continue to smoke. They will have their next generation of smokers. Nothing good comes of this, so it is time to stop those loopholes.

The bill also looks at new tobacco products. It looks at smokeless tobacco. Why? Well, because this industry is so creative. It is unbelievable the amount of marketing brainpower that goes into this industry to make sure that they keep this next generation of smokers, to make sure that they continue to be able to sell those products that everybody in Ontario, all 13.5 million of us, knows lead to cancer, lead to premature death, lead to a lot of dis-

eases that had better be avoided altogether. How do we do this? We make sure that we don't pick up the habit.

Those two bills have been debated in this House quite a bit. I haven't seen anybody telling me, "Oh, no, no. We would like to continue to make sure that kids are hooked on smoking," or that the obesity epidemic is something that we can ignore.

Will this bill change everything? Of course not. But this bill takes two tiny steps towards health promotion, towards making us healthier, towards keeping us healthy and towards preventing diseases in the long run. It's not going to change the world, but it's going to help us make it a little bit healthier.

I know full well that yesterday, actually, the bill from the Minister of Health, Bill 131, touching on the same issue—flavoured tobacco—was debated. I was not able to attend—I was in committee at the time—but I did read the Hansard from head to toe and I was really, really encouraged about what I heard. I heard the member from Nepean–Carleton, Lisa MacLeod, the member from Oakville, the member from Huron–Bruce, the member from Perth–Wellington, the Minister of the Environment, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—a very good rendition; this member is worth listening to, he's very funny—and then the minister responsible for seniors. They all talked in favour of, basically banning flavoured tobacco products.

So here we have a private member's bill that you have an opportunity to vote for on second reading this afternoon, today, on February 20, 2014. It can happen. The vote can take place. You have a bill that has been put forward by the Minister of Health that is a very good bill, that is also worth supporting. But in a minority situation, sometimes some of the bills really drag on. If you look at what has happened since we have been a minority government, there are more private members' bills that have made their way to the finish line than there are ministerial bills. Some of the bills that we all agreed on took hours, then days, then weeks, then months, then sessions to actually go to second reading. We have a chance to go to second reading.

1400

I have seen Bill 131 that the Minister of Health has brought forward regarding tobacco control; I have not seen the bill that she's tabling on Monday. We will all see it at the same time, but it has to do with menu labelling. It has to do with flagging sodium. I will read it at the same time as everybody else.

I think we're all on the same page. I think we all want that information to become public. If you choose to continue to eat food that is high in calories and sodium, more power to you. This is your life; you live it the way you want. But you will have the information to make informed choices. We're all going in the same direction. We have an opportunity today, through my private member's bill slot, to move it to second reading.

Once it is in committee, I guarantee you, I am open to suggestions, to listening to all. I know that I did not get it 100% right. I know that there will be changes. I'm 100%

open to this. Will it add to the bill? Will it subtract from the bill? I'm fully open. I'm ready to co-operate—co-operate with the minister, co-operate with the good people in the PC Party—just to make it through.

I think we all deserve to know what we're eating as more and more of us eat in restaurants, and I think we all deserve to do that little step to help protect our kids from being the next generation of smokers.

I hope I can count on everybody's support, and I guarantee you that once it reaches committee, I'm open to change.

Ça me fait extrêmement plaisir de vous parler de mon projet de loi cet après-midi. Je sais que les deux projets de loi ont été débattus plusieurs fois et ont l'appui de tous les députés. J'espère pouvoir compter sur votre appui encore cet après-midi et pour le rendre en comité pour y amener des changements qui ont besoin d'être fait.

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

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm certainly very pleased to speak to Bill 149 today, which I will be supporting. It is An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act and the Smoke-Free Ontario Act, and I believe it to be extremely well intentioned.

As a medical doctor and former medical officer of health, I have seen the damage caused by chronic illnesses. I have seen the burden placed on patients and families by diseases like lung cancer and diabetes. What frustrates me is the knowledge that much of the time these deadly diseases can be prevented. There are steps that all of us can take to ensure we stay healthy and help protect ourselves from these types of chronic disease.

We must also ensure our children are protected as well, because we know that healthy kids grow up to be healthy adults.

I believe that as legislators, we have a special part to play. The decisions we can make have a very real and positive impact on people's lives. We can help our kids say no to tobacco, we can help parents make the most nutritious choices for their kids, and we can protect Ontarians from the harmful effects of tobacco smoke. This bill certainly aims to help in this regard.

I am pleased to hear from the member from Nickel Belt that she has acknowledged some of our government's record in this regard, because we certainly have taken aggressive action to protect Ontarians, especially younger Ontarians, from tobacco smoke, and we have worked to prevent them from taking up smoking in the first place. We banned smoking indoors, in workplaces, and in enclosed public spaces. We banned the retail display of tobacco products on so-called power walls. We banned smoking in vehicles when children are present, and we prohibited the sale of flavoured cigarillos.

We have also worked to help kids eat nutritious foods as part of a healthy lifestyle. That's why we launched our Healthy Kids Panel, and we have implemented many of their recommendations.

There are certainly aspects of this bill, Bill 149, that I'm particularly interested in. Not only is the member

proposing that we post the number of calories in a serving; she has ensured that the serving is defined as that which is actually being served to people, because we know that portion size is exceptionally important in regulating the amount of caloric intake that an individual does consume.

She is providing for educational brochures, and she's also raising the question of sodium content, which is certainly very important in terms of public education, when high or very high amounts of sodium are present in foods. Of course, this is very crucial for those who have a tendency for or do have high blood pressure to be very aware of.

Our government has also enhanced breastfeeding supports in Ontario, so that every mum who wants to breastfeed in this province will be able to do so successfully. We have expanded our student nutrition program, providing 200 more breakfast programs to about 30,000 kids in high-priority schools.

But we recognize that there is more that can be done, so I am pleased to see that the legislation before us today shares our government's commitment to protecting our kids and encouraging Ontarians to make healthy choices. As the member for Nickel Belt has acknowledged, the government did propose yesterday that Bill 131, the Youth Smoking Prevention Act, which, along with proposed regulatory amendment, goes in some respects even further than the bill we are currently debating. I was with the member from Nickel Belt in committee yesterday, so I was not present for the debate, but it's extremely heartening to hear the support from across all three parties for this important bill.

Our proposed legislation and regulatory amendments in Bill 131, if passed, would increase fines for those who sell tobacco to kids, making them the highest in Canada. It would prohibit smoking at playgrounds, sport fields and restaurant and bar patios, and, like Bill 149, it would ban the sale of flavoured tobacco products to make smoking less appealing to young people. It would strengthen enforcement powers to test for tobacco use in indoor public places, and prohibit the sale of tobacco on university and college campuses.

We've heard loud and clear from parents that they want the tools to assist them in making the best choices for their kids, so our government launched consultations on menu labelling last fall. It's something many Ontarians do feel very strongly about, and that's why I believe our government's approach is the right one. We're working together with health providers, the restaurant sector and, above all, parents. The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care committed to introduce legislation this winter arising from our consultations, and I know that we all look forward to that proposed legislation being brought before this House.

We all share a common commitment to the health of our children. We all recognize that, as legislators, we are uniquely positioned to help kids and parents to make healthy choices. That's why I call on all members from all three parties to support Bill 131, the Youth Smoking

Prevention Act, as well as our government's forthcoming menu-labelling legislation, and I certainly will be supporting Bill 149.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? The member for Whitby–Oshawa.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to Bill 149, Healthy Decisions Made Easy. Improving the dietary health of Ontarians, as well as preventing youth smoking, are high priorities both for myself and the entire Ontario PC caucus.

We know that tobacco use is the number one cause of preventable death, and that it is associated with several chronic diseases, such as cancer, heart disease and diabetes. We also know that nearly a third of children and youth in Ontario are overweight or obese, conditions that also contribute to chronic conditions later in life.

Preventing tobacco use and promoting healthy lifestyle choices are important for the health of our province, and disease prevention and wellness promotion are especially important in order to lower the impacts and costs to our health care system, so I share these priorities and the motivations behind the member from Nickel Belt's Bill 149, Healthy Decisions Made Easy. However, for reasons which I will shortly discuss, I am unfortunately unable to support this bill, and I truly regret having to say that, because I have the greatest respect for the member from Nickel Belt and the important work she has accomplished during her time here.

As the member from Oak Ridges–Markham mentioned, there are currently two bills before this Legislature which are dealing with the prevention of youth smoking: Bill 131, which is the Youth Smoking Prevention Act, the government bill; and of course, Bill 149.

1410

Although I have some concerns with Bill 131, and I know we're not discussing that here this afternoon, I will be discussing those concerns during my leadoff speech in greater detail, probably next week. I do believe that it will achieve the stated goal of reducing youth smoking in the most comprehensive way. So I was a little bit surprised to hear the comments that were being made by the member from Oak Ridges–Markham with respect to supporting both bills, because they are different.

In my view, Bill 131 is the most comprehensive bill, and that's why I'm supporting it. Not that it in any way denigrates the merits of Bill 149, but I just believe overall it has the most balanced approach. Bill 131 covers all of the elements outlined in Bill 149 but is more specific and also has some additional legislative changes not outlined in Bill 149. Both bills prohibit the sale of flavoured tobacco products and both bills also increase the fines for those who sell flavoured tobacco products to youth. These two changes will go a long way in making smoking less attractive to youth, as well as limiting their access to tobacco products, and again I commend the member from Nickel Belt for drawing the assembly's attention to these two priorities.

Bill 131 covers some additional, important changes that are not outlined in the bill we are debating today.

Bill 131 prohibits the sale of promotional items with tobacco products, as well as prohibits tobacco sales on university and college campuses and other specified provincial government properties, such as hospitals. It also gives more scope to the inspector by expanding the types of places an inspector can enter, such as water pipe cafés, and increasing the fines that they can levy. All of these additional items make this bill a more thorough option in addressing and preventing youth smoking.

The bill that we are debating today also addresses the issue of menu labeling. As we all know, the Minister of Health promised last fall that she was going to be introducing legislation which would deal with menu labelling, and I understand that it may be coming forward next week. I look forward to seeing its contents, and I'm not intending to address in any specific way the menu labelling components of Bill 149 because, unfortunately, I'm not able to support it with respect to the issue of youth smoking. But I certainly await the tabling of the additional legislation by the government in due course. Even though we're not able to support Bill 149 in its present form, I certainly hope that the member will be able to achieve her objectives through the government bill, Bill 131, and perhaps the bill that comes forward on menu labelling in due course. I certainly will give that due care and attention. Again, I thank her very much for her efforts in these important objectives. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'm pleased today to rise to comment on private member's Bill 149, Healthy Decisions Made Easy. I'll be sharing my time with my colleague and seatmate from London West.

Let me begin by saying kudos to the NDP health and long-term care critic, France Gélinas, for taking the step yet again to bring forward a bill that will better help Ontarians make healthier decisions a whole lot easier. I'll split my comments into two, Speaker, just as the bill is structured, first commenting on the requirements of chain restaurants to provide calorie content and other nutritional information on menu items and secondly, a brief comment on the ban of the sale of all flavoured tobacco products by closing loopholes in existing legislation.

We all know that Ontarians can make healthy choices on their own, but there is no harm in having healthy eating information at one's fingertips when people would benefit from having intelligent information, especially when they're hungry and about to order a meal. That's why I support this bill, just like when we go to the grocery store, we have the ability, should we decide to do so, to look at the packaging and learn the nutritional value of some foods. Should we choose, it's pretty simple to look at the calorie count on the package. It can be a motivator to help us make wise decisions about what we consume.

Families, as we all know, are on the go—soccer, work, school; you name it. Understandably, many of us stop for a quick bite to eat. Fast food establishments are every-

where. They're convenient, they're quick and, for the most part, the food that's offered is relatively inexpensive compared to the high-end restaurants with the fancy linens and the crystal glassware.

I'm as guilty as anyone of stopping at Tim Hortons, Harvey's, Swiss Chalet, McDonald's or any of the other places where lineups aren't too long and the food will fill me up. Let's face it, Speaker: I have an expanding waistline as evidence of the food that I eat. I can speak about it; I'm not proud about it.

I know the statistics: 26% of Canadian children are overweight or obese, and three out of every four of our heavy kids will become obese adults just like me.

Kids, if you're watching at home, it's time to start making healthier food choices now.

Speaker, there's a lot of salt, or sodium, as we've already heard today, in our foods today, and that alone accounts for 16,000 premature deaths each and every year in this country. Obesity costs Ontario's health care system more than \$1.5 billion a year. Yet, though we know these things, most of us are probably as guilty as me of craving an ice cream cone or something else from time to time.

I would hope we all become aware of what we're doing here.

I know the member from Oak Ridges–Markham can appreciate this: My local health unit in Windsor-Essex county—the health unit, by the way, with the lowest provincial funding in all of Ontario, and that's something we hope one day to change—has been waiting for months now on a request for special funding to tackle the obesity problem in our area, which is more of a problem in our area than in most other parts of the province. Our health unit, under Dr. Gary Kirk, has a wonderful plan to turn an experimental program directed at our youth as much as anyone else—if it showed the results we're hoping for, it could be used as a template for other health units in Ontario.

So we, in Canada south, recognize that obesity is an issue, and we know the complexity of how certain food products play a major role in this public health problem.

If I can just turn my attention to the other part of this, Speaker, the part about the flavoured tobacco: It's more popular than ever, these days, with high school teenagers. It's a fad that seems to have caught on. Kids think they're cool when they use it. It's really alarming how popular it may be. It's kind of scary, actually.

I've seen the packaging for these products, as I'm sure many of us have. It's designed in such a way to appeal to young people. It's flashy and full of colours. They have flavours like watermelon, cherry, vanilla, strawberry and grape. The tobacco marketers are chasing the Mouseketeers in an obvious attempt to get them addicted to the drug, tobacco. Tobacco should not come in candy flavours.

We know there are serious adverse effects to this. We know the pressure it puts on our health care system and the cost of treating people who have been addicted to tobacco.

The last thing we want to do is develop a new generation of tobacco smokers, enthusiasts and addicts. Well, perhaps I should correct that statement. The last thing anyone but the tobacco companies wants to do is develop a new generation of smokers or tobacco enthusiasts or addicts.

Our children, our youth, are important to us. We need to take every step we can to protect them, and, at times, yes, protect them from themselves. I think they'll thank us for that later.

I certainly believe tobacco is bad for you. It's bad for me, if I'm standing near you when you're smoking.

Both the addition of calorie counts on menus and the ban on flavoured tobacco—Ontario should be taking the high road, demonstrating that we in this House take our health very seriously, and what easier way to start than with this bill, the Healthy Decisions Made Easy act?

Thank you to France Gélinas, the member from the riding of Nickel Belt, for being the long-term champion of this very important piece of legislation.

1420

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

Hon. Mario Sergio: I only have a couple of minutes to speak on this bill, and I want to tell the House that I'm in support of the present bill—

Interjections.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Yes, absolutely. As well, Bill 131, I believe, has been introduced as doing more or less the same thing.

But this takes me back a few years—last century, if I may say. Back in the olden days, at North York city council, we were debating for the first time prohibiting smoking in doughnut shops. At the time, I think the sky was falling, with the opposition to what we wanted to do. Doughnut shops today are still open, and they are thriving. People got used to it—better off, of course—and no one ever complained since.

This shows that we were on the right track at the time. I think we are on the right track today, supporting the legislation that is being proposed. I would urge the members of the House to go on with it and try and pass it as quickly as possible. I think we owe it to the families and to the young people. As legislators, I think we should do our part in trying to curtail young people taking up smoking.

Let's face it, Speaker: If someone wants to smoke, they're going to smoke. If somebody wants to stop smoking, they will find a way of stopping. I have to say that I stopped smoking some 40 years ago when my wife said, "You know, I really don't like the smell," and I said, "I don't like it either, so I'm going to stop it." That was cold turkey, and I did it. I know that it's not easy to do, but it's all up here, and if we want to do it, we can do it.

But as legislators, we have to do more. It's no longer a single personal matter; it's an issue that involves everybody, all our young kids. I think anything we can do to curtail that is necessary and it's important, especial-

ly in this day and age, when we are doing so much and talking so much and spending so much on health care. What else is better than to try and prevent our young people getting sick, getting addicted and then suffering the various consequences, which, in turn, we will have to suffer all the consequences of—not only the young people but family members and government as well? It costs everybody money.

I know we have a couple of minutes, but my colleague here wants to say a couple of things on this important bill. I have to say that I think it's so important that every member of the House should have an opportunity to say yes or no, willing or not. I do hope that, indeed, they will see the importance of addressing the issue in a very positive way.

I want to compliment the member for bringing it to the House today and all the others who will participate in speaking positively in supporting the bill.

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

Mrs. Jane McKenna: That's wonderful, to the minister of seniors affairs, about quitting smoking. I know my husband can take some of that, and my son, very sadly, smokes as well, which is heartbreaking to me as a mother.

Nevertheless, I rise this afternoon to join the debate around Bill 149, the Health Statute Law Amendment Act. I should say at the outset that I am always very pleased to speak to legislation of the member from Nickel Belt. I have had the honour of serving alongside her as a member of the Standing Committee on Social Policy and can attest, as I think we all can, that she is a member who is very well-spoken and someone unafraid of staking out a position based on her principles. That is obvious in Bill 149.

Bill 149 is a bit of a hybrid bill, covering some of the territory we were discussing yesterday morning in the government's Bill 131, the Youth Smoking Prevention Act, which aims to prohibit the sale of flavoured tobacco, promotional tobacco items and allows for inspection of water pipe facilities, as well as higher penalties. The member from Nickel Belt previously tabled Bill 130, the Smoke-Free Ontario Amendment Act, which similarly would prohibit the sale of flavoured tobacco products, the sale of flavoured tobacco and smokeless tobacco products. Bill 130 has been bundled into Bill 149.

Bill 149 also turns its attention to food services. If passed, it will require everyone who owns or operates a food service premise that is part of a chain of food service premises with a minimum of five Ontario locations and gross revenue of \$5 million to take certain measures. These include displaying the caloric content of quick-serve food and drink items; flagging high and very high sodium content of the same items; and offering nutritional brochures.

It should be clear to us all that there are enormous risks that go hand in hand with smoking. Those risks, of course, are not just limited to ourselves—but also those around us, whether as the result of second-hand smoke or

the behavioural example that we set when we choose to engage in certain behaviour.

School kids may smoke because their friends smoke. Children may take up smoking because a lot of their family smokes.

This is an area that has seen no end of studies over the last 50 to 60 years, Speaker, and we're still learning more every day. With each new study, we gain additional insight into how to mitigate risk and how to make more informed choices as free citizens. We understand now, in ways that our great-grandparents could not, the serious harm to health and the economy that is associated with smoking tobacco. We better understand the health implications, as well as the broader economic impacts, whether it's chronic or casual use, occasional indulgence or a grave addiction.

The same is true of our diets. There were certainly enlightened people 100 years ago who viewed their diet with scientific eyes. But outside of our major cities, even something as commonplace as vegetarianism is now would have been a fringe dietary choice even a generation ago. That has changed, as has our dietary attitude towards fat, salt, sugar, corn syrup, gluten, dairy and so on.

In fact, we're constantly uncovering new threats to our health, some of which are within our ability to change.

Some tell us that sitting is the new smoking. Extended periods of inaction pose a special danger to seniors.

So we encourage healthy and active lifestyle choices, as does Bill 149.

