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of Ontario

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Thursday 27 February 2014

Jeudi 27 février 2014

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 27 février 2014

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAIR MINIMUM WAGE ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 POUR UN SALAIRE
MINIMUM ÉQUITABLE

Mr. Naqvi moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 165, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to the minimum wage / Projet de loi 165, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le salaire minimum.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me. I may or may not share my time with the member from Brampton West, but I'm just reserving my right now. That will be made clear as we go on.

It is my great pleasure today to initiate debate on Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act. It's a privilege to stand in this House and say that minimum-wage earners in Ontario will be getting a raise. I was proud to stand with our Premier recently and announce that our government is increasing the minimum wage to \$11 an hour starting June 1, and we have already filed the regulation to make sure that happens. This will give Ontario the highest provincial minimum wage in Canada and builds on our strong track record of increasing living standards for workers. I'm proud that it will provide fairness for Ontarians who work for minimum wage.

The Fair Minimum Wage Act is about taking the next steps. It is about putting in place a process that makes sure that minimum wage increases in a fair, predictable and transparent way. Speaker, it is about making sure that minimum-wage workers know that their income will keep up with the cost of living, and it is about making sure that our businesses can have time to plan for their future and continue to be competitive and create jobs.

I think for all members there is a moment in their elected life, in their capacity, when they realize what motivated them to seek public office, what galvanized for them the reason to put their name on the ballot on behalf of their community and to make a difference. I'll share with you my moment and how that relates to the issue around minimum wage.

It was about 10 years ago, roughly around 2003, when the last big debate in our province was taking place around minimum wage. Speaker, you may remember that from 1995 to 2003, unfortunately, in our province the minimum wage was frozen, for that entire eight-year period. From 1995 to 2003, it was the Conservative Party that was in government at that time, and they chose not to raise the minimum wage at all—not a penny.

There was a debate that was taking place in our province at that time, and rightly so. The debate was around whether we should have an increase to minimum wage. You may remember, there was a campaign, "\$10 in 2010," that was being led by anti-poverty groups, that was being led by civil society, because everybody recognized that something needed to be done around minimum wage. Here's my moment: At that time, I was practising law in Ottawa. I was quite involved in my community of Ottawa Centre. I sat on the board, as many of you know, because I've talked about this before, of the Centretown Community Health Centre. I did a lot of work in my community, was very much engaged with the Ottawa Food Bank, which I still continue to do. And I remember thinking at that time, why is the whole notion of raising minimum wage a political subject? Why are politicians in charge? Why are politicians responsible to determine whether or not minimum wage should go up? How are we even in the situation where eight years can go by, and then hard-working Ontarians who work and live on minimum wage have not seen a penny in that rate? It was \$6.85, those who may remember, for that eight-year period.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I do remember that.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: And why don't we have a system or process in place that is fair, predictable and objective? That was my thought. You know, I didn't think I was being genius in my thinking at that time. As a citizen of this great province, as somebody who was quite involved in the community and spent time working with a lot of people on issues around community health care, around primary care, and other social determinants of health like affordable housing, like better nutrition, all the kinds of things that are important to our communities that we talk about—I just wasn't comfortable where the whole notion of determining minimum wage was a political football, if I can use that expression.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Well, Yasir, you believe in a just society—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Absolutely. I believe in a just society, a society that is fair to Ontarians, and my thought at that time was, "Well, government's got to figure out a

better way of determining minimum wage.” Speaker, I’ll be very honest with you. I think it’s one of those things that I felt quite passionately and strongly about. I feel very humbled and privileged and honoured that 10 years later, not only, obviously, I got the chance to actually run in my community and earned the privilege to serve my community, but I’m personally in a position to—along with our government, along with our caucus, along with our Premier, because of her leadership—actually put forward a bill that we’re starting to debate today, the Fair Minimum Wage Act, doing exactly what should have been done, and that is to ensure that we have a more fair and predictable way of determining minimum wage, where we take politics out of how we set people’s wages.

That’s what we are doing, and I feel really motivated. I’ve been working on this issue for some time. Even before I was Minister of Labour, I worked with many community groups in my community of Ottawa Centre and from Ottawa, as many members have done—

Hon. Jeff Leal: They say great things about you, too, in Ottawa.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Well, thank you. I have taken a lot of meetings on this issue. I was first elected in 2007, in my first term, and I was always very clear. This is when I was just an MPP saying, “You know what? This is the direction our province needs to move in. We need to figure out a way of somehow indexing minimum wage to an objective criteria, a criteria that nobody disputes, a criteria that comes from a source that everybody agrees to so that minimum wage can keep pace with the cost of living, so that we don’t run into periods where minimum wage does not increase at all.”