While I admire the spirit in which this legislation was brought toward, and while I recognize that it comes from a place of legitimate concern, the hybrid nature of 149 scatters its legislative focus. It's ambitious; no question. But what it boasts in scope, it lacks in specific and practical detail. It also overlaps with very specific measures outlined in Bill 131, as I indicated earlier. It pains me to say that because of those factors, I cannot support the proposed legislation at this time.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to rise today to join this debate, to encourage members of this House to lend their support to Bill 149.

I want to recognize the determination and the commitment of my colleague the member for Nickel Belt, who has persevered over many years to bring this legislation forward to help Ontarians make healthy decisions about what they eat, and, hopefully, not to smoke. Her personal background in health care, I think, makes her uniquely qualified to speak to these issues and gives her a deep and real understanding of the costs to human health, not to mention the financial costs to the health care system, of failing to take action.

This bill, as we've heard, focuses on two very important issues that have been recognized as critical to population health over the years: the menu labelling of fast food—not just calories, but also sodium—and stronger tobacco-control measures to discourage young people from starting to smoke.

First, Bill 149 would provide consumers with calorie and sodium information for food at large chain restaurants. This would allow parents to make healthy choices for their families and would allow adults to make informed nutritional choices. We know that Canadians want these options.

Enviro-nics research published a report in December 2013 that showed that 92% of Canadian adults said it's important to know the nutritional breakdown of the foods they eat. Nine out of 10 felt that they would be missing pertinent information if they only got calorie counts. In addition to calories, they wanted to know the total amounts of fat, sodium, trans fats and sugars.

This research was conducted and made public by the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association, showing that businesses involved in the fast-food sector recognize the importance of listening to their customers and understanding their customers' needs and preferences.

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In fact, as we've heard, several people have mentioned Tim Hortons. A number of restaurant companies across Canada are already taking action to document this kind of information to make it available to their customers.

The difference is that this private member's bill would make the information available at point of sale. Customers wouldn't have to ask for it and have staff search for it. It would be available on the menu display board when a customer goes into a fast food restaurant and it would be available at all restaurants across Ontario. Point-of-sale menu labelling helps people make more informed decisions about their food choices, and it also makes a difference in the choices people make.

There was a recent research study by a University of Waterloo professor that showed that publishing this information, making consumers aware of the calorie and sodium counts, can trigger concrete changes in behaviour and switch people's decisions about what they're going to eat.

From a public policy perspective, this is more than just good customer service; it's an essential contribution to maintaining population health. We've heard about the number of Canadian children who are overweight and the much greater risk of being overweight as adults when children are overweight in their youth. We've also heard about the significant health complications associated with being overweight and the financial cost to our health care system—about \$1.6 billion annually. As my colleague the member for Nickel Belt said, the bill will not in and of itself reverse these statistics, but it's an important step in the right direction.

The other aspect of the bill around banning smokeless tobacco products and all new flavoured tobacco is similar to the provisions in Bill 131, which we're currently debating, but it goes further in including smokeless tobacco products or e-cigarettes. We know that reducing social exposure to tobacco smoking is important so that smoking is not normalized for young people, to discourage young people from starting smoking or discouraging reformed smokers from relapsing.

I urge the support of MPPs in this Legislature for this bill. It's an important and much-needed step to a healthier Ontario. Thank you.

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

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to stand today to speak to Bill 149 and to congratulate the member from Nickel Belt for bringing it forward. I'd like to let her know that she is equally as entertaining and great to listen to as the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Another little bit of news is the hockey game: The women's hockey game is tied up at 2-2, for those of us—apparently there were two goals in the last four minutes.

I think that the idea of menu labelling's time has come. It's something that we can all agree on here. I think the provisions put forward in Bill 149 are reasoned and measured in terms of how they would affect business. I think it's important that we give people the information they need to make healthy choices, because it's a determinant of health. If we can help prevent disease, chronic disease that's caused through obesity, by making people aware of what high sodium levels mean to their health and their longevity, I think we're a lot farther forward.

I would like to mention as well, though—the member from Windsor–Tecumseh made a comment about ice cream, and there would definitely have to be some menu labelling at Baskin Robbins and Dairy Queen, because I'm affected by that addiction. Maybe it will slow me down a little bit.

On flavoured tobacco, anything that we can do to make sure that young people don't get hooked on tobacco is really—having been a former smoker myself, actually smoking from age 16 to the age of 23, I quit. Then I started smoking again when I was 31, and then I quit again when I was 40. I don't know why—but that's how powerful an addiction that is. I don't think that we can do enough.

I know that the member from Ottawa–Orléans here put forward a bill a few years ago on the banning of power walls. I supported that as well, although I was not in the Legislature at the time.

Again, I'd like to thank the member from Nickel Belt. I will be supporting this bill.

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

Mr. Jack MacLaren: I would like to speak to Bill 149. Good intentions: We all have them. Unfortunately, good intentions alone do not form the basis of good policy. So the question is, will the proposed bill result in the desired outcomes, or will it add unnecessary regulations and red tape on law-abiding people and businesses for no good purpose?

It is becoming startlingly obvious to anyone who is paying attention that as government grows and increasingly meddles in people's lives, outcomes worsen. Social engineering attempts by government create resentment, harden attitudes of targeted populations, and, in the case

of prohibitions, provide black market opportunities for products that have attained a certain cachet due to their prohibited status.

Substituting decisions made by individuals with government decisions gives people a false sense of security and creates a dependency. It is far better for government to respect individuals' ability to make decisions for themselves and accept responsibility and the consequences of those decisions. This is the fundamental basis of a free society.

People's freedom to choose should be respected by government. People should be allowed to choose the food they want to eat and to make their own lifestyle choices without being hectored by those who purport to know better.

I cannot support this bill, because it is an ineffective attempt to protect people from themselves while it increases job-killing costs and red tape for businesses.

Once again, politicians are demonstrating that they do not trust people to do the right thing. We must remember that we are a free and a democratic society, and with freedom comes the opportunity and responsibility for people to accept the benefits and consequences of their actions. This freedom is a right that was earned on battlefields and in Parliaments over the centuries. We should not give up freedom so easily on the altar of good intentions. It is a right that defines the essence of this land and this institution. It is our duty as parliamentarians to be diligent about protecting this right: our freedom.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for the debate. We now return to the member for Nickel Belt, who has two minutes to respond.

M^{me} France Gélinas: When I opened my speech, I made it clear that I had been working on those two issues for a long time. Well, I didn't do that on my own. I always want to say thank you to Dr. Penny Sutcliffe. She is behind the postcard campaign. She's the chief medical officer of health in Sudbury.

I also have many, many organizations that have helped along the way: the Alliance for the Prevention of Chronic Disease, the Association of Ontario Health Centres, the Bariatric Medical Institute, the Canadian Association for Enterostomal Therapy, the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists, the Canadian Association of Perinatal and Women's Health Nurses, the Canadian Public Health Association, the Canadian Stroke Network, the Canadian Women's Health Network, the Canadian Council of Cardiovascular Nurses, the Canadian Diabetes Association, the Canadian Gerontological Nursing Association, the Canadian Public Health Association, the Canadian Orthopaedic Nurses Association, the Center for Science in the Public Interest, the Childhood Obesity Foundation, the College of Family Physicians, the DisAbled Women's Network, Dietitians of Canada, the chair of hypertension prevention and control at the Heart and Stroke Foundation, the Elementary Teachers' Federation, the Fitness Industry Council of Canada, Hypertension Canada, Leslie Beck Nutrition Consulting, the

Ontario Home Economics Association, Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada, the Prevent Cancer Now board, the Public Health Physicians of Canada, the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, Sport Matters Group, Ottawa, and the University of Ottawa Heart Institute.

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To this, I have to thank my big sponsor, freeze-the-industry.com. If you haven't seen Freeze the Industry, go see them: "Freeze the Industry is advocating for a tobacco moratorium, a ban on all new tobacco products not yet introduced in Canada and an alteration to current products. We need a moratorium because the tobacco industry continues to develop new, innovative products that evade and exploit tobacco legislation designed to protect the health of young Canadians; recruit and retain youth and young adults, since 81% of current and former smokers begin smoking before the age of 18—and they appear to be less harmful than existing products when in reality they continue to contain the same dangerous ingredients." They're called freeze-the-industry.com. They are super cool. Go see them on YouTube and on the Internet.

J'aimerais remercier tous ceux qui m'ont aidée à amener ce projet de loi. Merci.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AMENDMENT ACT (TEMPORARY
HELP AGENCIES), 2014
LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI
(AGENCES DE PLACEMENT
TEMPORAIRE)

Mr. Takhar moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 159, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to temporary help agencies /
Projet de loi 159, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les agences de placement temporaire.

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

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Before I do that, actually, I have a fractured leg; I might not be able to stand very long, so just bear with me.

Temporary help agencies have become an important part of our dynamic labour market. Temporary work includes seasonal, casual and/or contract work. In Ontario, there are more than 700,000 temporary workers, with a large portion employed by more than 1,300 temporary help agencies.

From 1997 to 2012, the share of Ontario's workforce engaged in temporary work gradually increased from 9% to 13%. That is a 44% increase. In certain sectors, this increase actually has been up to 22% from 14% when comparing 1997 to 2012, and that is an increase of about 60%.

The continued increase of temporary employment may be attributed to a number of factors. For example, employers might find mixed permanent and temporary employment more desirable as it provides them with the ability to adjust payroll costs in response to the cyclical nature of the economy. In other words, this allows businesses to more easily expand or reduce their staff according to the business activity levels.

In addition, temporary employment also offers both employers and employees an opportunity to get to know each other before making a permanent commitment. For example, to employers, temporary employees provide an opportunity for extended evaluation purposes. Likewise, employees can assess the quality of the type of work to be performed, as well as the workplace environment, before making a commitment.

There is no doubt in my mind that temporary workers can offer organizations a certain flexibility that can accommodate quick changes in line with market demands while reaping cost savings in labour and other expenses.

Temporary help agencies employ people to assign them to perform work on a temporary basis for clients of the agency. Work assignments may be short-term, long-term or open-ended. Such employees are called assignment employees. Based on the research conducted by different organizations, some workers found work through temporary agencies to keep busy or to have flexible employment. Other workers went to agencies because they needed immediate work, for financial reasons, or had an employment background and experience that was not attractive to regular employees. For example, recent immigrants use temporary work agencies to get a foothold as they discover that their past job experience and qualifications are often not being recognized by the employers. It is very clear to me that temporary work agencies do serve a very important market niche to meet the needs of the employers and employees.

As the trend of temporary employment is growing, our government, over the past several years, has taken a number of steps and made amendments to the Employment Standards Act, 2000, to clarify and strengthen the rules and regulations dealing with temporary health agencies. I would like to recognize the work of the member from Brampton West, who actually had the ball rolling on this issue and made considerable improvements with regard to temporary help agencies and temporary workers.

Even after all of those efforts, temporary jobs are generally seen as poor quality. On average, they don't pay as much as permanent positions and have fewer benefits. This makes it tougher for temporary workers to support their families and build up savings for retirement.

Due to the job insecurity inherent in many temporary jobs, individuals may find it difficult to plan their future. Uncertainty over one's employment status may even lead to high levels of stress and family issues. It is also important to note that, in general, average wages for temporary jobs are lower than permanent jobs, and temporary workers may not qualify for certain employee benefits, training and advancement opportunities.

Based on current and emergent trends, temporary employment and temporary employment agencies in Ontario can be expected to continue to grow into the future. As such, it is essential for people entering the labour force to be aware of this changing dynamic of employment and the steadily changing realities of Ontario's labour market.

The proposed legislation is based on the feedback that I have received from my constituents, and during the leadership run of my party. In that context, I am proposing to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000.

The purpose of this bill is three main goals. The first is to require all temporary employment agencies to have and maintain a licence to operate in Ontario. This bill, if passed, will establish a licensing regime for temporary help agencies. Temporary help agencies will be prohibited from operating in Ontario without a licence. This bill clearly sets out the procedure for applying for a licence from the director, as well as powers to suspend and revoke the licence.

The second goal is to ensure that employees working under temp agencies receive 80% of the total wages paid for the work they do. Let me be very clear that if this bill is passed, temporary help agencies will be required to pay their employees at least 80% of the amount the agency charges its clients for the employee's services. This will ensure that temporary workers are fairly paid for the work that they perform. Temporary help agencies will have to submit a semi-annual report to the minister, certifying that they are in compliance with this requirement.

Finally, this bill is designed to ensure that employers must ensure that no more than 25% of the total number of hours that are worked in their organization are performed by temporary employees. I have heard examples that some workers have worked through temporary agencies with the same client for an extended period of time, in some cases over 10 years. This, by any reasonable standard, is not temporary work; it is permanent work. These temporary workers deserve better treatment and protection.

Entrepreneurs and small businesses are the backbone of our economy. They work hard and create the majority of new jobs. We, as legislators, must continue to create an environment in which our businesses can continue to grow and succeed.

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It is for this reason that the proposed legislation provides an exemption from this requirement for employers with less than 10 employees and employers that may experience a temporary increase in business volumes. We need to provide our businesses and organizations the flexibility to deal with unexpected increases in workload or unforeseen situations.

Mr. Speaker, let me assure you that I do understand the issues and challenges of our business community. The proposed legislation strikes a fair balance between the desire and the need for protection of the working conditions of the temporary workers and the need of the

employer to have flexibility to deal with the ever-changing business environment.

Mr. Speaker, let me tell you a little bit about what I went through. I came to Canada in 1974. I faced the same challenges as most new immigrants face today to settle in a new country and a new environment. New immigrants continue to face great hurdles to have their qualifications and experiences recognized by employers.

Also, our young people are increasingly in need of better opportunities. They are always looking for that first break in their chosen field. Our young people are increasingly looking for that first opportunity—

Interjections.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: Looks like Canada won, did they?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: Oh, that's good. I want to congratulate the women's hockey team at the Olympics. Congratulations.

Applause.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: Mr. Speaker, my first break in my field was to fill a temporary maternity leave position. If I recall correctly, temporary work agencies were not common in 1974, but this temporary position gave me the opportunity to prove myself and to secure full-time employment with the same employer. This paved the way for me for a very rewarding and successful career in finance and the business world over the next two decades. Mr. Speaker, frankly, if I hadn't have gotten that opportunity, I would not be standing in this esteemed House today and speaking and advocating on behalf of temporary workers.

This is an issue that affects temporary workers province-wide, and I look forward to a healthy discussion. As always, I look forward to comments from all of my colleagues in the Legislature from all sides, and encourage them to offer constructive ideas to move this important piece of legislation forward.

My intention with this proposed legislation is to put a workable and practical frame around the issues that are facing the assigned temporary workers. I am very open to any other suggestions or amendments from my respectable colleagues, as long as these suggestions can address the issues that I have outlined above in a concrete way.

The employment trend in Ontario and around the world is changing continuously, and our rules, regulations and legislation must continue to keep pace with the ever-changing requirements and needs of the workers and employers. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It gives me great pleasure to confirm that the Canadian women's ice hockey team has won the gold medal at Sochi.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Nickel Belt on a point of order.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I wish to correct my record. When I introduced the postcard, I said that they were from my health unit. They are from

the Canadian Cancer Society, but collected by my health unit. Thank you.

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

Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's a privilege to rise today and to have been asked to speak to this private member's bill this afternoon.

Bill 159, the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Temporary Help Agencies), 2014, as we all know, is a new bill introduced by the Minister of Government Services this week. In fact, I saw the first copy of this only a couple of days ago, Speaker, so I haven't had a lot of time to look at it, but, of course, we're here debating it today.

This bill amends statutes relating to employment licensing and employer prohibition for temporary help agencies. The bill amends the Employment Standards Act, 2000, to establish a licensing regime for temporary help agencies and require them to pay their employees at least 80% of the amount the agency charges its clients for the employee's services. It also requires employers to ensure that no more than 25% of the hours worked by their employees are performed by assignment workers.

Now, Speaker, we understand the goals of this bill, but we do have a couple of concerns. I'm glad that the minister is willing to listen to the concerns raised in this debate today. The concern predominantly that I have is that it adds yet another provincial licensing regime. I think that's the big concern that we're going to raise with this bill. At a time when the province already has enough unnecessary red tape—and, I might add, costly red tape—we think that this bill adds another layer to businesses and to employers.

We are concerned as well—I was speaking to Bill 146 yesterday, the Minister of Labour's bill—that there's just been little consultation with job creators across Ontario. I think this bill, again—I don't believe there's been a lot of consultation. I know, as the labour critic for the official opposition, we certainly haven't had a lot of time to look at this bill. I think maybe it's about 48 hours.

The other concern I'd like to raise is, I'm curious to know if there are going to be WSIB implications with this bill. Of course, we know of the challenges at the WSIB now with the unfunded liability, so I would hope that the member consulted with the WSIB. I'd go back to Bill 146 yesterday, where the management team—it's my understanding that WSIB weren't a part of that discussion when the minister drafted that bill.

Speaker, Ontario has reached a tipping point, of course, with a decade of overspending under this government, a decade of high unemployment. In fact, here in Ontario we're 86 months above the national average when it comes to unemployment.

This bill doesn't actually do anything to actually create jobs in Ontario. I know we've been on the record a number of times for many, many months—in fact, since the Premier was coronated just over a year ago—that the government needs to bring forward ideas and bills that

are actually going to create jobs, or create the conditions for employers to create jobs in Ontario.

We need to have an honest debate about the kind of Ontario we want and the plan to help get us there. Any legislation that affects the labour file will directly affect our job creators, and we need to establish the environment we need to create jobs, as I just was saying.

We feel, in the official opposition and in our PC caucus, that Ontario can do a lot better. Our caucus is looking forward to continuing putting out our fresh, bold and new ideas to fix current problems while looking into the long-term interests of Ontario.

Speaker, with that, I raise a couple of concerns with this bill. I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 159 today.

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

M. Taras Natyshak: C'est vraiment un plaisir d'être ici et de parler en deuxième lecture du projet de loi 159, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne les agences de placement temporaire.

Aussi, il me donne plaisir de féliciter notre équipe olympique des femmes qui a juste récemment gagné la médaille d'or.

I'm a little bit excited here, of course, because I was watching in the back in the members' west gallery as our women's Olympic team just secured the gold medal. I have to say I'm extremely proud that one of our very own in the riding of Essex, Meghan Agosta, is a part of that team. She's a two-time Olympic medallist—gold Olympic medallist. I can't wait for her to come back to the riding adorned with Olympic gold. I'm pretty excited, Mr. Speaker. I was back in the members' gallery watching that game intensely—what a crazy game. When they scored, there were high-fives in the back between myself, the member from Barrie, and a couple of other folks who were back there. It's amazing what sport can do to bring us all together. Of course, politics is a sport unto itself, but that brought us together there.

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In the spirit of collegiality, I guess, I'm going to speak favourably of this bill, the bill brought forward by the minister, and also highlight that it's about time. It's certainly a bill that we in the NDP caucus see as one that is needed and one that addresses some of the issues of oversight and standards within temporary employment agencies.

The bill amends the Employment Standards Act to establish a licensing regime for temporary help agencies and requires them to pay their employees at least 80% of the amount the agency charges its clients for its employees' services. It also requires the employers to ensure that no more than 25% of the hours worked by their employees are performed by assignment employees.

This is a very, very important component to this bill. Imagine that some employees out there receive less on an hourly basis than the fees recovered by the temporary agency that is indeed employing them. That certainly doesn't seem fair in today's society and in our modern

labour market. I think that the correction built into this piece of legislation is one that all members should be supportive of. We all know that a dollar is certainly stretched further when the employee feels that they're secure in their job, that they're valued and that they can continue on to progress in their working careers. It's difficult to do that when you are working in a business where you are working alongside someone who just makes that wage; they don't have to have a fee attached to it or a portion of their wage isn't garnished. This, I think, certainly levels the playing field within the temporary employment agencies.

The other component is that it requires employers to ensure that no more than 25% of the hours worked by their employees are performed by assignment employees. I think this a problem that needs to be addressed. Specifically, I can say that in Windsor and Essex county, we've seen a real increase in the prevalence of employment agencies over the years. I spoke to it yesterday during the debate under Bill 146, which was tabled by the Minister of Labour. In Windsor, there was a time, within my generation, where my friends could simply apply, under their own merits and any work experience they had, to the Big Three, as we call them in Windsor: GM, Ford and Chrysler. They got jobs. They walked in off the—this was 15 years ago, Speaker.

Nowadays that's absolutely unheard of, not only within the Big Three, the tier 1 suppliers, but the tier 2 and the tier 3. No longer can you simply apply on your own merits to these jobs. The companies have relied on temporary job placement agencies to fulfill their labour demands because of some of the regulations that allow them to skirt their responsibilities under the Employment Standards Act. In fact, we've seen a prevalence of employees under temporary agencies being hired for 89 days, just under the threshold of having to be responsible for those employees' rights under the Employment Standards Act, and then let go and then have to go through that entire process again.

It's high time that we addressed these issues under the Employment Standards Act as it relates to temporary agencies. Again, I congratulate the minister for bringing them forward.

Our caucus is, however, a little bit worried that this bill won't really ever see the light of day in terms of receiving royal assent, and we question why the provisions weren't built into the bill that was debated yesterday, Bill 146, which was introduced by the Minister of Labour. That, of course, has some components that deal with temporary agencies, and that's an omnibus-type bill. These could have very well fit within the context of that bill, and we would certainly have been supportive of them because we see them as important first steps to addressing that income inequality gap that is created by the prevalence of temporary work in this province. Nevertheless, we're supportive of the thrust of the bill, we're supportive of the general goal of the bill. I welcome the debate here in the House and thank the minister again for introducing it.

Speaker, I am splitting my time with my friend, my esteemed colleague the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, who will take up the remainder of my time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm pleased to recognize the government House leader and Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize for interrupting the flow of debate. I just want to welcome the Honourable Rob Norris, who is the Minister of Advanced Education, from Saskatchewan. He's in Ontario visiting us. He's a good friend from my time at training, college and universities; our present minister you see there. I think all members would want to welcome him here to Queen's Park today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. We do welcome you to the Ontario Legislature.

Further debate?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: First of all, I want to commend my colleague from Mississauga–Erindale for bringing forward this very important bill.

Temp agencies have a very important role and a very good role in our society for businesses that go through cyclical adjustments from time to time. They allow them to adjust their costs in accordance with their activity levels throughout the year.

However, temp agencies have also become a source of many issues and problems—problems that are regularly brought to my attention, and, I'm sure, to the attention of many of my other colleagues. For example, temporary jobs are, in general, lower paying, even for the same job being performed by a permanent worker. This really complicates things for temporary workers who can't save up for their retirement, for their future or for their kids' education. It creates a high level of stress within hard-working families, and that leads to further problems.

Temporary agencies are commonly used by people who have a relatively low skill level, as well as new immigrants. Temp agencies, instead of helping these people get further ahead in their lives, are actually preventing them from becoming contributing members of our society. I think these are the main reasons why this bill was brought forward and the main reasons for why we need this bill.

The first aspect of this bill, which I think is very important, is that temporary agencies under this bill would have to be licensed. Without a licence, a temporary agency cannot operate in the province of Ontario.

The second part, which is also very important, is that 80% of the total wages must be paid to the temporary worker. What I hear a lot of times is that the temp agency is getting \$20, \$22 from the employer and they're paying the temporary worker just the bare minimum legally they have to pay, which I feel is morally wrong. Agencies must also submit a report semi-annually to the Ministry of Labour proving that they are operating within this law.

The third aspect of the bill is that no more than 25% of the total hours can be performed by temporary workers. I often hear of people working—and as the member from

Mississauga–Erindale mentioned, people are working at the same temp agency for 10 years, which is not right. "Temporary" means temporary, and this is not the way we should be treating people.

With respect to the 25% of the total hours not being performed by temporary workers, we would also keep in mind small businesses and new entrepreneurs, who are a very important part of our economy. We would look at, in this bill, exempting small businesses that have 10 or less employees.

In addition to this bill, earlier on this week, our government also introduced Bill 146, the Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act, which has the same theme and similar goals to this bill, and builds upon this bill, builds upon all the work that we have done. We're doing all this to make sure that temporary workers get the respect that they deserve, and the bottom line should be that "temporary" means temporary.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 159, the Employment Standards Amendment Act regarding temporary help agencies. But before I get started, there is a lot of jargon that's used when discussing temporary work agencies, and it would be helpful to those watching at home to explain what some of these terms are.

Contract work can, in fact, give many employers a more flexible workforce, allowing them to quickly respond to ebbs and flows in our fragile economy. This type of work can also suit highly skilled employees who don't want to be tied down to a single employer, but can also be problematic for workers living paycheque to paycheque with little job security.

You'll hear of talk such as "vulnerable workers" and "precarious work." A Law Commission of Ontario report stated: "In Ontario today there are fewer full-time, well-paid jobs with good benefits and more precarious jobs with lower wages, poor job security, few benefits and little control over working conditions. Workers doing this kind of work are 'vulnerable' because of the job insecurity and other conditions."

In their report, the law commission found that an estimated 22% of Ontario workers are in fact in low-wage, unstable employment. This is a reality that faces our province after a decade of Liberal rule. Ontario's economy has been driven into the ditch. In Kathleen Wynne's Ontario, there is a strong focus on minimum wage and temporary help agencies, because those are the only jobs left for a lot of people.

In the past, people in this province could look forward to getting a good job. Now the Ontario dream is just to find any job. More and more Ontarians, especially our youth, are turning to minimum wage jobs and temporary jobs because it's better than nothing. In looking specifically at the bill, the first thing that it sets out to do is to create a new licensing regime for temporary work agencies.

In my few years here at Queen's Park, I have seen this government introduce or increase a staggering number of fees. Any time they propose another licensing regime, we want to know that it will accomplish what it sets out to do and will not negatively impact the province, and I think that's fair.

There are certainly bad apples out there in the temp agency industry. We've all heard horror stories of certain agencies holding onto pay, taking too large a percentage from their employees and in general taking advantage of workers who are desperate for employment. But, at the same time, there are many reputable agencies that garner positive reviews from their employees.

This bill places a cap on how many temporary workers an employer can have on the books. The bill states, "Every employer shall ensure that the total number of hours worked by assignment employees in a workweek does not exceed 25% of the total number of hours worked by all employees, including assignment employees, in that workweek." However, the bill does also provide an exemption for employers who experience a temporary increase in business volume. In my riding, there is a lot of seasonal work in the agricultural sector, so I'm glad to see this exemption in the bill.

At the end of the day, we need to ensure that this bill does what it's intended to do, and that is to help the workers of this province of Ontario. We need to be careful that there are no unintended consequences in this bill. For the companies that are playing by the rules, that are doing the right thing by their employees, we cannot make it even more difficult to run their businesses in this province. The companies that are taking unfair advantage of their employees who have nowhere else to turn, of course, should be accountable, to the full extent of the law.

I look forward to hearing what employees and employers alike have to say about this bill in committee, so let's take a sensible approach to this issue, and let's make sure it helps our province's workers.

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

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'm very pleased today to stand up and speak in favour of the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Temporary Help Agencies), 2014, introduced by my neighbour and mentor in many ways—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Hear, hear.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Yes, he has been there for me, the member of provincial Parliament for Mississauga-Erindale.

The first thing that struck me when I read this bill was how well-crafted it was for a private member's bill, which just speaks to the experience this member brings not only to this file but to legislation in general and the years of experience he has had being an excellent minister of the crown. Thank you so much for your service.

The goal of this bill is very simple. All that we're trying to do is ensure that people who are temporary workers get a fair wage and that temporary work is just that: temporary. When you hear that somebody has been

temping for 10 years, that is not temping. At that point, it ought to be permanent. That's essentially what this bill is trying to do, and I'm not sure if there's anybody in this Legislature who can argue against the goals of the bill. How can you argue against saying that temporary workers ought to get a fair wage and that temporary work ought to be temporary, not permanent?

I've heard some criticism from the official opposition, and I did want to speak to that. In particular, I wanted to speak to one issue—which is not related to the bill but I do feel it merits a response—which is when the member for Lambton-Kent-Middlesex suggested that the Premier was coronated. I take exception to that, because it betrays a lack of understanding of the parliamentary system we have in Canada. I am sure the member ought to know better than to insinuate something like that.

The second thing that I heard from the loyal opposition was that they're against the licensing part of the bill just because it's red tape. Well, you can't be against something just because it's red tape. You have got to be against it because you feel it won't work. If you said to me, "I don't want licensing because I don't think it's going to help get to the end goal," that's a fair criticism. But to just say, "We don't want licensing because it's going to add red tape," that's meaningless. Come out with a good reason not to license rather than just some general black hole, "It's red tape; it's too much government." If it's going to work and give us the end result, which is a fair wage for our temporary workers and ensuring that temporary work is temporary, I think we should have licensing. If you think it won't work, give me a better way. I know that this MPP has told me he is open to suggestions, that he is open to amending the bill, as required, in committee. All I've heard is criticism; what I've not heard is constructive suggestions that would make the bill better.

I would, indeed, like to thank very much the third party for their support and their supportive comments.

Finally, I'm just going to wrap up. I began by saying this is a well-crafted bill, and the reason I say that is because it balances the need to have a fair system for temporary workers with the need to ensure that our small businesses are not overly burdened—hence the exemption for small business: Anybody with 10 workers or fewer is not going to be covered by this. I know that as far as consultation goes, having spoken to the member, that he has extensively consulted not just with employers in general, but with temporary agencies. In fact, he sat down with temporary agencies to talk to them about what level of profit would be reasonable—I think it's the 80% rule: Is that fair? He actually spoke to them before he came up with that number. All in all, I'm very supportive, and I'm delighted to be here speaking to it.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: First of all, I want to acknowledge the member from Mississauga-Erindale. When he was minister, which he is not now because of his own personal reasons, I had great time for him. He's a very

thoughtful gentleman, and I respect that. Even the tone of his remarks today was commendable. In fact, it was done in an offering of collegiality and co-operation. I think in that context, my remarks, after 30 years of working in industry and seeing it and having some background in HR—here's the deal: For young people today, a job for life, for 30 years, is finished, unfortunately. I say that rather sadly because we had the model Parliament here this year with the young leaders of the future. In that context, there's no job that will last for 30 years, whether it's Nortel or whether it's General Motors or whether it's even Research In Motion. No job will last 30 years. The technology will change, the skill sets will change; That's the climate.

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But here's what I tell my five children: Basically, I worked for 30 years. Let's say, for simple math, I made \$50,000 a year. That's \$1.5 million. I think what will happen today is they'll work for 20 years and make the same amount of money, unless they keep their skill sets up. Because whether it's law—which is all online now; all the books—it's all toast. All I'm saying is that the skill sets, whether it's making watches or whether it's painting an airliner with nanotechnology paint that is photosensitive and runs the electricity on an airplane—that's the future. You have printers now that make products. You can order them, send them a copy of the little switch that's broken on your printer, and they'll make it for you through printer technology, 3-D printers. It is fabulously changing. That's the context.

I think there are provisions within the total number of hours, but there are a number of exemptions that you provided in the bill. Here's one modest concern, though: It does run into the government Bill 146, and I think our critic from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, who has done a fabulous job, mentioned it in his remarks; it would be rather important to look at those from yesterday's debate on Bill 146. Those are the implications for WSIB itself. The WSIB is staggering under a \$13-billion deficit because there are fewer people paying into it. It's a payroll tax. We have to find new ways of funding that kind of organization so injured workers are protected.

Minimum working hours—I think employment standards need to be modernized so that we have jobs for the future. Without jobs, there's no hope for young people, and we need to create the environment for investment, working co-operatively with business as well as unions to have jobs for the future—a good discussion.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Let's cut to the chase here. The government has been in power for 11 years—10 years going on 11 years. They've been fully aware of this problem. They've known about the problem regarding temporary job agencies for years.

In 2009, this government tried to implement some changes to improve the situation, but they failed. The members across from the Liberal Party, from Brampton West, from Mississauga–Brampton South and

Brampton–Springdale, are bombarded daily from their constituents, because I know this is a top-three issue in Brampton. This is a major issue across the GTA. Temporary job agencies are exploiting workers, and this is no surprise.

The fact that this government has just put forward a bill, Bill 146, a government bill, that addresses temporary job agencies but coincidentally leaves out all of the important components to address the problems facing temporary workers in our province, to me can't be a coincidence. The fact that they left out all the important ingredients like the fact that we need to see temporary workers transition into a permanent job; like the fact that temporary workers sometimes see almost half of their paycheque being kept back by temporary job agencies—these are some of the key problems that are facing people in Ontario, but the government completely failed to add those components to the government bill. But they'd have us believe that they care about it because they bring forward a private member's bill that talks about it.

Now, if this was the opposition, if this was the third party, I would commend them because they would be showing leadership by saying, "This is what we need to do," but they're the government. They could actually do this. They could actually implement this if they wanted to. The fact that the government is not bringing this forward as a government bill, the fact that this government is bringing forward a private member's bill regarding the key problems facing temporary workers in the province shows that they're not serious about fixing the problems. It absolutely casts doubt on their sincerity about dealing with this problem, because if they wanted to deal with this problem in a meaningful way, they could have.

I challenge the Liberal government to add this private member's bill that's brought forward by the member from Mississauga–Erindale—I challenge them to include that into the government bill. Then we would say that this government is taking this issue seriously, because the workers in this province deserve more.

Let's look at the reality. If the government had done something on this issue, we wouldn't have the situation that's going on right now in my riding. A company, Gate Gourmet, has laid off 50 permanent workers and replaced them. It wasn't a matter that they didn't have work and said, "Listen, we have to lay you off. We don't have enough work for you." They laid off 50 permanent workers and immediately replaced them with temporary workers who don't have benefits, who don't have job security, and who are going to receive half of the wages they used to receive. There are people who have been working at this company for years, who are experienced, who are skillful, and they're now going to be at home without a job, perhaps collecting EI if they're struggling to make ends meet. But where is the sense in that? Where was the government to protect these workers, to protect the permanent, good-paying jobs? Instead, a multi-national comes in, buys out a local Canadian company and lays off permanent workers, replacing them with temporary workers. This shows very clearly that this gov-

ernment is not solving the problem, has not done enough to address the situation.

Furthermore, there's a number of problems that are still left undealt with. Currently, as the law stands, if you are hired through a temporary help agency, for the first six months, even if the company wants to hire you, they have to pay a fee. They have to pay a fee to the temporary job agency just to hire you on board. How much of a deterrent is that? That deters people from getting a permanent job. That's a serious problem.

Again, I want to stress this point: If the government was really serious about addressing the serious problem of temporary job agencies, the temporary and precarious employment that's going on in this province, if they were serious about it, they wouldn't be presenting a private member's bill. They would have added this into the temporary job agency bill that's before this Parliament right now, that's before the House right now. They would have put it into the government bill and not relegated it to an insignificant, unimportant, private member's bill.

That speaks to the fact that this government is not serious about solving this problem. Again, I challenge you to include it in your government bill if you're serious about solving this problem.

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

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I always say at the outset of my remarks in this chamber, it is a pleasure for me to stand in my place today to have this opportunity to speak to this particular private member's bill.

This is, as I'm sure it's been for many who have had the chance to speak, the first opportunity to speak in formal debate since we have come back here in this calendar year, and I am delighted to stand, as I said a second ago, on behalf of the people of my community of Vaughan to speak in favour of Bill 159, the Employment Standards Amendment Act, 2014, otherwise known as An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, with respect to temporary help agencies.

I did have a chance to hear my colleague from Mississauga East–Cooksville speak a little bit earlier. She went on to talk, quite appropriately and also eloquently, about the member who has sponsored this particular legislation, the member from Mississauga–Erindale. I think, as she said—if I could just very briefly echo some of the comments she made about the work, the dedication and the commitment that our member from Mississauga–Erindale has shown with respect to reaching out and consulting around the importance of this kind of legislation, for taking the initiative to move this forward. It speaks to his own skill set, to his experience and to his ability to make sure that an issue that is of great importance comes to the fore.

I was actually happy to hear members opposite, including the member from Durham, speak also about the substance of this initiative, about the individual member himself, our member from Mississauga–Erindale, who has brought this forward, who is pushing it and has done outstanding work to make this happen.

There's already been a fair bit of discussion here in the House today about some of the technical aspects of this bill. Generally speaking, members on all sides of the Legislature have an understanding of why this bill is being brought forward and what the importance is. There are statistics that have been brought to the fore in the course of this debate this afternoon, but fundamentally the purpose of the bill is make sure that we, as a province, find creative ways to better protect those who are employed through temp agencies. It will ensure more fairness and equality in regard to wages, and provide fair pay for well-performed work.

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There has been some fascinating discussion. It is really important at this point, on this particular day, that members on all sides of the House, when the opportunity will arise in mere minutes, join with the member from Mississauga–Erindale and others on this side of the House to make sure that this bill moves forward in the legislative process and gets to committee.

The member from Mississauga–Erindale has been among the first to admit, in his very eloquent remarks earlier today, that, like many other private members' bills, this is not necessarily a bill that, as it currently sits, is absolutely perfect. This is the reason we want this legislation to get to committee, where the committee members can do the work that they need to do: to analyze and conduct the research, and have the hearings to make sure that amendments come forward that will ultimately strengthen the bill, and make sure that it ends up providing relief and support for those workers who are most vulnerable in our province, as was originally intended by the member from Mississauga–Erindale.

I have heard, as others on our side of the House have heard, members opposite talk about ways to improve the bill. I think it's fantastic that the member from Mississauga–Erindale and others want to roll up their sleeves and work together on this. This is what the people of my community certainly expect, Mr. Speaker. It's what the people who have elected all of us, from communities right across the province of Ontario—to come to this place, to engage in this kind of discussion and debate about bills like this, and to make sure that, again, those who are most vulnerable, those who perhaps don't feel like they have the kind of support or reinforcement that they need to continue to be productive, to continue to earn the wages they need, to have those protections in place for their benefit—and for their families, indirectly, who they help to support with their wages and with their incomes. This is a fantastic opportunity for us to work together, to join together, to support this bill, to support Bill 159, to get this bill to committee.

In the final comments coming from members of the NDP caucus—I think it's interesting to note, not for the first time over the last number of months, that there's an awful lot of discussion emanating from that caucus that doesn't always match up and is not entirely consistent with the actions. It certainly falls far below the expectations that people in my community and others have of a party that has purported, historically, to be

relevant for the folks who find themselves at the most disadvantaged places in society. Speaker, over the last number of weeks, on issues ranging from minimum wage to public transit to many others, we have seen that particular caucus absent without leave. It's a sad comment today that they would stand in their places and criticize this member for demonstrating the leadership that he has to bring this bill forward.