0910

That’s why, Speaker, I’m also very, very proud that when our party came into government in 2003, we took a position. We said that it is unfair to hard-working Ontarians who work and live on minimum wage to freeze their wages for eight years straight, as the Conservative government under Mike Harris and the current Leader of the Opposition had done. I think that was shameful—eight years of a freeze. And these were good economic times, right? I mean, they try to take credit that somehow they created out of magic some numbers of jobs. Well, those were good, booming times. This is when Mr. Chrétien was the Prime Minister in Ottawa and they were able to eliminate the deficit.

Hon. Jeff Leal: A 63-cent dollar, too.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: A 63-cent dollar, low oil prices. But they did so. Who they neglected were the hard-working Ontarians, those who work and live on minimum wage.

I’m really proud that our government, our Liberal government, put a process in place to raise the minimum wage from \$6.85 to \$10.25 in 2010.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Was it that low?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: It was frozen for eight years.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Oh, my goodness. It’s just like being in Siberia.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Progressively, in an incremental fashion, we raised the minimum wage from \$6.85 to

\$10.25 in 2010. Remember, I told you there was a campaign going on at that time: \$10 in 2010. So we raised it not to \$10 but, in fact, to \$10.25 by 2010, making minimum wage in Ontario the highest in Canada.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Were the NDP on board for that one?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Well, I know for sure that the PCs voted against it. At that time, at least the NDP used to talk about minimum wage; now they don’t even do that. I’ll come to that. I’ll speak to how the NDP has abandoned the hard-working Ontarians in this province, and now the NDP believes in cutting corporate taxes. The NDP does not believe in raising corporate taxes. There’s an NDP out there that nobody recognizes, and that’s a sad commentary. We’ll talk to that in a bit.

The point is that we went on to work on the issue of minimum wage from the very first day that we came into office, because Ontarians said it’s time to increase the minimum wage, and we, in a predictable and a progressive way, through legislation, increased minimum wage from \$6.85 every single year to \$10.25 in 2010. That was almost a 50% increase to the minimum wage, which, by the way, the official opposition, the PCs, voted against.

Hon. Jeff Leal: No.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: They voted against that, because they don’t believe in raising the minimum wage. They don’t believe in making sure that those Ontarians who work and live on minimum wage should see an increase, and that is shameful.

The NDP, before the Conservatives, just to note, when they were in office for five years, raised minimum wage a little under \$2 at that time—again, not making any meaningful difference in wages.

We were able to raise the minimum wage to \$10.25, even in the good times, but even through the depths of the recession. We did not put a stop to that because we wanted to make sure—even though we were fighting through the great recession that we experienced in 2008 and 2009, one of the biggest recessions since the Great Depression—that we continued with our commitment to increase the minimum wage.

Now comes the question, what are we doing now? We raised it to \$10.25, which is the highest in Canada, and this is the time to take the next step, to ensure that we bring a kind of predictability, certainty and balance to the way the minimum wage is determined and, most importantly, Speaker—and I know my colleagues on this side of the House believe it—that we take politics out of how the minimum wage is set so that it does not matter which political party is in office, it does not matter which political ideology is the fashion of the day. When it comes to the livelihood of those Ontarians who live and work on minimum wage, they know that they are going to get a raise every single year based on the cost of living. That is exactly what the Fair Minimum Wage Act is proposing in front of this House.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Even the Tea Party Tories? Do you think they’re going to—

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Well, I hope all the parties support this—I really, really hope—because this is not a partisan issue. I’ll give this to the Conservative Party this time: I

have heard some very positive responses from them in terms of agreeing with the notion that we need to take politics out of minimum wage. What's uncertain is where the NDP stands on this, because they have been absent—and I will come to that, because I think it's an important point.

Speaker, we recognize that and have decided it is time for change, a time for consistency and fairness. We believe that both employees and employers need to be able to plan for their financial future, and to be a prosperous society, we need to ensure a fair minimum wage that also allows business to remain competitive.

So the first step we are doing is we are raising the minimum wage to \$11 an hour, as I mentioned a little earlier. That will take place on June 1.

That is not the subject of this Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act, because we are doing that by regulation. That is happening by regulation; that regulation is filed. I want Ontarians to know, those who live and work on minimum wage, that raise is coming. It is not subject to the passage of this bill. On June 1, the minimum wage in Ontario will be \$11 an hour, the highest minimum wage among any province in Canada, something that we should be proud of—we should be very, very proud of.