I hope members of the NDP caucus and official opposition will join with us to support this bill and get it passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Mississauga–Erindale has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: I really enjoyed the discussion that happened here today. I want to thank the member from Brampton West, who was very supportive of this bill; the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville, who actually stole all the comments that I wanted to make right now; and the member from Vaughan for very, very supportive comments. I also want to thank the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex; the member from Essex—especially the member from Essex, for his incredible support—the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex; and also the member from Durham. He used to be my critic in a couple of portfolios. I want to thank him for his remarks as well.

I was a little bit disappointed with the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. He said it should have been a government bill, or it should have been included in a government bill. Mr. Speaker, my understanding, based on 10 years of experience in this Legislature, is that the responsibility for passing the bill lies with the Legislature, here, whether it's a government bill or a private member's bill. So he's really abdicating his responsibility in that regard if he says that a private member's bill cannot be passed just because it's a private member's bill; that it should be a government member's bill.

Anyway, I'm very, very thankful to everybody for their remarks. As I said, I think that this legislation strikes a fair balance between the needs of temporary workers and also the needs of small businesses—the people who will need flexibility and the businesses who will need flexibility.

As I said before, I'm open to suggestions. I haven't heard a lot of suggestions, but I'm open to suggestions, so long as they meet the needs, at the end of the day, of the temporary workers whose issues need to be addressed by this legislation and by this Legislature. So I look forward to those comments. I'm prepared to work with everyone who has some concrete ideas to move this bill forward.

MAJOR WILLIAM HALTON
DAY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE JOUR
DU MAJOR WILLIAM HALTON

Mr. Chudleigh moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 142, An Act to proclaim Major William Halton Day / Projet de loi 142, Loi proclamant le Jour du major William Halton.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's my privilege to rise in the House today to speak on my private member's bill, Bill 142, An Act to proclaim Major William Halton Day in Ontario.

In 2016, Halton region will mark 200 years from the time that it received its name from its founding father, Major William Halton. The people of what was then Halton county could not have foreseen that it would one day become the fastest-growing and culturally diverse municipality in Canada, with one of the highest qualities of life anywhere in North America.

Given the county is braced by Lake Ontario, it involves about a third of its area in the Niagara Escarpment. It's got ski hills. It's got hiking trails. It's got parks. It is truly one of the jewels of Ontario where you can live, raise a family, work and find a wonderful place to live. Halton region, as well as Ontario, owes a debt of gratitude—all of this—to William Halton.

It is interesting to note that Halton county was the only one in Upper Canada to be named for a private secretary when most of the original counties in Ontario were named for prominent members of British royalty and famous political leaders, such as the former Lieutenant Governor Sir John Wentworth, Sir Robert Peel, the Duke of Wellington as well as the Duke of York. Their historical significance is celebrated with memorial statues and plaques in their honour, in addition to formal state funerals that punctuated the end of each of their lives. But William Halton did not have a state funeral, and even his name has disappeared from the weather-worn headstone of his burial place. He was truly a man of the people.

But who really was William Halton, and why are there so many institutions and places, including one federal riding and my own riding of Halton, named after him? Halton was a 46-year-old bachelor who was next in line to become a baronet. He entered Ontario history in 1806 as the private secretary of his long-time friend and mentor Lieutenant Governor Francis Gore, who had just been reassigned from Bermuda to head the province of Upper Canada at that time. Having arrived in what John Graves Simcoe referred to as “our royal town of York,” he reported directly to the head of government in Upper Canada and was responsible for a number of administrative duties, acting as an intermediary between the public and the Lieutenant Governor, and as an adviser to him.

Lieutenant Governor Gore relied on Halton's judgment, decisiveness and ability to deal with the several contentious issues and individuals that the new Lieutenant Governor faced. Among other things, Halton was involved with securing tenders for the House of Assembly, which was a forerunner to this building in which we stand today.

He was also responsible for letters of discipline and dismissal, inquiries about land grants in the colonies, reports concerning the build-up of troops on the American side of the border, and requests for additional soldiers, arms and supplies at various points along the Canadian border at a time when tensions with the Americans were coming to a high pitch just prior to the outbreak of the War of 1812.

Halton was also involved with the actual receipt of the deeds for lands purchased from the Mississauga First Nations people. A portion of these lands would one day be named in his honour as Halton county.

A letter from Gore to Halton dated January 1808 also reveals that Halton was even involved in espionage activities related to the impending war with the Americans. Halton's conciliatory abilities were all-important in a province where individuals were antagonistic to Gore and his predecessors on the grounds that not enough was being done by the British government to secure better infrastructure and establishing improved roadways. It is difficult to get money out of government today; it was equally difficult to get money out of a government that was 4,000 miles away in those days, especially when that government was involved in a European war.

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Halton was the person whom Gore trusted completely, precisely because he could deal directly with the important political issues of the day and act as an effective mediator with different sectors of the populace. Halton also had dealings with the legendary Mohawk chief Joseph Brant, who formally thanked Major Halton for his offer to provide inoculations against cowpox to the First Nations people.

As the tensions with the Americans increased, so did Halton's role in keeping the government apprised of troop manoeuvres and build-up across the frontier. Officials, recognizing Halton's influence with Gore, tended to directly ask for Halton's support for their requests for more men and supplies at various border points, bypassing Lieutenant Governor Francis Gore. Gore was considered to be rather high-handed and autocratic, while Halton was approachable and compassionate.

By 1810, however, the animosity between Gore and some of his vocal critics in the Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada resulted in lawsuits issued against the Lieutenant Governor in London, England. Gore received permission to return to London on a leave of absence to deal with these on the eve of the War of 1812.

Halton accompanied Gore to London, but he continued to work closely with colleagues and officials in Upper Canada, often taking their petitions directly to the British government. Throughout the War of 1812, William Halton continued to apply his considerable administrative and conciliatory skills in helping to produce additional assistance from the British government for this province of Upper Canada. Remember that this was taking place during the Napoleonic Wars and this was a minor skirmish in the minds of most of the British, and therefore getting their attention to supply this war was a

monumental task, and William Halton rose to that task admirably.

When the town of York was attacked and its Parliament building was burned, Halton was instrumental in requesting funds to help rebuild that building—again, a forerunner of the House that we stand in today.

Halton was eager to return to Upper Canada. He and Gore did return in April 1815. Gore's second term began, among other things, with the establishment of schools and school boards throughout the province. To demonstrate his esteem for his private secretary, Halton county was named in his honour on March 22, 1816. Three days later, on March 25, Halton was appointed to the newly created position of Provincial Agent for Upper Canada. This appointment meant that Halton had to return to London to work on behalf of Upper Canada with the Colonial Office in London. It was a huge promotion. The Colonial Office was where everything in the British Empire took place.

Halton was familiar with everyone's perspectives, and he was likewise trusted by all who came in contact with him, so there was none better to fulfill this important role of mediator between the Colonial Office and the province. It was during this time in this position that Halton revisited his earlier work on behalf of the veterans, and their families, of the War of 1812, and that in a most aggressive manner. On August 25, 1818, Halton, in a letter to the Colonial Office, asserted that no satisfaction or justice for those who had defended the province of Upper Canada had yet materialized. Halton even had the audacity to say that the Americans were far more progressive with assistance for their own veterans.

While Halton's pleas fell on deaf ears, he refused to give up. However, it wasn't until 60 years after the war had ended that Upper Canada veterans of the War of 1812 finally received a pension based on Halton's earlier demands.

Halton's health began to seriously deteriorate, and he finally succumbed to his illness on September 22, 1821. He was buried in St Johns Wood cemetery in London.

The author of the defining biography of William Halton, entitled *Halton's Heritage*, John McDonald, is with us today in the Legislature.

Applause.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: He is accompanied today with his brother, Fred. I want to take this opportunity to commend John for all his work in bringing every known detail about the person of William Halton to life.

With us also is Mr. Harry Andrew, who is Major William Halton's great-great-great-grandnephew. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

I would like to end my remarks by quoting Mr. McDonald's words: "Halton was a hard-working civic administrator, determined to fight against injustices and dedicated to the causes he believed in. William Halton has earned a place in our history and deserves to be recognized."

Mr. Speaker, I believe that with a speedy passage of An Act to proclaim Major William Halton Day in

Ontario, this assembly, which is the successor of the assembly of Upper Canada for which William Halton worked so hard and so tirelessly, will have fulfilled what I believe to be a duty of justice to honour the memory of Major William Halton, so that in just under two years the people of Halton region may join with all Ontarians in honouring their founding father on September 22, 2016, on the occasion of Halton county, Halton region, being 200 years old. Thank you very much, and thank you, Mr. McDonald.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's a pleasure to have an opportunity to speak to the bill. I have to admit, I knew very little of Major William Halton, and I suspect 99% of the population of Ontario knows very little about William Halton. And it's no surprise; we're talking about an individual who obviously was here a long, long time ago. I have to say, he only lived in the area for about six years, in Upper Canada, and then he immediately went back to England. One has to assume that he loved this place, and I believe he did, but we don't know much about our history; this is very true. This effort by the member from Halton will help a lot of the residents of Halton to know who he was.

We know that one of the things that he has done during his tenure as provincial agent to England from 1816 onwards was that he pressed for some form of compensation or land grants for the loyal citizens of Upper Canada who had defended the province during the War of 1812 against the Americans. My suspicion is that a whole lot of people would be grateful for some of that compensation in the form of money or land, and to that degree and to that extent, one hopes that the people who benefit from that would remember him.

We know that Halton is a fascinating area. Despite the unprecedented growth in residential development, the region is still known for agriculture and protected lands along 80 kilometres of the Niagara Escarpment. So Halton has to balance incredible development with a part of what it stands for, which is part of a watershed. It's one of the most beautiful and diverse places in Ontario, which includes the world-renowned Niagara Escarpment, a Carolinian forest, the Lake Ontario shoreline, creeks, valleys and rich wetlands. It combines an incredible mix of incredible development with a lot of valuable land that we all appreciate.

I think this is a bill that I am convinced the member knows a lot about, and I'm hoping that a lot of people will get to know Major William Halton through this. I'm hoping that he has reached out to a lot of his residents, as a result of which we have this bill today. With that, I think all I can say is that we will be supporting the bill, and hopefully the people from Halton will appreciate the efforts of this member.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to rise in support of the member for Halton as he brings forward

Major William Halton Day Act, Bill 142. Being a long-time resident of Halton and having served in the past with Councillor McDonald a long, long time ago, it's a pleasure to be here. I have to admit, John, that I relied on a lot of your research to form my remarks today, so thank you for doing that.

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In essence, we are making somebody famous here today. I think John has brought it to our attention from historical perspective, and the member from Halton has brought it forward to the Legislature to perhaps spread the story a little bit more about somebody who had a lot to do with Halton region.

But I would say that about an hour ago I watched somebody from Halton make history as well. That was Brianne Jenner from Oakville, who scored the first goal on that comeback when we took that gold medal. That was something to watch, I'll tell you.

I think it is really fitting that we honour those people who have come before us and have laid the groundwork for the lifestyle that we enjoy today, those people who brought law and order to certain jurisdictions, who brought a form of government to certain jurisdictions that we live in today. They're the people who often get lost in history, and Major William Halton appears to be one of those people that, had it not been for the work of some and had it not been for just being in the right place at the right time perhaps, he would have just gone out into obscurity, as I think it's described in some of the research I did. But he was in the right place at the right time, and he was with the right person. He was with the then Lieutenant Governor of Upper Canada, Sir Francis Gore, and he was his secretary.

Part of Sir Francis's role, part of his mandate from the British government, was to open up certain lands for settlement. As a result of that, as you open up lands, you apply a name to them. It appears that Major Halton happened to be around when he was applying the names and said, "Why not use my name?" That appears to be how the story has been written, and it appears to be something that we are all learning a lot more about as a result of the research that has been done in the past.

Halton is a fantastic place to live, I have to tell you. I know everybody is proud of where they come from in this House, and I certainly share that pride with the member from Burlington, the member from Halton, and the member from Wellington-Halton Hills, I think it is, who shares a little bit of the region with us. It's an area that's got an incredible amount of natural beauty. It's got a conservation authority that is very, very active. It's got some conservation areas, and I think those people from the city who are looking for a day drive would be hard-pressed to find anything better than Crawford Lake or Kelso, Bronte Creek Provincial Park or Hilton Falls Conservation Area. There are places in the region that just have a natural beauty that often has been lost in other communities. It's as a result, I think, of the people who have come before us and have formed part of local governments, have formed part of regional governments.

Just to digress, when regional government came in, in the region of Halton certainly, it was very, very unpopular with the municipalities. I served for 18 years on that unpopular form of government. I have to tell you—and I never shied away from this—I always thought it was one of the most efficient forms of government I had ever seen and one of the most efficient forms of government I'd ever been involved with, as a legislator or as a councillor. But at the time, I think there was a lot of turf protection. At the time, I think a lot of the member municipalities—the Oakvilles and the Burlingtons and the Miltons and the Halton Hills and the Actons and the Georgetowns—felt that they were being stripped of some of their powers and that their authority was being superseded.

I think what was really happening at the time is, we were just becoming a bit more efficient and a bit more effective in the way we were organizing our government. But people like to use things to their own political ends, and it became a bit of a political football.

But those people who did agree to serve, who did run for office, who became the CEOs and the management staff at the region of Halton, I think, over the years have proved themselves and have done a fantastic job to leave behind the sort of place that I'm extremely proud to live in. I don't think it matters what political party you belong to; you take a look at a community, and it's either a good place to raise a family, it's a good place to get a job, it's a good place to live, or it's not. I think in the case of Halton region, you would be hard-pressed to argue that it hasn't worked out in the long run.

So as a result of that, as a result of Halton county becoming Halton region, we get to know a little bit about this man, Major William Halton. John, I think, has gone to some lengths to point out some of the personal characteristics of this gentleman.

It sounds like, as has been previously mentioned, after the War of 1812, veterans on either side of the border were treated a little differently. There was a sense, certainly in the opinion of William Halton, that the Americans, having lost the War of 1812, were treating their veterans much better than the British, who had repelled the American invaders during the War of 1812. I think for an army that had won the war—some people called it a tie; I think we won the War of 1812. We weren't trying to invade anybody; we were trying to prevent ourselves from being invaded. We did that. That, to me, is a win. But it seems to me that at the time when the British Empire, as it has been stated, was involved with the Napoleonic Wars and a number of expenses around the world trying to maintain an empire—it appeared that they were giving very short shrift to the veterans who had actually protected one of their colonies.

Even though this gentleman only spent a short amount of time in Upper Canada, I think he punched well above his weight in what he left behind. I think any one of us would be proud to have a community the size of this community, the quality, the lifestyle that this community offers, named in our memory. As it has been stated

before, he died in relative obscurity. I'm sure people in Upper Canada didn't know what he was responsible for, what he had tried to do, how he had tried to make life a little bit better for those people who were living a pretty hard life as pioneers in any event.

As has been stated, he is buried in London, in St Johns Wood cemetery in London, England. He appears to be the sort of person any one of us would have loved to have known. I don't know how many "grands" were attached to the nephew, but the grand-grand-grand-nephew—you've come from very good stock. You come from somebody who I think did what they could do to make the world a little better place and, as a result of that, has been rewarded in having his name exist now off into eternity. You would think that there will always be a Halton, I would imagine, and that's named after one of your relatives. I think you should be extremely proud of that.

It's the fastest-growing municipality right now in the entire country. It's growing the way it wants to grow as well. I think you can look around the GTA or the 905 area and you look at some communities that underwent the same quick periods of growth and perhaps grew too quickly and perhaps grew the wrong way—didn't preserve the green space that should have been preserved; didn't look after the natural heritage; and didn't look after the heritage of the area itself and the memories and the people who got it to that place.

Halton has taken a different route in its growth. And I don't think anybody in Halton has ever said, "We don't want to grow. We just want to live here. We want to shut the doors and we don't want anybody else to live here." I think Halton has always been open to growth, but it has been open to growth on its own terms. It has been open to the sort of growth that results in communities that you still want to live in.

I live in a part of Oakville that was annexed by the town of Oakville. At one point in the past, Bronte, where I live, was taken over by the town of Oakville. That was another unpopular move at the time, although I think they took a lot of Bronte's debt with them, so that was the part that was good at the time. But if you live in Oakville, you still refer to Bronte as Bronte. Bronte is not Oakville; you say, "I'm from Bronte, and Bronte is a part of Oakville."

I think in the region of Halton, there are not many people these days who say they're from the region of Halton. I think those days are yet to come. You're still from Burlington or Milton, from Halton Hills or from Campbellville or wherever you're from in the region. I don't think we've actually achieved the standing where, if we're travelling abroad, we tell somebody that we come from Halton yet.

But certainly, I think for those people who live there and for the way that we have organized ourselves as a jurisdiction, it's become an area the entire country should be extremely proud of. It's got a very high standard of living, but at the same time, what we have done is we've attracted people from all over the world. We've got one of the most multicultural communities and populations in

the entire country, and I think it really reflects the Canadian multicultural mosaic that has come to typify this country.

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What a lot of people don't understand, Madam Speaker, and I think it's something we should brag about a little bit more, and Halton is a part of that, is that they say in southern Ontario today there are more people from more different cultures that are living together in peace and harmony than at any other time in the history of civilization. That's not in the past 50 years and it's not just in North America; they say there's more people from more different cultures that are living together, working together, not fighting with each other, than at any other time in the history of the planet. That's something I think we should be especially proud of, and if you look at the demographic profile of the area that is named after Major William Halton, you'll realize that really what you're seeing in Halton is a microcosm of the entire country. You're seeing the success and you're seeing the affluence and you're seeing the lifestyle that people move across the planet to be a part of, and you're seeing it be successful; you're seeing people be successful.

I want to close by thanking the people who have done the research on Major William Halton and who have joined us today, to thank his relatives for being part of the family, and to thank the member from Halton for doing such a wonderful thing and ensuring that we don't forget that this gentleman existed and he did a wonderful job for us.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'm pleased to rise to speak in support of Bill 142, An Act to proclaim Major William Halton Day, and to commend the member for Halton for bringing this forward.

As an MPP representing one of the partner communities of Halton region, this is obviously a matter of pride. But it is not simply that, Speaker. It is also a matter of some importance. When you look at a map of Ontario, you are looking at our history as much as you are looking at our geography. History is written all around us and fills our daily lives, whether we recognize it or not. Places are named for historic figures of varied importance: statesmen and soldiers, pioneers and merchants. That history is an ongoing story in which we all play a part. It is also part of our heritage. Understanding where we came from helps us understand who we are. Understanding how we came to be here enriches our sense of what we will make of our time here. The past informs the present and the future.

Sadly, it is well known that we as Ontarians are not always as mindful of history as we might be. As legislators, we are in a unique position to ensure that our heritage is something of which we are all better aware. We can take steps, and indeed we should take steps, to ensure that Ontarians' heritage is more widely recognized and celebrated.

Ontarians need to recognize and honour their great heritage and celebrate their notable achievers, those who

spend their lives constructing the foundation on which our great province and indeed our great country are built. By doing so, we protect our shared memory.

It is fitting that we in this House turn our attention to celebrating Major William Halton. Many in this House, and I would guess most of those watching at home, may not be particularly aware of the importance of this man, though they would roughly assume that this region, like this community of Halton Hills, was named in his honour; so was the historic Halton county. Yet it is notable that until this bill was brought forward by my colleague from Halton, Major Halton's name had not been spoken in the Legislature for generations. Let us correct that here today, Speaker.

Major William Matthew Halton was an officer of the British army who was appointed in 1805 to serve as secretary to Upper Canada Lieutenant Governor Sir Francis Gore. Major Halton came to Upper Canada in 1806 and served proudly in that role for a decade. While here, he was a key agent of change in the life of Upper Canada and played a significant role in the early development of Canada.

As provincial agent, Major Halton was known for his compassion. He dedicated himself to veterans' affairs, serving and assisting veterans of the War of 1812 as well as their families. He was also intimately involved in immigration, helping to settle United Empire Loyalists in Upper Canada. That work laid the foundation of Halton region, which is now recognized nationally for its welcoming communities, quality of life, vibrant business culture and dynamic growth.

Major Halton was fortunate enough to have received the honour of Halton county during his lifetime. But while such tributes would occur long after his death on September 22, 1821, he remains a figure of some mystery.

As an administrative official, Major Halton saw no statues raised in his honour. Not a single portrait was made of him. No living person knows what he looked like, and he died without issue. Even his headstone in England had lost the shape of his name.

Major Halton was honoured alongside English military heroes such as Nelson and Wellington, whose names were given to some of the townships that went on to form what is now the city of Burlington.

In life, Major Halton's reputation was well and widely known. In death, his memory grows pale and ghostly, but he need not become a footnote to history. He should be remembered for his service to Ontario and Canada. Bill 142 is an overdue step, reclaiming and celebrating the history, as well as the region that proudly bears his name.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I think everything that needs to be said about Major William Halton has probably been said at this point.

What I want to commend the member for, and those who came, is their excitement, interest and passion about

history, period, and perhaps about a figure who is not the best-known figure in history.

We as a community, and we as a government—but, broader than that, across Ontario—don't take our history seriously enough. I use the example—I was speaking to my benchmate from Trinity–Spadina—about how difficult it is even to keep heritage buildings standing, because the onus is always on an individual or a group of people to go and make the case that this is a heritage, that this is important and that this must be saved. That's backwards. In fact, we should, as governments and as a collectivity, be very concerned about keeping our history—both buildings and memories, and the lived history of those who played a part in history—alive. That's a responsibility as citizens. That's a responsibility for the next generation, and the next generation after that. It really, truly is part of the educational process.

But it's more than that. It's also part of the cultural process. We've all been lobbied today, I believe, by an association of museums, many of them small museums in our communities, many of them the result of passions of an individual or a small group of people who started these small museums, without many resources, on their own, by hook or by crook, and then got a little bit—dribs and drabs—of money from government.

That's not how it should work, I might suggest. I'm glad—I'm so thankful—that the member from Halton brings this forward to us. It was an education for all of us, because I don't think anybody here knew who this person was.

I thank you for coming down, and for writing a book, and for being passionate about preserving the history of your family and your community. That's passion; that's what we should all be doing. But we shouldn't have to rely on individuals to do it. This is a collective responsibility. I would just simply say that this is an example of one person's passion coming forward as a bill that, I think we're all agreed, we will pass today.

But there's so much more, and we shouldn't have to wait. We were kind of musing that maybe one day, for the minor players—but the good people; I mean, he was a good person; he wasn't a major player, but he was a good person; he did good work—maybe one day, one of us will be memorialized in such a way. Maybe someone, in generations to come, will stand up and want to name a day after one of us. Think of the eventuality.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Jonah Schein.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Jonah Schein Day. There you go.

Interjection: Hear, hear.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Anything's possible.

But again, the fact that nobody knew about him, and that really, quite frankly, most of us don't know much about our history, and we do even less to protect it, and even less to protect what's so culturally important and valuable—I think, really, that this is an example and a charge on all of us, wherever we come from and whatever riding we're in, that we do a little bit more to preserve that cultural heritage.

I think it is the responsibility of government to be proactive about preserving our heritage, not just to wait

for somebody to bring it to us but to actually proactively look at what is important in our communities and to preserve it.

That's really all I'll say. I commend the member from Halton—yes, there are some beautiful places in Halton; I also have been there. I also want to commend him for bringing forth a name that wasn't known to everyone. Often when we name days, it's a name that most people know of, if not know a lot about.

1610

And I want to thank our visitors for having a passion and seeing it through. I just wish that we could say the same of our governments.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very, very pleased to have this opportunity this afternoon to speak in support of Bill 142, an Act to proclaim Major William Halton Day in the province of Ontario. It received first reading on November 28 before the Christmas recess, and we are here today, of course, to discuss it at second reading.

It's good to hear the debate from the other members. It would appear that the New Democrats and the Liberals are supportive in principle. Of course, that's a good sign and we hope that the members of their respective caucuses will want to show their support for this bill as well.

This bill was introduced by my friend and colleague the member for Halton, Ted Chudleigh, and I want to congratulate him for it. I think it's an outstanding initiative. I think it speaks to the importance of the heritage and history of this province, and I'm really pleased that we are debating it today because I feel very privileged to be one of the Halton region MPPs, having been re-elected to the Legislature in 2007 representing the newly constituted riding of Wellington–Halton Hills. So I've been privileged to represent people in Halton region since that time, some six and a half years now, and it's been a real honour and a privilege to get to know people in the town of Halton Hills and to work with my colleagues Ted Chudleigh and Jane McKenna and the others. Together, it is our privilege to serve the people of Halton Hills. So I was very pleased to be asked to speak to this legislation.

As was said, we understand that this private member's bill would establish September 22 in each year as Major William Halton Day, or, in its short form, Halton Day. Major William Halton came to Upper Canada or what is today Ontario in 1806 as the private secretary to Lieutenant Governor Sir Francis Gore. He served in this capacity from 1806 to 1811, and 1815 to 1816. We know that he played a significant role in the early development of Canada as an administrator.

The Legislative Assembly of Upper Canada established the role of provincial agent, to which Halton was appointed, and while in that role Halton worked tirelessly to assist veterans and their families after the War of 1812. We can only imagine the importance of that role, but obviously it was something that was very important in those years after the War of 1812 had concluded.

Halton worked to settle the United Empire Loyalists in Upper Canada, who constituted Canada's first culturally diverse immigration. He thus set the foundations for the future of Halton region, which, as we know, is today the fastest-growing municipality in Canada and is home to nearly half a million people from various backgrounds.

Halton county was, of course, named for him, as was said, while he was still alive, which is an interesting distinction, of course, and his name came to be used in the naming of dozens of places and institutions in Halton region and in Toronto.

Halton was known and esteemed by such great historical figures as General Sir Isaac Brock, Bishop John Strachan and Henry Bathurst. His renown as a humanitarian and dedicated public servant won him the admiration of the early settlers in our province. Again, I believe it is fitting that we celebrate the life and work of William Halton. Ontarians need to recognize their great cultural heritage and celebrate notable achievers, from the heroes of yesterday and today to the builders of our province, who laid the foundation on which our lives in Ontario and Canada are built.

This bill reminds me of a piece of legislation that I brought forward in the fall: the Lincoln Alexander Day Act. I'm very pleased to see Dr. Rosemary Sadlier of the Ontario Black History Society, whom I worked with on that bill, as well as our bill to recognize Emancipation Day in the province of Ontario. Welcome again to the Legislature, Rosemary. It's wonderful to have you here. I know that we're in the month of February, which is Black History Month, and I know that there is a reception tonight at the Legislature. We certainly encourage members who are around and able to come to visit that reception. It is an important event as well.

I want to pay tribute to the member for Halton. As I said, I've had the privilege to work with him, jointly representing the interests of the people of Halton, for some time now. He was first elected, actually, in 1995, re-elected in 1999, 2003, 2007 and 2011, which puts him in a situation where he's one of the longest-serving members of this House. I think it has been almost 19 years now that he has served here—

Applause.

Mr. Ted Arnott: —and he deserves the credit and the applause of all members. He has done an outstanding job and he demonstrates a great commitment to his constituents at all times, a great deal of wisdom, and we hope that his service will continue in this Legislature for many, many more years to come.

When our party served in government, of course, he was involved with the ministries of finance, economic development and trade, natural resources and a number of other important responsibilities. Certainly he was one of the pillars of our caucus when we served in government, and we hope to see him in government again after the next go-round. He also had an important private member's bill that was passed into law in the late 1990s to recognize Holocaust Memorial Day, and it is something that I think is a hallmark achievement for him, and

this bill is a good follow-up to that. He is an outstanding MPP, and I feel very privileged to work with him.

He carries on the outstanding family tradition of public service that was, I think, initiated by his grandfather, the Honourable Tom Kennedy, who served in this Legislature for many, many years, representing a Peel riding, I guess it was in those days, and also for many years as the Minister of Agriculture, culminating in his tenure and service as Premier of the province of Ontario between 1948 and 1949. I know that Tom Kennedy would be very, very proud of his grandson for the outstanding tradition that he has carried on in terms of public service.

It was said that in 2016 the region of Halton will, in fact, celebrate 200 years of existence. I think it is very appropriate, then, and fitting that this bill is passed into law as part of those celebrations so that we can continue to recognize the importance and the contribution, the historical contribution, of people like Major William Halton. Again, I congratulate the member for Halton for this outstanding private member's bill, and I encourage all members to support it when it goes to the second reading vote later on this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Halton gave me the opportunity to speak for a couple of minutes. We often, as good friends, talk about the relationship between—he's the member from Halton, and that is the name of what we are talking about today; I'm the member from Durham. These are the regions. We are actually the bookends of the GTA, and we form, if you will, the perimeter of the quality of life he described. I would like to put on the record as well that Durham region will be celebrating its 40th year as a regional government this year, and I've been to a couple of the ceremonial events already.

We're bounded on the north by the Oak Ridges moraine and on the south by the shores of Lake Ontario. We're probably one of the more prosperous and vibrant areas in terms of agriculture, but also with the quality-of-life issues with fishing, sailing, skiing and golf, and I would say a great place to live. I just want to put that on the record. I want to thank the member for taking the time to recognize Major William Halton on this day, and specifically on the day of his death, I suppose. Durham has a similar proud history, and it's a compliment that the member here, whose grandfather served here as Premier for a while—that we have a proud history as well. All of us should take that opportunity to celebrate, as we did earlier today, the important things that happen in our ridings.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? Have we used it all up? Further debate.

We'll come back to the member for Halton, who has two minutes.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'd like to thank my colleagues, the member for Trinity–Spadina, the member for Oakville, the members for Burlington, Parkdale–High Park,

Wellington–Halton Hills and Durham for their kind remarks regarding William Halton.

I think it was obvious that a lot of people made comments that William Halton was not someone who anyone knew. I think that's the very point. You know, York was named after the Duke of York. He was the Duke of York by accident of birth. It's not something that he earned. York was named after him, as were many other places around the world. Not so with William Halton. William Halton earned his reputation. He earned the recognition of having a place such as Halton named after him. When people who were dealing with William Halton faced him, asked him to do something, expected him to do something, they found that it was done. It was done well, it was done on time, and it was done in a manner and in a fashion which they expected it to be done. They respected him for that. They respected his compassion. They respected his hard work. They respected his integrity. They respected the commitment that he made. Even though he was no longer in the province of Ontario, the province of Upper Canada, he continued that work. He earned his title. He earned the right to have a county in Ontario named after him, unlike many of the other counties—all good people, all good things, but this is one county that was named after a private secretary, a private secretary who committed himself and made it work so that he was recognized, and that makes it a little different. That makes it a forerunner of what Ontario is really all about. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

1620

HEALTH STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT (HEALTHY
DECISIONS MADE EASY), 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT
DES LOIS RELATIVES À LA SANTÉ
(DÉCISIONS SANTÉ SIMPLIFIÉES)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We will deal first with ballot item number 70, standing in the name of Ms. Gélinas.

Ms. Gélinas has moved second reading of Bill 149—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I can't entertain a point of order—An Act to amend the Health Protection and Promotion Act and the Smoke-Free Ontario Act to improve the health of Ontarians.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion carried. Which committee should the bill go to?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The member would like to order it to Legislative Assembly.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes. Legislative Assembly—it's done?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Which committee would you like the bill to go to?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We're going to put it to a vote. Is it the pleasure of the House that the bill be referred to the Legislative Assembly committee? Agreed? Agreed.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AMENDMENT ACT (TEMPORARY
HELP AGENCIES), 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI
(AGENCES DE PLACEMENT
TEMPORAIRE)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We'll deal with the next one. Mr. Takhar has moved second reading of Bill 159, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000, with respect to temporary help agencies.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Member from Mississauga–Erindale.

Mr. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to refer the bill to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Mississauga–Erindale is asking to send the bill to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. Agreed? Agreed.

MAJOR WILLIAM HALTON
DAY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE JOUR
DU MAJOR WILLIAM HALTON

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We'll deal with the third one now. Mr. Chudleigh has moved second reading of Bill 142, An Act to proclaim Major William Halton Day.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Member for Halton?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Social policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Halton is seeking to send the bill to the social policy committee. Agreed? Agreed.

VISITOR

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Citizenship on a point of order.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I would just like to take a moment to recognize Rosemary Sadlier for the Ontario Black History Society, on behalf of the government of Ontario. Welcome.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Again, we're very pleased to recognize the presence of Rosemary Sadlier. Thank you, and welcome.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING AND IMPROVING
GOVERNMENT ACT, 2014LOI DE 2014 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT
ET L'AMÉLIORATION
DE LA GESTION PUBLIQUE

Mr. Milloy moved second reading of the following bill:

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the minister to lead off the debate.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's a pleasure for me in my capacity as Minister of Government Services to lead off the debate today. I'd like to begin by informing members that I'll be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the hard-working member from Etobicoke North.

It's an interesting position I find myself in as Minister of Government Services, because I have carriage of this bill, but in effect, this bill deals with a number of ministries. As we get into debate and discussion, potentially and hopefully, at committee, I'm sure we're going to be looking for the expertise of a number of ministers or parliamentary assistants and others with background in a variety of fields.

This bill is the bringing together of a number of initiatives, of matters which themselves could be independent pieces of legislation. Unfortunately—and I say this maybe a little bit more as House leader than as government services minister—we have not seen a great deal of progress in moving legislation through this House. There have been some bright spots, and I thank members for when we have been able to come together to move things through. But there has been a certain slowness, a certain stickiness, if I can use that term, in moving forward on items—surprisingly, Mr. Speaker, items on which there is a consensus within the Legislature. We've seen a number of occasions, and I've even remarked to the press, where we've had 19 hours of debate on a matter which every party then has voted for as it's moved on to committee or, at the end of the process, third reading, despite the fact that even under the

standing orders, it's thought that about six or six and a half hours would be the usual debate time.

What we've done—and I'm going to be very honest, very candid, with members of the Legislature—is we have brought together five initiatives which, as I say, could have themselves been stand-alone pieces of legislation. We've brought it together in one bill to facilitate the passage through the Legislature. Although I don't want to presume what the other parties will say, I find that all of these are matters where I think there is consensus here in the Legislature. I would also argue that they're non-controversial and, in fact, reflect good public policy.

So I'm not going to spend a lot of time this afternoon. As I said, I'm looking forward to passing the baton to my parliamentary assistant. But I do want to spend a few moments outlining for members of the Legislature what these five components are.

First, the act proposes to amend the Courts of Justice Act. The proposed amendments would help same-sex couples and other couples who were married in Ontario but are not residents of Canada to obtain a divorce in our 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 piece of the proposed act would provide greater certainty to pension members and plans. The Pension Benefits Act would be amended to clarify spousal entitlements to pre- and post-retirement death benefits. It would also make changes to help people impacted by split pensions and asset transfers. These changes are a prudent and necessary step for pension members and plans here in Ontario.

The third piece of the proposed act would help strengthen the partnership with the Ontario Medical Association. The act proposes to amend the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act to prevent legal action against representatives of the association for acts done in good faith during negotiations with the government. Individuals in this organization represent the diverse interests of Ontario's medical profession. These changes would better support representatives of the Ontario Medical Association, representatives who play a key role in the delivery of health care services in the province.

The fourth component of the act would amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act. If passed, the amendments would allow the government to collect more meaningful information about post-secondary students' enrolment and transfer activities. Our goal is to better inform decision-making in our post-secondary sector, and these changes would benefit students and, ultimately, our economy.

The fifth and final piece of the proposed bill would amend the Highway Traffic Act. If passed, these changes would improve the safety and reliability of stretcher transportation services in Ontario. These amendments

respond to the provincial Ombudsman's recommendation to regulate the stretcher transportation services industry and would ensure greater accountability for stretcher transportation services. It would protect passengers and provide greater peace of mind for Ontarians who need these services.

1630

The proposed Strengthening and Improving Government Act will support Ontario's post-secondary, health care, justice, pension and transportation legislation. As you heard, Mr. Speaker, these are important amendments. In some cases, it's a response, as I just mentioned, to the Ombudsman; in other cases, public policy issues; the issue around marriage, an anomaly that has arisen due to changes at the federal level. These I would not in any way view as being controversial. As I say, I will allow the other parties and members to speak for themselves, but I don't think there's great opposition to this.

I guess my plea—to go back to my original point—is that we've bundled them together; we've tried to make it as acceptable a bill as possible. I'm hoping that we can work our way through this legislation in the normal course: a number of hours of second reading, some committee review, and come back and demonstrate to people—particularly the stakeholders; as I say, many of these are of a technical nature, but there are stakeholders who find a great deal of importance in these amendments that we're bringing forward—the fact that we can make this Legislature work. So again, I look forward to passing the floor to my parliamentary assistant, but that's a quick overview of what we're doing here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Thank you, Speaker. I would like to, first of all, salute Minister Milloy and our colleagues at the Ministry of Government Services, who have done a great deal of work putting together, collating, a lot of legislation that we'd like to move forward. I would, of course, now like to thank not only my minister, but as I say, colleagues and proceed with some of the details.

Tel que l'a mentionné le ministre Milloy, le projet de loi comprend cinq composants. Ces composants englobent des modifications à des mesures législatives existantes et veindront améliorer l'efficacité et la réactivité pour les Ontariens.

Proposed amendments to Ontario's Courts of Justice Act would better respond to families and better support personal rights and freedoms for all Ontarians. These amendments would change our legislation to effectively support couples who meet requirements under the federal Civil Marriage Act, which governs divorce proceedings for non-residents of Canada. Last summer the federal government amended this legislation. They eliminated the one-year residency requirement for non-resident spouses who married in Canada but whose home jurisdiction does not recognize their marriage. This new law provides for a new kind of divorce for spouses who reside outside of Canada, and our proposed amendments, of course, support this particular change.

Les modifications à la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires de l'Ontario permettront l'élaboration de nouvelles règles, de procédures et de nouveaux formulaires pour ce nouveau type de divorce. Des modifications complémentaires donneraient aux tribunaux unifiés de la famille de l'Ontario l'autorité d'autoriser ces divorces. Ces tribunaux existent dans 40 % des installations des tribunaux partout dans la province. Pour améliorer l'efficacité, ce projet de loi permettrait à l'avenir l'ajout par réglementation de toutes nouvelles mesures législatives fédérales en matière de droits de la famille.