Speaker, we have made sure that we have set a fair minimum wage, and the manner in which we have done so is in an objective and balanced way. We have determined that number by taking into account the inflation since the last increase—and that was in 2010—up to now to make sure that the purchasing power of a dollar of that minimum wage is restored to what it should be today.

As I said, this particular bill, Bill 165—I want to spend a little bit of time talking about how we arrived at this bill, the content of this bill, what are the specific details around how we are proposing to set a fair minimum wage in Ontario moving forward, year after year after year.

If passed, this bill would establish a fair, predictable and transparent approach to setting minimum wage in the future. As I said earlier, for the first time, Ontario's minimum wage would have to keep pace with the cost of living, and workers would not see their wages fall behind because of any political ideology.

The Fair Minimum Wage Act contains all of the panel's thorough and thoughtful recommendations made in their consensus report. The panel that I'm referring to is the advisory panel that we created on minimum wage, and I will come to speaking a little bit about the panel, the panel members, the process they went through, the deliberations they've had and the suggestions that they provided.

What it really means is that, if passed, the first CPI adjustment would be announced by April 1, 2015—if this bill becomes the law—and will take effect on October 1, 2015. That will be the first time we will see the first automatic increase in minimum wage based on the consumer price index of 2014, and then we'll be in a cycle every year. So every year, what we're proposing is that on April 1 of that particular year we will be able to an-

nounce the amount by which the minimum wage will be increasing based on the previous year's consumer price index, and it will come into effect on October 1, giving businesses—and this is the predictability part—a six-month notice so that they can plan for that increase that will come.

0920

Speaker, here's another important technical point: Any annual adjustment would be rounded to the nearest five cents when the number is calculated, and there will not be any decrease. That's an important point. So if we are looking at a circumstance, for instance, where inflation doesn't go up or if there is deflation perhaps, we will not reduce the minimum wage. It will stay the same. So that's another important principle that has been outlined in this particular bill.

In addition, our proposed legislation also puts in place a five-year review of the minimum wage and how it is set—again, this was one of the recommendations that we received from the panel—so that there is an automatic review of how the system is working, and we have enshrined that in this particular bill as well.

I'm proud that this bill would make sure that the minimum wage would keep up with the cost of living. This will ensure fairness for workers and give them a meaningful opportunity to improve their lives. We're talking about students working their way through school. We're talking about parents working hard to raise their children. We're talking about newcomers in search of a better life. And we're talking about business owners who know that our economy is recovering, but they know that they need predictability to succeed in the future, because this legislation is not only about protecting workers, it is also about providing predictability for those businesses employing minimum-wage workers. These are businesses that create jobs in our economy. If they have predictability so that they can plan for the future, they can be successful and create even more jobs for our communities.

Speaker, we have seen the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Ontario Convenience Stores Association and the Retail Council of Canada, among others, applaud the predictability this bill would bring to their businesses. And this is why I urge, again, the support of all members of this Legislature, because this bill is about providing fairness and protection for minimum-wage workers. It also helps create more stable economic conditions for the province.

This legislation is very much a result of a transparent and open process. We knew that the system of adjusting the minimum wage had to change, as I talked about. The case is there as to why we need a better, a new system to set minimum wage in our province. We also recognize that a substantial change had to come by consensus. We had to, as we have done in this case, bring in the business community, the workers, organized labour and the youth. We had to bring everybody together to see if we could build a consensus around how change should be and what kind of change should be brought in.

That's why, Speaker, we took an important step. In last year's budget, the first budget under the leadership of our Premier, we announced that we were going to be creating an advisory panel to consult Ontarians as to how minimum wage should be determined in our province. We made that commitment in the budget. Pursuant to that commitment, last June I had the honour of announcing the panel, and the terms of reference to the panel, giving them the task. Let me talk to you about who was on the panel, because it's very important. We wanted to make sure that the panel is representative of our communities, that the panel is representative of our economy. We worked very hard to have the right balance, to have the right points of view, to have the right set of people as part of the panel, so that we can get advice that represents the point of view of our great province, and of course of all Ontarians.

Hon. Jeff Leal: So, Yasir, who's on that panel? Who was on that panel?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The panel was composed of an independent chair, representatives from business and labour, anti-poverty advocates and youth. The chair, Speaker, of the panel was Dr. Anil Verma, who is a highly respected professor at the University of Toronto. He is a professor of human resource management at the University of Toronto's Rotman School of Management. He is also the director of the University of Toronto's Centre for Industrial Relations and Human Resources. He serves as a member of Statistics Canada's Advisory Committee on Labour and Income Statistics and on the board of directors of COSTI Immigrant Services, somebody who's very well recognized, experienced, is sought after internationally for his access to expertise around industrial relations, around labour relations; just a perfect person. It was a true honour and delight to work with him as he worked on this very important project on behalf of all Ontarians, and I want to thank Professor Verma for his tireless commitment and dedication to this particular process.