Proposed amendments to the Pension Benefits Act would provide greater certainty to pension members and their plans. If passed, the Pension Benefits Act would be amended to clarify spousal entitlements to pre- and post-retirement death benefits. This means providing spousal pre-retirement death entitlements to the spouse, married or common law, who was living with the plan member at the time of death. We are also proposing to amend the post-retirement death benefit provision.

Dans ces cas, les prestations consécutives au décès seraient payables au conjoint survivant qui demeurerait avec la personne décédée le jour où la pension était due. Si cette modification est adoptée, elle réinstaurerait le droit du conjoint à la charge de ces prestations.

Proposed amendments to the Pension Benefits Act would also help people impacted by split pensions and asset transfers.

For a moment, departing from my text, which I'm sure my colleagues in the press will be checking against delivery, I would, Mr. Day, with your permission and yours, Speaker, like to recognize now the presence in the government gallery of Shafiq Qadri, Jr., my 12-year-old son. Welcome, sir.

As a result of government divestments, some employees in Ontario receive one pension from their former employer and one from their new employer. In some cases, benefits from these split pensions may be less than if they were combined. As committed to in our 2013 budget, we implemented changes that allow certain plans to provide eligible people the option to consolidate their benefits. Our proposed amendments would give these people until July 1, 2016, to consolidate their benefits.

Étant donné la restructuration de l'organisation, certains employés occupent de nouveaux emplois et deviennent participants à de nouveaux régimes de retraite. Le règlement concernant le transfert définit un ensemble de règles pour le transfert de l'actif du régime de pension ancien au nouveau régime.

Proposed amendments to the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act would better support representatives of the Ontario Medical Association, of which I number also. Proposed amendments would prevent legal action against representatives of the association for acts done in good faith related to physician agreements and payments—and these are doctors, so the acts are, generally speaking, always done in good faith. This responds to the needs of representatives of this organization during negotiations with the government, and it would help to strengthen partnerships with this association.

Proposed amendments also included here alter some aspects of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act, which would ensure that we continue to provide students with affordable, world-class post-secondary education that equips them with skills they need to succeed.

Nos modifications proposées permettraient au ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités de recueillir et d'utiliser des données concernant les inscriptions, les activités de transfert et les résultats en matière d'éducation. Cette mesure aidera le gouvernement à mieux comprendre les tendances en matière d'éducation postsecondaire et de formation. Si elle est adoptée, elle permettra d'apporter des améliorations au système d'éducation postsecondaire et aidera le gouvernement à cerner les facteurs qui influencent sur le rendement des étudiants et leur transition vers le marché du travail.

La protection des renseignements personnels et de la vie privée est un engagement que nous prenons au sérieux. C'est pourquoi le gouvernement a consulté le Bureau du commissaire à l'information et à la protection de la vie privée au cours de l'élaboration des modifications proposées. Ainsi, nous veillerons à la protection de la vie privée des gens.

Si adopté, ce projet de loi aidera la province à mieux surveiller et à évaluer la qualité des programmes offerts par nos collèges et universités.

Proposed amendments to the Highway Traffic Act would regulate the stretcher transportation services industry with new requirements. The new legislation would require operators to meet specific requirements for vehicle inspection and maintenance, equipment, drivers and attendants. These changes would also authorize the inspection of vehicles and related business premises, and ensure greater accountability for stretcher transportation service providers. If passed, passengers who require a stretcher but do not require medical care during their trip will be assured of enhanced safety, reliability and greater peace of mind.

Le projet de loi proposé, soit la Loi sur le renforcement et l'amélioration de la gestion publique, viendra renforcer les mesures législatives concernant l'éducation postsecondaire, les soins de santé, la justice, les pensions de retraite et le transport. Ce projet de loi fait partie du plan économique du gouvernement de l'Ontario, qui vise à investir dans la population, à bâtir de l'infrastructure moderne et à favoriser un climat d'affaires dynamique et novateur.

With these particular itemizations—a lengthy list, I know—touching on a broad range of legislation, I invite the entire House to please join us as we in the Ministry of Government Services strive to modernize some of the services offered by the government of Ontario, in the continued service of the people of Ontario.

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

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Mr. Gilles Bisson: J'accuse le député. I accuse him.

I just want to say to my good friend, who happens to be in the Tory benches today but we know he's on that side of the House, that I heard him at the beginning talk about how everybody is holding everything up in this Legislature, and the terrible snail's pace at which things are going. The reality is that New Democrats have come to this Legislature and have dealt with every bill issue by issue. If there's an issue where there has to be public scrutiny—well, there's always public scrutiny, but if it's a bill where members have something they need to say because they are representing their critic's portfolio or their constituency, of course we're going to have the debate, and we're going to put those issues through the process.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's what the Liberals used to do.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I remember Liberals doing that, as my good friend Mr. Marchese has just said.

When it comes to committee, we have always believed, as New Democrats—and this is not a surprise to anybody in this Legislature—that bills should always be vetted through committee. It may be in the end that nobody wants to present—and God bless; that's the choice of the public—but at the end of the day, the public has to have the right to say, “I feel strongly about this bill,” one way or another, “and I would like to be able to say a few things about it and make my points.”

New Democrats are following the process, and that's what we've always done: to understand that it's all about the people back home. It's about the people in our constituencies, the people of Ontario, who have the right to know what's going on in this Legislature, who expect the members on all sides of the House—and the opposition has a specific role when it comes to what happens in this House—to put on the record those issues, either pro or against the particular bill, and to have their say on committee, to make sure the public has a right to speak. Because, my friends, this Legislature is about what? It's not about you and I. It's not about Mr. Milloy, Mr. Bisson or Mr. Wilson as House leaders. It's about the people of Ontario, and we as New Democrats believe it's important to make sure the public has their say, to make sure there is transparency so that in the end, people know what's going on in this Legislature and we always do what's right for the people of Ontario.

Now, je ne t'accuse plus.

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

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. I'm very pleased to get up and talk about the proposed Strengthening and Improving Government Act, to improve efficiency and responsiveness in core areas that matter to Ontarians. This is a unique act covering many different aspects of daily living and what's important to Ontarians. There's the Courts of Justice Act changes, Pension Benefits Act changes, the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, as well as amendments to the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act.

But there's one piece I'd like to talk about, because as the member from the third party just said, a number of

these things do impact everyday lives of Ontarians, and the amendment to the Highway Traffic Act is one that I can relate to on a very personal level. That's the one to improve the safety and reliability of non-ambulance transport services in Ontario.

The legislation here will help ensure that those services meet the people of Ontario's expectations for safety and quality. This is really about when someone needs to be transported safely by qualified personnel but not necessarily in an ambulance. These vehicles often look like ambulances—in fact, they may be former ambulance vehicles—but they are not ambulances and they are not staffed by hospital personnel. But they play a very important role, as they are doing for my husband right now, who is very ill, being cared for at home, but does have to be transported for hospital appointments on a stretcher. He cannot transfer into a car himself. So we use this service at home, and I'm very happy to see more clarity around this so that people know what these vehicles are and what they are not. These are private companies, it's a private business, and I'm very pleased to see stronger rules around how this particular business is governed.

So that's my personal story, and I'm very pleased to support this.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to respond to the minister's opening remarks on the Ministry of Government Services changes in Bill 151.

First, I want to say this: I'm very surprised—in fact, I'm shocked—at how little respect is paid to this particular bill. It's an omnibus bill by any description, and this is quite remarkable. On a Thursday afternoon, which is usually dedicated to private members' business, here's a bill, An Act to amend various Acts. In fact, there are five of them, and these aren't simple little kind of reference amendments; these are very, very significant.

Under schedule 1 is the Ministry of the Attorney General, the Courts of Justice Act on civil marriages etc. I don't have much problem with that particular section.

Under schedule 2, Ministry of Finance, the Pension Benefits Act, there are significant remarks that I will be making this afternoon that are relevant to a current case before the courts of Ontario.

Section 3, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, with respect to the Ontario Medical Association and employees and agents: There are provisions within that, as well as schedule 4, which is the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. I'm looking forward to our member from Barrie, who will be doing our party's official lead on it.

More troubling in all of this is the Ministry of Transportation provisions.

These acts, each one of those schedules, is described in some detail in the preamble of the bill, amending the sections within those acts themselves. This is no small piece of legislation that should be brushed off so casually

by the minister, as well as his parliamentary assistant, who was given notes to read that I'm sure he read fairly accurately.

But I would say this: That is discouraging. When you look at the province of Ontario and the chaotic basket of items that we have before us that have been remarked on by the auditor, by other select committees that are standing on issues—Ornge, the gas plants—this is disrespectful to the process of this Legislature itself.

I have more to say this afternoon on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): There's time for one last question or comment.

One of the government members has the opportunity to respond.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: At the outset, as the tradition is, I will thank my minister, the Minister of Government Services, Mr. Milloy, and my honourable colleague from Timmins—James Bay. I appreciated how he quoted « J'accuse ...! » from Émile Zola. I'd simply reply with a changed quotation from Louis XIV: « L'État, c'est nous, en fait. » In any case, I'd thank Tracy MacCharles, Minister of Consumer Services, and the MPP for Durham, although I thank him under slight duress. I'm a little bit perplexed. When we pass what you may term ceremonial legislation, you call it too insubstantive; it's not meaty enough. When we give you large pieces of legislation, you say it's too complex.

I would simply invite you to not follow Tory tradition, to actually read the legislation and see how the various issues it intersects, whether it's the Courts of Justice Act, Pension Benefits Act, Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act or improvements to the Highway Traffic Act—how it impacts, benefits and improves in its, yes, modest way; yes, in its broad-spectrum manner. But actually read the bill before you do this blanket Tory, reflexive, Tea Party, Republican, “We're going to vote against it and call the government on it,” and, you know, blow the place up. I think that kind of mentality and mode of operation is not really called for.

A great deal of thought—I know personally, having attended endless amounts of briefings on all of these issues—has been put into these matters. This is not being brought lightly. There's no conspiracy to be inflicted upon the people of Ontario on a Thursday afternoon. These are thoughtful, measured, broad-spectrum improvements to the way government does business in Ontario. By the way, if I may say, the Ministry of Government Services doesn't do anything small, because size does matter.

With that, Speaker, I would simply encourage all members of this Legislature to support wholeheartedly, forthrightly and immediately Bill 151.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: I will be sharing my time with the member from Durham today.

It's an interesting bill to speak on today, to say the least: Bill 151, the Strengthening and Improving Govern-

ment Act. I'm really glad the Liberal Party actually realizes that there is a significant need to strengthen and improve government. It does show a little bit of light, I think, in the sort of dark days Ontario is under with the giant deficit and debt. It's record-breaking, in fact.

However, Speaker, I regret to say that I doubt this bill has all that it's going to take to be able to strengthen and improve government. It's a very small step in that direction. Unfortunately, with its omnibus nature, it really doesn't give all of the credit and all of the improvements the due diligence that they need, I believe.

The bill is examining legislation in several areas. We look at the Ministry of Finance. Clearly, the Ministry of Finance on its own—the largest ministry, money-wise, in this government—is in need of a massive reform—in fact, massive innovation, I'd say.

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We can only go back to the taxpayers so much and ask them to fund your mistakes, or to fund new projects, when we know that there's enough money there already. It's just being misused. The revenue of this province has gone up dramatically over the past decade that this party has been in power—yes, a decade. You wouldn't know it by listening to them still blaming governments from 10, 20 years ago.

The bill also talks about the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. It addresses some issues there. We know that this ministry needs attention and improvement. The Ministry of Health takes up almost half of the total of the provincial budget—almost half, and growing every year. I'm going to talk a little bit more about that within this address.

The Ministry of Colleges, Training and Universities: Clearly, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities isn't moving fast enough, isn't innovative enough, to be able to provide the kind of trained individuals that our marketplace is in demand of right now. So what do we find ourselves with? We find ourselves now, in places like Simcoe county—and, I know, around the province as well—where we have a lack of skilled tradespeople.

To get tradespeople trained in Ontario is not only expensive; it's confusing for them. We actually have to hire people from other countries to come and do some fairly plentiful trades, like millwrights and auto mechanics. Actually, there's a whole bunch of auto mechanics now coming over from Ireland, because they find it difficult to find jobs there, but there are lots of them here. These are jobs that have six-figure salaries attached to them.

We have all these kids who are looking for work and looking for options, and they don't even know—and if they do know, we're not making it easy for them. We have all sorts of people graduating from universities and colleges and they can't find jobs, because the education they've got doesn't match the jobs that are out there. Let's talk about that when we talk about the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Ministry of Transportation: Where do you start with this? It's another massive ministry.

We look around us and we see—and we don't talk about it too much, really, but there is a crumbling infrastructure around us. Friends of mine visited from overseas this summer, and the first thing they noticed—we don't notice it, because it happens slowly. The first thing they noticed was the actual state of our roads.

Drive on a 400-series highway, and if you look at the infrastructure crumbling—I drive that highway every day, and—I mean, that's just one of them. There are plenty of them that need work. We're not seeing the same level of investment to keep our highways and our roadways and all our infrastructure, sewers—our cities don't even have sustainable plans, aren't able to have sustainable plans, to maintain their infrastructure, so they have massive infrastructure deficits that the province isn't doing anything about. They're not giving them any sort of sustainable infrastructure to build around. A bill just on that alone could be the same size as this.

If you really, really want to attack these things, if you really want to solve these problems, you know what? Split them out. Actually deal with the problem instead of putting window dressing on it and creating a nice, pretty bill that says you're strengthening and improving government. At least you're agreeing that you need to strengthen and improve government.

Then we talk about the Attorney General, too. There's a plethora of issues there that could be dealt with.

You know what? The fact is that there's so much more work to be done than is detailed here. But I suppose you can call it a start, if nothing else.

The government has given themselves numerous reasons to strengthen and improve government, I think, so hats off to them for recognizing that, as I mentioned. But what's really lacking, I find, in this bill and generally in this government is the will and courage to actually take substantial action, to be able to fix our province and to make it the place we want it to be.

Instead, they're just putting nameplates on bills that sound nice and sound good but don't accomplish much. There are a million examples of this throughout the last two years I've been here, anyway. Many of them have really great names that I think people can get behind, but when you actually get into the words of the bills, you realize that in fact you were getting nothing or very little, or you were even getting less, in many cases. It's costing money, with no return. The Green Energy Act: a great example of a bill that is starting to bankrupt this province and causing our energy prices to go up, chasing businesses out of our province. Let's start talking about those sorts of things. Let's talk about substantive things that actually make change. This bill, I'm afraid, doesn't go as far to do that as it should.

I want to talk a little bit about each of those ministries that I mentioned earlier:

Finance: The legislation within the Ministry of Finance needs so much updating that it's unreal, Speaker—never mind this quick housekeeping bill. It's almost an embarrassment to put this bill forward as a housekeeping bill when, really, there's an opportunity here to do so

much for our province and actually strengthen and improve government.

For starters, how about an amendment to not shamelessly run a deficit act—how about that? We know the deficit is old news. We know the problem with our deficit and our debt. People's eyes roll back in their heads when you talk about it. The numbers are so dramatically huge that people can't even relate to them.

The deficit in Ontario is around \$10 billion. The Ontario debt is \$262 billion. That means that every person in Ontario, young and old, infants and retirees, all the pages in this room today—that is a \$19,000 burden on each one of their heads, that we put on. That's not fair. That's something that we need to take more seriously, and we need to do it without calling the taxpayers "tools." They're not revenue tools. It's up to us to make sure that we don't use them as tools, to actually make sure that we give them value for their money. They're not getting value for their money. You've got to stop taking their money from them.

Our debt is growing by over \$1.3 million an hour. Just think about that: \$1.3 million an hour. It's another one of those numbers that makes your head spin a little bit. It's enough to hire five doctors or 20 front-line nurses.

In the riding of Barrie, boy, do we need doctors; boy, do we need nurses. We have a great new regional hospital in Barrie, the Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre—great bricks and mortar. It would be even better if we had doctors and nurses and custodians who were able to be there to run it. Right now, we don't.

We have a problem in Barrie. We have 30,000 people who don't have a family doctor in the city of Barrie—30,000 people. What if we were dealing with that? What if we actually took that \$1.3 million an hour and hired doctors and nurses and front-line health care professionals with it?

In 2013, debt-servicing payments cost nearly \$11 billion, making it the province's third-largest expenditure after health care and education. If debt-servicing was a ministry, it would be the third-largest ministry. That actually comes in ahead, by a billion dollars, of community and social services. I'm also the critic for community and social services. That's a \$10.1-billion budget. It's costing us \$11 billion to service the debt. Imagine if we didn't have to service that debt anymore. Imagine if we were actually responsible about the money we're spending on behalf of the taxpayers and were able to use that money for front-line health care workers, for community and social services, to make sure people with special needs actually get what they need. Imagine that. Imagine a place where we could do that. And we're just talking about a small portion of what's generating that debt. That alone tells me that we're not doing enough.

This bill certainly doesn't do enough to strengthen and improve government, and it doesn't show the courage and the will to do it either.

Like I said, after health care and education, our debt is the hugest. This government, the McGuinty-Wynne government, has allowed the debt to grow by \$114

billion over the past decade. That's your legacy. That's huge. It's more than all the provinces in Canada combined. When you tell people that, they can't believe it.

I always use this analogy when I talk about a billion dollars, because, again, it's one of those numbers where people's eyes glaze over and roll back in their heads—"Yes, a billion dollars, Rod. It's government. That's what happens." We need to do better, and we can't just say that's what government does with billions of dollars here and there. We tend to get upset about \$1.25 coffees and \$16 orange juices in expenses. But do you know what? Here's what the number, a billion, looks like. A billion minutes ago, the Roman Empire was in full swing. A billion hours ago, we were in the Stone Age. A billion months ago, there were dinosaurs roaming the earth. That's how many a billion is. It just kind of puts it into perspective for people, what we're talking about when we say the word "billion," with a B. It's absolutely massive and it's nothing to sneeze at. It's going to take a long time and it's going to take some hard work to get us out of the hole. The bill doesn't address that. So that's debt and deficit.

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Overspending, taxes, the upcoming budget, an amendment—let's talk about another amendment that maybe might have worked. It could work and actually improve and strengthen government. What if we had an amendment called the "stop gouging the taxpayer act"? How about that one for a change? It seems like it might be well served here, actually.

Ontario doesn't have a revenue problem. I mentioned this earlier. We know that we're collecting enough money. We're collecting much more now than we were 10 years ago, a lot more now, folks, than we were collecting 10 years ago. Yet our debt and deficit have ballooned at a record pace over the past 10 years this government has been in power.

It's a spending problem. We hear this over and over again—a spending problem. We can talk about all kinds of ways—into the billions and hundreds of millions of dollars that this government has perpetrated. The worst part is that when we start talking about solutions to this, the first go-to for this government is to actually go to the taxpayer and say, "You know what? We want more. We want more of your money. We want to squeeze your pocket just a little bit more. Don't worry. Trust us. We know what we're doing." You know what? The jig is up. They get it. They know what you're doing with their money: nothing. We got nothing for a \$1.1-billion gas plant; nothing. Not that we got bad value for it, folks; we got zero for it; absolutely zero. I believe we can do better today, tomorrow and next year. We can do better.

This bill does not address that problem in a substantial way. It doesn't show the courage or the will to make it happen.

I kind of dread the upcoming budget. I dread it because I know it's going to be used as a tool. We know that there's the possibility and the potential for an elec-

tion. This government has shown that they have an unabashed will to spend money to influence voters during elections—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Oh, no, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Peterborough on a point of order.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I don't believe that he can use such language implying influencing voters. It borders, from my perspective, on being unparliamentary, Mr. Speaker, and I wish to have you rule on that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to caution the member for Barrie to ensure that his language is in fact parliamentary and ensure that his comments relate back to the bill.

I return to the member for Barrie, who has the floor.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Thank you. Your caution is well-advised.

I'm concerned about 10 cents more for GTA transit. I'm concerned about going deeper into people's pockets for more without having shown the responsibility with their dollars in the first place. I dread looking at more bureaucrats for less front-line services. Here we've seen front-line services expand and grow like crazy, the actual bureaucracies in between them to buffer this government. We look at some of the things that have been done in the last little while for seniors and diabetic strips and physiotherapy changes that have especially affected seniors in rural areas, areas with lack of transit, or ophthalmology decreases causing, in many cases, really highly ill effects on seniors with sight problems.

The other thing this bill doesn't address that it really ought to, Speaker, is transparency. There should be a whole section in there on government transparency. This is something this government talks a lot about but actually really does very little to address. But you know, honestly, why amendments and legislation at all, really, when just a little while ago the Minister of Finance just ignored them when it was convenient for him anyway? Finance Minister Sousa wrote to the Clerk of the Legislature last week to confirm that he would not be tabling the third quarter Ontario finances by the February 15 deadline as required by the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act. If that's all it takes for the minister to not comply with an act on transparency and accountability, I'm not sure if this government has any legitimacy at all when it comes to transparency and accountability. Instead, the minister wrote that he would instead table those numbers along with the 2014 budget. You have to comply with your own laws, especially when you're a lawmaker. I mean, lead from the front—really.

We need to see more. We've seen this government under OPP investigation for email deletions and general public misfeasance. This has got to stop, and this is the kind of thing that a bill like this has the opportunity to address and does not. Again, the theme I have here is will and courage, and it doesn't show either, to do the right thing. Maybe it does show that there's a little bit of a will—I'll give you that, because at least you named it

properly. But it really doesn't go far enough to show that you have the courage to actually make the difficult changes that need to be made.

To talk about lack of transparency, a subject that I'm very familiar with is the Pan Am Games. We have an opportunity to fix, in the future, issues like those that have been happening with the Pan Am Games with transparency, yet we don't see any attempt to do that.

For example, the sunshine list for secretariat salaries with the Pan Am Games were hidden—hidden, really—through three ministries. So if you really wanted to know what the real cost of the games was, you had to dig quite a bit. Lord knows you couldn't actually go and ask the question, because I didn't get an answer for almost two years on that. You know what? It was really easy. You actually had to dig for it, though. People shouldn't have to dig. The opposition shouldn't have to dig that hard to get that simple information.

Also, embedding money across other budgets: For example, the athletes' village was not included in the original \$1.2-billion budget—but always a Pan Am cost. If it's part of the Pan Am games, it needs to be included in the total cost of it, transparent to the Ontario public where their money is going.

The other things that were originally not included until they were actually caught were the \$3.5-million Pan Am trail, \$10 million in the secretariat's budget for paperwork, administration and hospitality—paperwork and partying, I like to call it—and another \$2 million for OSAP breaks for volunteers. I don't know; where I come from, volunteers are volunteers, and you don't pay them. They volunteer out of kindness for their community and caring for their community. Believe me, there are lots of great opportunities for volunteers for the Pan Am Games, and I highly encourage people to get involved and to volunteer.

Another ministry that is addressed through this bill is the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Again, I look at this bill and think, "How do you have one Strengthening and Improving Government Act with all these massive ministries—finance, health care and transportation—and feel that you've done something that can actually get anything done?"

I was given advice early in my career, actually, against multitasking in certain jobs. You don't want a brain surgeon who's a multitasker; you want them focused on the task at hand. What this bill doesn't accomplish is focusing on specific problems and dealing with them in a wholesome way, in an efficacious way. It doesn't do it. Do one thing, do it really well and excel at it. Take your time if you have to, but do the right thing.

You've addressed a housekeeping issue with the medicare act and how legal proceedings are handled with this act, but the real problems within the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care are the scandals and bureaucracy. What are you doing about those? What are you doing to address the problems that have happened in the past, whether it's eHealth or Ornge, or even the LHINs? What is going on to address some of this misspending

and some of these layers of bureaucracy where we see immense amounts of waste?

Here's an opportunity for you to have the courage and the will to make that change with this bill that you've missed. You've missed the opportunity that you have.

You failed to oversee Ornge, despite endless spending. We're looking at \$730 million over five years, signing off on questionable for-profit ventures—we know this story—and allowing Ornge to borrow \$300 million. All of these Ornge subsidiaries that all this money went to are bankrupt, too, now, by the way, so not even a good investment. Again, it's getting nothing for your money for the taxpayer.

Here's another opportunity lost: \$2 million in bonuses for staff. Even after Ornge, you defended it. Even after Ornge promised to cancel them. I'm not sure how you give bonuses to people for failing. That still boggles my mind. I'm not quite sure how that happens. Chris Mazza collected \$9.3 million before being terminated as Ornge's CEO during a criminal probe of the air ambulance service's finances. How does that happen? How does someone have that sort of catastrophic failure and walk away with \$10 million of taxpayer money?

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To me, it says there has been no oversight. A bill like this—if you really want to strengthen and improve government, you'll address these sorts of things very directly, and in fact you have an opportunity to do it in a very meaningful, easy way. These aren't difficult things to fix. What it does take is for you to admit there was a problem in the first place that is actually indicative of a lack of accountability on this government, on this minister. Where does the buck stop with these things? What real leaders do is they stand up and put their hand up and say, "I'm responsible; the buck stops with me. I'm going to do what I need to do to make it right." Instead, we saw brush-off after brush-off by the minister, blaming other people. This bill had an opportunity to fix that and address those things.

Ornge also had problems with staff shortages and delayed responses to save money, the poorly designed interiors for the helicopters that we heard all about, and questions about reliability. You know what? It makes you wonder how many people's health was affected by this. How many people had negative outcomes because of these problems? It's kind of a frightening thought, how many people might have really, actually physically suffered, how many people's families might have suffered because of Chris Mazza's little kingdom-building and this government's lack of ability to oversee it. After all, that's what we're here for: to oversee and be responsible for the operations of government. We haven't seen much of that.

EHealth—just as bad, right? We're going back a few years. The health and long-term-care minister personally approved a \$406,000 severance package for the outgoing eHealth chief, Greg Reed. He gave out about \$16 million in untendered contracts to consultants. Some made \$3,000 a day and expensed tea and chocolate chip

cookies to taxpayers. Here's another opportunity this bill had to fix that sort of thing. We see these ongoing issues. We're talking about eHealth, several years ago, and we see the same things happening with Ornge and then with Pan Am. You wonder: What does it take for people to wake up and understand that there's a bigger problem here with accountability and transparency and the lack of courage to be able to do the right thing and make decisions and take action effectively?

In 2008—here's an interesting one. EHealth Ontario CEO Sarah Kramer approved \$4.8 million—\$5 million almost—in no-bid contracts in the first four months of the agency's operation, while also spending \$50,000 to refurbish her office and paying consultants \$300 an hour. One consultant earned \$192,000 in just five months.

These are all incredible deficiencies; easy, low-hanging fruit that this bill could have affected within our health care system alone. It really could have been fixed. If we could really fix these problems, if we could really spend the money where it needs to be spent, we'd see so many more health care professionals on the ground where they're needed, more nurse practitioners, more physicians, more nurses, more physiotherapists, more of every type of health care professional on the ground.

Instead, we see manipulation and frittering around the edges of the health care system, and some of them not well thought out. We see some seniors that have some ophthalmological issues that are really, seriously affecting their sight. Some of the changes this government has made—diabetic strips being denied to people, not to mention some of the changes to physiotherapy that are having an extremely negative impact. I know the people in Barrie—you can try to sell those changes to physiotherapy all you want over there, but the fact of the matter is, when I tour my seniors' homes in Barrie, people are very affected in a negative way about this. You can't deny that. You can't tell me that the sky isn't blue, because I see it myself.

The LHINs: Here's something that I think is another piece of low-hanging fruit that a bill like this, if you really want to strengthen and improve government, could have improved. The LHINs represent kind of the ultimate layer of bureaucracy that this government has to protect them from being accountable. How many times have we seen people across the floor point their fingers at the LHINs and blame them, or point their constituents towards the LHINs? Do you know how many of my constituents know what a LHIN is or even what LHIN stands for? How many people in here know what it stands for? Let's ask that question.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Local health integration network.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Very good. It's good that someone over there understands. The interesting thing is that most people don't know what the LHINs are. They don't know what they do, and they don't know the people who run them. So how are they to be accountable? They're not elected. No one knows who they are or how much they're getting paid. Yet this government points to them all the time to blame them for the problems and the things that

are going wrong, yet they're a layer of bureaucracy you created, at a fair cost. They cost \$70 million a year to run, and employ approximately 430 people. If you call that job creation, I guess you've done a good job there, although they don't generate any wealth, and they just serve as a buffer.

Here's a good example of the lack of transparency. The best example is probably the Niagara LHIN. The Niagara LHIN's reports are not released until six weeks after the LHIN members have already made a decision over issues that are being debated. That's not transparent. If you're the Minister of Health, I'm looking at that and thinking, "That's inappropriate," and you're making that call. We don't see any of that sort of accountability from this side.

In 2012, LHINs failed to achieve 77% of the government's health care targets. You made targets; good for you—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member from Oakville on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd love to give the member opposite all the latitude in the world, but there isn't anything in this bill that has anything to do with LHINs. I would ask that he speak to the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Every speech in debate on a bill is supposed to go back to the bill in terms of the subject of discussion, so the member from Oakville is quite correct about that. I am listening to the member for Barrie, and I would just suggest that he bring his comments back to the sections of the bill that were opened up through Bill 151.

I return to the member for Barrie.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Thank you. I'm speaking to the portion of the bill that actually deals with health and long-term care, and the LHINs, apparently, are part of that, last time I checked.

Here's an opportunity for you to have fixed that. Here's an opportunity for you to have used this bill, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act, but you haven't. And you know what? I think it's just a missed opportunity for you. Even the Drummond report recommends that spending should be held at 2.5%, but the annual increase for health is 4.9%. At this rate, the \$47-billion budget will go up to \$62.5 billion by 2017 or 2018. That's a dramatic increase. This bill represents an excellent opportunity to address that massive increase in health care spending, rather than frittering away on the edges like it does. That's my point.

Another piece of this bill that is addressed, another ministry in this bill that is addressed, is the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. I know this bill will make changes to some privacy rules that are good. But you know what? Here's another opportunity where they had an opportunity to really, really effectively strengthen and improve government. They missed out again on the opportunity to strengthen and improve government.

Here are some of the immense issues that they could have talked about. Here are some of the immense issues

that they could have had the courage and the will to tackle. Look, our young people aren't finding jobs. We know that. Why aren't they finding jobs? They're not finding jobs because our training, colleges and universities aren't supplying the right kinds of students for the marketplace. There needs to be better communication. There needs to be more happening there to encourage young people—they need more offerings, frankly—to be able to get the jobs that are actually available out there, and we know they're there. I know that in Barrie alone there are 300 to 400 skilled trades jobs available to young people that they don't even know or have the training to apply for. So we have to hire foreign workers to do that. We have the need and the will right here, if the kids only knew and had the opportunity to train properly and it was made easy and affordable for them. Right now, it's not. This bill had an opportunity to address the affordability and ease of getting into programs that would find young people the employment that we know they need.

We should be making amendments to our apprenticeship system, a seriously dated apprenticeship program. Here's a really great opportunity for us to have addressed this in this bill. Talking about ratios, we have an opportunity here. I know this government talks a lot about it; it really does little, again, as I said. Their answer is to create another bureaucracy, the College of Trades—right?—and another new tax, this time targeting tradespeople with astronomical, in some cases, fee increases. That shouldn't be your answer to creating jobs; in fact, by the way, it doesn't create jobs. It scares people away. It does the opposite of what you should be doing. This bill should be encouraging young people to get into the trades. If you're going to strengthen and improve government and its services to the people, one of the basic things you should be doing with the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities is addressing the fact that we don't have enough young people getting into the trades in Ontario. We're getting beat out by other provinces. We're getting beat out by other states. We're in the world economy; we're not in our own little microcosm here anymore.

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I know we have dozens of people who have dozens of stories about family. My own nephew had to go out west to get a job as a plumber—to become a plumber—because of the ratio system that we have here. Other people are leaving the country to do that. It's actually quite a shame, and then we turn around and wonder why we don't have enough people to fill these jobs. It really is shameful, and I don't get why this government thinks it's a good idea to charge people more money and make it more difficult and more bureaucratic for young people to get into the trades. This bill, if it had the courage and will, would have been able to do that and address that.

Your own Minister of Finance predicts that by 2021, there will actually be one million skilled trades vacancies—one million skilled trades vacancies. There are a lot of high-skill, high-tech jobs available in this sector, a lot of them in my own riding, and that's just the

tip of the iceberg. This is where our economy is going. We can't compete with Mexico and lower wages in other places in the world. We need to compete on a different level, with a better product, and again, this is something this bill could have addressed but didn't. It could have strengthened and improved government, and it didn't — just another pretty name.

Youth unemployment: Let's talk about that for a minute. That's really what training, colleges and universities should be doing: improving youth employment. At the end of the day, that's our end goal on this. Youth employment requires attention. Unemployment is getting worse under this government. Ontario lost about 39,000 jobs in December, the most of any province, while the government payroll increased by 13,000 employees; 600,000 Ontarians out of work; 300,000 manufacturing jobs left Ontario for more competitive jurisdictions, as I just mentioned. But the Liberal answer has been to let the taxpayers fund 300,000 new bureaucrats instead, so we're hiring people to work in government and letting the people who are losing their jobs pay for it. It's a little bit backwards, isn't it? Part of the problem is unaffordable energy, red tape and all the things that I've previously mentioned.

This brings me to the other ministry that is addressed by this bill, the Ministry of Transportation, another very large ministry that has lots of opportunity to tackle low-hanging fruit and to actually make a difference and to actually improve and strengthen government, if the bill only showed the courage and the will to be able to do it.

It seems that there are not only weak points with the medical transportation services, as the act attempts to address, but the management of the entire transportation portfolio is a disaster. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Pan Am Games. Here's a great example of how little things could have made a big difference in this bill. We're already looking at the GTA, and it's suffering some of the worst gridlock in North America. Probably, if it is second to anyone, it would be LA. That's pretty sad. It scares people away. I know that a lot of people, even from my riding, don't want to come here, not for any other reason than they don't want to tackle the traffic. Most of us who come from around the province to come here deal with that every day, and it's always more evident when you're away for a while and you come back and see it.

Last spring, I even asked the Minister of Transportation for a plan on the order paper for the Pan Am Games. He promised one by late 2013, but question period revealed that it still wasn't ready in late November. We're almost into March, and there's still no plan 1.5 years out. So there's something broken in this system when we can't even plan for a major event that's coming up in a year or so. We don't even have a plan for it. We can't come up with a plan fast enough, on time—or on budget, by the way, which seems to be the mantra over there.

We've learned that there are several drafts of the plan. We know that there are drafts of the plan for the Pan Am

Games, but they're not being released to us by the government. They're hiding them from the public. So if you want to talk about transparency, you want to talk about accountability, you want to talk about strengthening and improving government, why don't we start there: by actually showing the public what the books are. Show us what your plans are. Show us how you're going to spend our money. What are you afraid of?

This bill had an opportunity to do exactly that: to open it up, to show us all what this government is up to. If you have nothing to hide, then that shouldn't be a problem. There's an opportunity with Bill 151 to address that, and it didn't. It really skimmed over the surface.

The media has also discovered that there's thousands of additional vehicles introduced to the roads to transport the athletes during the Pan Am Games. Lanes may be closed, exacerbating gridlock during the games. This is the kind of poor planning and secrecy that requires legislative amendments to protect us from this government. I'm not sure you want to protect yourselves from yourselves, but it might not be a bad piece of advice. This bill had an opportunity to do that.

Here's another one that hasn't even really shown its true colours yet, but I'm sure it will over the next little while: the air-rail link. Right now it's costing almost twice as much to rush it and have it ready for 2015. This money isn't included in the budget. Diesel, originally \$300 million, now has ballooned to about \$500 million, electrification is another \$440 million, and it's past \$990 million. That's way over the original budget here. We're not even starting to skim the surface on this.

If you have a bill that you want to strengthen and improve government, you need to do more than talk about medical transportation services. You need to tackle these big issues. You know they're there. To actually call it the Strengthening and Improving Government Act—I just don't see it happening. I don't see it being anything more than window dressing when you have all this really low-hanging fruit in just a small portion of the ministry that I've outlined, Speaker—just a very small portion of it. I've given you a few examples of things you can do if you really want to strengthen and improve government.

The one thing that has kind of bothered me since I got here is this ability of the government—maybe other governments have been prone to it in the past, too. Like I said at the beginning of my address, we can do better. What I mean by that is, let's stop naming bills pretty things without any substance to them. Why do you lack the courage to actually make efficient and effective changes? What is it that we're afraid of about the change that can actually make the things that I just mentioned a reality? Why are we so afraid to really address these difficult issues? Is it because it costs money? Is it because it upsets people? What stops you from doing the right thing at the end of the day? What prevents you from doing the wrong thing? This bill does nothing to address any of that.

Before I hand over some of the remaining time to the member from Durham, who's studiously doing his

homework preparing for this, I want to summarize a little bit.

I just think that for this for this to be called a housekeeping bill may be true, but there's so many housekeeping issues pending, so many issues pending that need individual attention. Each one of these sections that I outlined deserves its own specific piece of attention, and they're not receiving it. You cannot continue to nibble around the edges on these problems. At some point, a government that is willing to lead and to get their hands dirty and to get in there and really turn the wrenches is going to make the real changes that are needed to make a government work. I don't see that happening with this bill. I think it's another bill that is great window dressing—it sounds perfect—but it does nothing for anybody other than just chew around the edges of some serious problems.

We have a province that is not performing anywhere near where it should. We have a 40% increase in ODSR recipients and a 50% increase in OW recipients in the past eight years. Newfoundland and Ontario actually lead the way for welfare recipients in Canada. When did that happen? When did this engine that drove Confederation turn into the trailer? It's a shame.

When you see bills come out like this come out and everyone puffs their chests out across the aisle and say how much they're doing to improve and strengthen government while really doing nothing, it's shameful. You should really take some responsibility and actually do the things you know you need to do. You've been given the advice by Don Drummond. You've been given lots of opportunity and ideas by our party and by the people that you represent.

It's time to act, not time to play cute. It's time to act. Don't be the government that treads water; be the government that actually does the things that you've been elected to do. Get the job done.

You know what? Under this government, there's no bill that can really truly strengthen and improve it at this point, not unless you the have courage and will to do that. I don't see that, Speaker. In conclusion, I am very glad that the government finally realizes that it needs to be strengthened and improved, and I would offer them any list of solutions that we provided and a challenge to actually rise up and do the bold things that need to get done to get Ontario back to its old glory again.

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With that, I'll pass off my remainder of the time to the member from Durham.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to, first of all, commend the member from Barrie for standing in and dealing with an omnibus bill that allowed him a certain amount of liberty in terms of roaming around the landscape of the province of Ontario in a fiscal sense. I think he did a commendable job of linking his concerns from his constituents in Barrie and area and his experience both here and as a councillor, and what he brings from his experi-

ence in business. He brings a lot to this debate. I think it was substantive, and I would encourage the minister to reflect on some of the comments he made.

Mostly what I heard more clearly, at almost every reference point, was the scandalous waste. This word itself is the subject in pretty well every standing committee of the Legislature, dealing with the onerous waste of money. Imagine when he mentioned, with all due respect, the work done by Frank Klees in the committee on public accounts and the auditor's reports.

Imagine a doctor, having been given the liberties and the respect that doctors deserve—of course, the parliamentary assistant is a doctor, still practising in the province of Ontario. The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health is a doctor as well, but a medical officer of health. A doctor—the Hippocratic oath puts me in mind of their commitment to the outcomes of the patient.

I can't imagine what happened to Dr. Chris Mazza. He was a highly regarded emergency room doctor, as I understand it—and it was so little oversight. I don't blame them; it's sort of like having a bowl of candy there. He started nibbling on it and pretty soon ate the whole bowl of candy. It's part of the appetite of entitlement that has crept into the entitlements of my entitlements at the civil-servant Liberal level of their appointments.

We saw it in Ottawa, under Prime Minister Jean Chrétien. I don't blame them specifically, but they sort of set the tone. They set the tile of what's permissible. Now, after the horse has left the barn, they've got all these hard and fast rules. It's quite pathetic, but it actually is an admission of guilt on almost all the fronts—not just Ornge, but we talked about eHealth, and we talked about the—the most scandalous one that I deal with every day is the Presto card.

Our auditor and the new auditor have done a marvelous job. The question I raise: Are they paying attention to some of the auditors' reports, whether it's Mr. McCarter or the current Auditor General for the province of Ontario? I think they do commendable work, and that is the context of Bill 151. It's kind of a whitewashing of a bunch of bills that need a lot of attention.

There are five sections in the bill. I should put it in context, because I don't have that much time, but I think the Ministry of the Attorney General—this is, of course, the justice act—“is amended to add proceedings under the Civil Marriage Act (Canada) to the list of proceedings that are within the jurisdiction of the Family Court. The schedule is also amended to permit additional family law proceedings to be added to” Family Court.

Perhaps it's a more efficient use of the courts. For that, I think there's probably some reasonable support, in a reasonable way, to get it at least to committee. It's wrapped into schedule 2, which is what I found very troubling, and I prevailed on my colleague from Barrie to give me a few minutes—perhaps you didn't give me enough; this is the disappointing part, but anyway, we could seek unanimous consent for more time, which I may do.

This section here is: “The provisions of the Pension Benefits Act dealing with joint and survivor pensions and pre-retirement death benefits are amended. The amendments relate to how the definition of ‘spouse’ in subsection 1(1) of the act applies in those provisions for the purpose of determining eligibility for benefits.” It probably sounds fairly simple and administrative, and I think that it’s, again, another section that needs—and I will talk about it.

“Administrators who made payments in specified circumstances before the amendments come into force are granted a discharge. In the case of payments of pre-retirement death benefits, the discharge is granted to administrators who made payments before October 31, 2012. The act is amended to provide that no person has a claim against an administrator who made payments, or against the recipient of the payments, if specified circumstances exist.”

This is in a statute forgiving certain plan administrators—is what that is. I would have to look into more detail on that. It’s technical.

This is another one that has been talked about a lot: “amendments are made to section 80.1 of the Pension Benefits Act in respect of the transfer of assets between pension plans when a business has previously been sold. Currently, section 80.1 of the Pension Benefits Act is to be repealed on July 1, 2015. The schedule changes the repeal date to July 1, 2016.”

In this particular one, I want to put on the record—this is related. I would hope that the Minister of Finance’s assistant—he isn’t in the House at the moment but is probably listening. I would say this is a specific case, and I’m going to refer to it in some technical detail. Recently, I met with my constituents; my constituents worked and they were retirees from General Motors. I think the names of the constituents are important to put on the record as well. They made a presentation to us. I encouraged them to give it to the other members from Durham, which would be Joe Dickson and Tracy MacCharles.

They talked about four things: General Motors financial challenges between 2014 and 2017—so this is about General Motors and its position in Canada. “GMCL continues to underfund the salaried pension fund, dramatically declining a wind-up ratio. Underfunding is a direct product of the changes negotiated by the government of Ontario through fiscal”—this is really treating in a disadvantaged way retirees in a government agreement during the bailout in 2008.

Now, there’s a lot of information here. In 1992—you should get this—the too-big-to-fail provision pertained to GM Canada Ltd. to fund the pension on an ongoing basis. That decision, made by the government in 1992, by the NDP, is commonly known as the too-big-to-fail provision. Between 1992 and 2009, many profitable years could have been resolved. The funding, however—the regulation permitted them not to address the shortage and they did not.

GM’s ability to fund continued. The government contributed—now, this is important—\$4 billion to the

bailout money for the underfunded GM pension plan, \$720 million for the salary plan and the rest to the hourly plan to make these plans whole.

Here’s the key: Rather than putting the money directly into the plan, GM declared this as a prior-year credit balance. This is important. This is a technical thing. I want it on the record. It’s a prior-year credit balance, and it would be used to lower GM’s future pension contributions. This is shameful.

Now, if they didn’t know, then the government is wrong. If they did know, then they treacherously fooled the retirees of General Motors under that provision. The bailout put money right into the bottom line, which was paid out as bonuses to the ongoing executive group, the operating group. Market share declined by 50% between those years, and I would say there are other risks: the repayment of a \$220-million loan related to the Ste-Thérèse plant that’s due in 2017; required payments of \$1.5 billion to the Unifor—that’s the CAW, now Unifor—health care trust over five years starting in 2014; a pending lawsuit potentially totaling \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion with dealers on retired salaries; and no announced product allocation for three Ontario production centres in 2015-16. They could no longer have a present from a company that was employing 20,000 people, all under the watchful eye of the McGuinty-Wynne government.

I want to make a specific reference here on a couple of things. Under the agreement—this is another technical thing for the record. I think the Minister of Finance—I encourage him, because I will be raising these issues more directly with him in question period, on the order paper and through other communications with the minister. Part of that agreement—now, this is the treachery of this, the sad disappointment, and Mr. Dickson is here as well. He’s no part of this. I’m sure he doesn’t know any more about it than I do.

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Here’s the provision: Under that agreement, a single employer plan, called a SEP—those are types of pension funds. It’s a single employer plan. They were always entitled, in the event the company failed, to a Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund. So there was a fund, which was paid for by the employers as a kind of a tax on their contribution to the pension into the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund, which is run by the province. That pension guarantee fund—do you know what they did? I was part of that agreement in 2008, with the settlement bailout. They disallowed any of the pension people from General Motors to be eligible to the fund, which was in fact their money. They did pretty much the same snowball job on the people working for Nortel. This is a shameful thing.

When they talk about protecting seniors, it’s an absolute shame. I won’t use anything more descriptive than the words I’ve just used, but it is shameful what they’re doing to the retirees of Ontario. It is a mess. The whole pension file, every single pension in Ontario, is unfunded—every single pension. The province owes hundreds of billions of dollars to the pensions. The public sector pensions are not funded.

The auditor's report this year—this is so troubling, and it's so technical that nobody pays attention. It's tragic. This technical bill here has nothing in it. It's changing and forgiving a few plan administrators. It is tragic. Now, in Ontario, they're blaming the federal government because the federal government has realized the CPP was never intended to be income replacement. It was kind of a threshold plan. Who pays the money into that? It's the employer and employee, which is really a payroll tax. Why are they in trouble? Why? Because there are 700,000 people unemployed in the province of Ontario. That means they're not paying into the plan, which is ultimately a pyramid scheme—one person collecting, 10 paying in. It's a big giant pyramid scheme; that's what it is. They don't work anymore. It's unfortunate. I'm disappointed; I'm one of them. That's the significant problem in this province of Ontario.

If they ever start dealing with the pension—Premier Wynne has suggested that she's going to create her own plan. Well, the plans don't work. If she doesn't know that—she called in Paul Martin. Paul Martin reformed the Canada Pension Plan a number of years ago and, respectfully, did a great job. I would suspect that if he's wise, which I think he is, he will tell her that it's an election pipe dream. It's beguiling the people of Ontario by giving them some sense of security when there is nothing but a beguiling communications plan for them to make seniors feel secure, that someone's going to look after us: "Oh, we're going to do everything"—it's shameful, in fact, we have to stoop to those treacherous moves in the face of an election.

Look at the by-election too, just what they did. They tried to buy the people out in the election. It's tragic. They put the money back in Fort Erie Race Track. Then they put the money back into the hospital. They did the same thing with the gas plants. They spent a billion dollars to save a—look, if the people of Ontario allow this to continue, I say, blame yourself; look in the mirror. If you allow these people to run this province for 10 years—we've doubled the debt. The third-highest expenditure in the province of Ontario is interest on the debt, in a time when interest is very low. If it goes up one point, it'll cost another billion a year just to pay for the \$300 billion you've already spent. And if you've spent that much, how come things are so bad?

They won't listen to our leader, Tim Hudak. It's tragic. He has a plan; it's called the million-jobs plan. I could say more about that too. The Premier should look at that plan. Do not dismiss the plan—at least it's a plan.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no. They've got their own code language about talking about things that aren't even true. Talk about your own plan. You don't have one. You're throwing money whenever an emergency erupts, whether it's the ice storm—get out the chequebook and start giving out money. There's no plan and that's—

Ms. Soo Wong: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Scarborough—Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: Speaker, can the member opposite please stay on the current debate on the bill? His ice storm and million-dollar plan have nothing to do with this bill. I just want to remind the member opposite.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm listening carefully to the member, and, again, would remind all members, as well as the member for Durham, to bring their comments back to the bill.

I return to the member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm going to put out some more information.

Here's what I'm asking the Minister of Finance to look at. It's a reasonable request. Regulation 321/09 took the GM plan out of the Pension Benefits Guarantee Fund. That was a deliberate, constructed disadvantage to a group of people. I challenge them that this should be put back in. I want to find out who made that decision. Phil Howell was head of FSCO I think at the time. This is on the record. It will be also on the order paper next week on behalf of the retirees I represent in my riding.

I also say that the tragedy of this prior-year credit balance—remember that phrase. If they didn't know, then they're incompetent. If they did know, then they stole the money from the retirees. It's that simple.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: He can't use that language.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no. I will send you the documents, if you wish to read them. I will help you read them if that's the case as well.

I would only say this: This is the physical evidence that I have of a government that says, "I won't raise your taxes"—

Ms. Soo Wong: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Scarborough—Agincourt, again on a point of order.

Ms. Soo Wong: The member opposite is using language that's unparliamentary. They accuse the government of stealing. That's unacceptable, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would ask the member for Durham to please take his seat. We're almost done for the week.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes, you are. I apologize for that, but I have to deal with the point of order. I would again caution the member to ensure that his comments are not inflaming other members and that they are within the bounds of the parliamentary rules and the standing orders.

Member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's tragic.

Schedule 2 is all about pensions, and there's nothing in it. I'm providing some amendment material for anyone who's listening and paying attention. This would be helpful to people who have been disadvantaged because of government decisions, mostly under Dalton McGuinty and Premier Wynne.

I only say this: that these are the facts and the evidence. I don't say something that I won't defend outside of here. I heard it from retired senior executives. It's pointed out to me that people are experts on pensions,

and I have checked with them and I am quite supportive of them.

I'm asking, under this particular bill, Bill 151, which has a provision under schedule 2 to amend the Pension Benefits Act to remedy the—I'll give you room—the unintentional errors, through ignorance or some other explanation—to remedy, to fix it, and if they want to bring the issue forward, go back to one of the committees they formed called the Wise Persons' Committee that looked at pensions. They've had two pension bills. They have fixed nothing. They're probably reduced entitlements. It's a problem area where she now has an artificial plan. It's in our order paper here, her motion to create a new plan, the Ontario pension plan, and they're not sustainable. By any measure, they're not sustainable. The reason is, the assumptions in all the pensions are wrong. People aren't dying at 82; they're living to 92. They can't retire with freedom 55. That's a pipe dream. They work 20 years and retire for 40. It doesn't work, and in a time when there are no jobs that last and people's employment—when payrolls are down and these taxes on payroll—you have huge problems and you're not dealing with them honestly and fairly, and I challenge that. I leave that on the floor for the minister to address.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I am the critic for government services, so I will have an opportunity when this comes back to be able to do a lead. I'll see whether or not I have the energy or will have the energy to do a whole hour, but I'll do my best.

I couldn't help myself. When you see the title of Bill 151, and it reads "strengthening and improving government," I thought, what could we do to strengthen and improve government? What jumped in my mind—I say this playfully—is that all we have to do is elect more New Democrats. That, in my mind, would help to improve and strengthen government.

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You see what I'm saying. If you have such a title, you can't help but have one of us—people like me—say, "That's the better way to do it." You send more New Democrats, as we did with the member from Niagara centre, who will be sworn in on Monday. That's the way we grow and that's the way we improve things.

With other elements of the bill—I see these as technical changes, to be sure. I know that they meant to introduce this in a budget bill, which would include everything, and they didn't have an opportunity to do that, so we have it here as an omnibus bill, one that affects five different ministries, as the Minister of Government Services said. And they're largely technical in nature—I think that to be true—but are mostly responding to court judgments that have forced the government to make the necessary changes, and the response to the Ombudsman and his insistence that we make some changes vis-à-vis the Highway Traffic Act. But I will have an opportunity to talk about pensions and respond to the Liberals and Tories when I get my hour. I'm looking forward to that.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: Let me say what a great privilege it was to listen to my colleagues the members from Barrie and Durham this afternoon. If you want to talk about pensions, I would recommend to this House, every member: Get the latest copy of the Mercer report. Mercer is one the leading actuarial firms in Canada—I would say in North America and perhaps throughout the world—and they've just recently provided a definitive overview of the state of pensions throughout Canada and, indeed, North America. So I recommend that reading. We all know that there was an article in today's Toronto Star talking about how pensions now are moving above water because of the recent returns that we've had in the marketplace. But I really recommend, for background reading, the Mercer report, and I would think all members would profit from that.

I heard the member from Barrie touch upon a few things. I want to share with this House one of the constant calls I get from constituents in Peterborough riding: It's the 407. You'll recall, back in 1999, that a very valuable asset was valued at \$9 billion. That was a conservative estimate in 1999. And then we have a process like I call "the Walmart man." Do you know the Walmart man you see in the commercials? He starts rolling back the prices. It went from \$9 billion to \$8 billion to \$7 billion to \$6 billion to \$5 billion to \$4 billion. Wham-o; the Walmart man finally sold it off for \$3 billion. You know what? There are two Ontario places in the world: There's one here in Toronto and one in Madrid, Spain, where they enjoy the proceeds from the sale of the 407.

I recommend to the members of this House: Get a briefing from the Ministry of Finance about the forgone revenue that Ontario could have had if we had kept the 407. A conservative estimate—and again I use the word "conservative"—from the Ministry of Finance: \$1 billion every year in revenue to the province of Ontario. If you want to talk about the scam of the 20th century, let's talk about the sale of the 407.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The former speaker talking about the 407 highway—it's amazing how history and the facts associated with history get distorted and changed over time. This member has no relationship; he wasn't here at the time. He drank the Kool-Aid that his party has tried to sell him, and he has no relationship to the facts at all. The highway cost about \$2.75 billion to build. We sold it for \$3.6 billion, I believe, making almost a \$1-billion profit on it. It was a good deal at the time. The consortium that bought the thing has had about a 6% return on their investment. It's a public company. They publish a report. Look at the report. It's on the Internet. Have a look at it. They make about a 6% return on their investment.

Interjections.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Oh, you drank the Kool-Aid; that's the problem with you. Use your head for something other than a hat rack.

They make about a 6% return, which is not up with what normal returns for those kinds of investments should be.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to have to call a halt to this and ask the members to come to order so that we can continue.

The member for Halton still has the floor.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Oh, am I not finished yet? The week is winding down, you know. We've got five minutes left in the week, so I can understand the member being a little fast and loose with the facts and not really understanding the facts, but to misrepresent the facts is something else entirely.

Interjections.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Oh, I withdraw that. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): There's still time for one last question and comment if anyone would like to participate.

The member for Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I shall be very pleased to stand up. Thank you, Speaker.

Once again, I would commend the ministry and the Minister of Government Services for taking it upon ourselves to help move forward the government's agenda on a number of different issues. I appreciate the sort of brush fires that are going on here. It is a very substantive piece of legislation, touching on the Courts of Justice Act, the Pension Benefits Act, the Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act, as well as the Highway Traffic Act.

Ultimately, our aspiration and our hope and hopefully what we're attempting to enshrine here in law is to improve the efficiency and the responsiveness in the core areas that matter to Ontarians: post-secondary, health care, justice, pension and transportation legislation. I think it's a very thoughtful piece of legislation. I can tell you, from the endless briefings that we were exposed to, that were shared with us, that were inflicted upon us, that there are a lot of items, a lot of background material, a lot of heavy lifting that has gone into this piece of legislation, and for that, and many other reasons, it deserves the wholehearted support of this Legislature. So I'd invite you to please support Bill 151.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One of the opposition members who spoke to the bill now has two minutes to reply.

The member for Barrie.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Thank you, Speaker. It was a distinct pleasure to be able to speak to Bill 151 today. As I mentioned earlier, I think Bill 151 is a lost opportunity. It nibbles around the edges of what's really wrong in this province, and I think it's indicative of all the other bills,

frankly. Almost all of them, without fail, that I've seen introduced by this government, since I've been elected anyway, sound good and do nothing. I think it's indicative of what this government is all about: "Let's sound good. But you know what? We're not going to do anything. Let's just keep the status quo; steady as she goes."

The problem is, the more you think about that, the less innovative you get, the less creative you get, and you sink, and that's what this province has been doing for the past 10 years. You've had 10 years to strengthen and improve government, and now, with an election nibbling at your heels, you want to strengthen and improve government and point back 10 years to issues that were happening before these pages were even born.

You need to start looking at the future and worry less about what has happened in the past, to think about today and not worry so much about what happened back 10, 15, 25 years ago. Let's face it. We're at least four Premiers out since some of the things you guys keep bringing up—enough of it, already. It's actually a joke. People think it's kind of funny that you keep pointing your fingers back. It may have got you elected 10 years ago, but you know what? We're going to be pointing back at you guys in a year from now and talking about the mistakes that you've made.

This bill is a shameful attempt to try to appeal to people on a level that is so superficial that everyone is starting to see through it. They see through all the stuff, all the bills that you've put through, whether it's the Green Energy Act, whether it's the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit—I call it the wealthy homes renovation tax credit. There are a number of examples of bills that have pretty names but no substance, that don't do anything and don't really help the people who need it the most.

If you really care and you have the courage and the will, you'll do what needs to be done.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

VISITOR

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before we adjourn the House, I recognize the member for Etobicoke North on a point of order.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Speaker, for your indulgence. I'd like to welcome, on behalf of all the members of the Legislature, being received very ably by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Marcia Brown, who is the program head of Men of Distinction and Ladies on the Rise, who are here from the very great riding of Etobicoke North.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We're all very pleased to welcome you to the Ontario Legislature today.

It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday morning at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

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Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
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Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
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Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

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Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
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Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
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Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
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Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
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Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
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Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
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