In addition to Dr. Verma, the panel also consisted—I mentioned that we have representatives from business, and from anti-poverty and youth groups. I want to give you the names of individuals who were part of the panel along with Dr. Verma.

So the panel consisted of Antoni Shelton, who is a director and a liaison to the president for the Ontario Federation of Labour. So we wanted to make sure we have a representative from organized labour. Antoni works very closely with Sid Ryan, who is the president for the Ontario Federation of Labour.

We had Adam Vasey, and I'm sure the member from Windsor–Tecumseh will know Adam Vasey, who's the director of Pathway to Potential, which is Windsor–Essex county's poverty reduction strategy, so we had a representative, Mr. Vasey, from the Windsor area, who does a lot of work in poverty reduction.

Gary Rygus is a board member of the Retail Council of Canada, to sort of bring the perspective of small businesses in the retail communities, be it in Peter-

borough or Richmond Hill or Markham or Brampton or Ottawa. These are businesses that keep our local economy running.

We also had Beth Potter, who is the president and CEO of the Tourism Industry Association of Ontario, as part of the panel. Again, tourism is a big part of our economy in our province, from big cities like Toronto to small communities like Kenora, and we wanted to make sure that that point of view is very well represented.

Laura D'Amico was a student trustee for the Ottawa Catholic School Board and a member of the Ottawa Youth Commission and is currently attending Wilfrid Laurier University. I know Laura personally from Ottawa, because she is a really hard-working young person, a thinker, a doer, and it was great to have that youth representation from Ottawa to be part of this panel.

Hon. Jeff Leal: And a friend of Jim Watson, I think, too.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Well, we all are friends of Mayor Watson, who is doing a great job in our city of Ottawa. We thank him for his public service. I'll let Mayor Watson know that—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Send him the Hansard. He loves to see his name in print.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, as you can see, this was a diverse panel that reflects all sides of this important issue. I want to take this moment to thank them once again for their hard work and dedication.

0930

Just to give you an idea of the task that I gave them: As I mentioned to you earlier, we appointed the panel in June. In my very first meeting with the panel, I told them very clearly, “You have six months to consult Ontarians, to look at the research on the issue of what's the best way of determining minimum wage, to look at the experiences of other provinces in Canada and jurisdictions beyond Canada and get back to us with a report and recommendations. Six months, period—not a year, not a year and a half. This has to be done fast, this has to be done effectively, because our government is serious to ensure that we raise minimum wage for hard-working Ontarians, but also to provide predictability for businesses who create jobs in our economy.” We were very clear. We gave them that task and said, “By December, you have to come back with the report.”

They took it on, and I congratulate them. I think they felt that the timelines were a little too tight, but on behalf of our government and on behalf of our Premier, I just wanted to make that very, very clear. It's their efforts that have resulted in this legislation.

They went on to travel the province. They went on in gathering the important data that they needed, the research that needed to be done and analyzed to understand what their recommendations should be. Just so you know, they conducted public consultations across the province and invited written submissions on adjusting the minimum wage. We created a dedicated website: ontario.ca/minimumwagereview. There was a discussion paper that was put on there. We set up a toll-free number

so that people could call in with their comments. They could write emails, they could send written submissions besides the actual consultation so that nobody's left behind. Anybody who wanted to take part in the consultation process had the opportunity to write, to speak, to call in to provide their feedback.

The panel went to 10 different cities across the province, every single region, to make sure that we were available to many places.

Hon. Jeff Leal: What cities did they visit?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: They were in places like Hamilton, London, Ottawa, Toronto, Mississauga. These are just the ones that come top of mind. I think in the north they were in Thunder Bay. I mean, they really did their homework well.

Some 92 organizations and individuals made presentations to the panel. As well, another 340 submissions were delivered through the website, by email, fax, mail and telephone to them. We really wanted to make sure that accessibility was not an issue.

Speaker, as I mentioned, after the consultation deliberations, the panel reached a consensus with the chair, relayed to me in his report. The report is available on the website. I actually encourage everybody to really look at the report. It's a very good read. They have looked at a lot of data. They have presided—it gives you a really good understanding in the report as to who lives on minimum wage in Ontario, who works on minimum wage, what age demographic, what background, where do they come from.

Interjection.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I love receiving notes from the staff telling me what to do and what not to do. They don't realize that I'm standing here; I can do what I want to. I've got 27 minutes to talk about an important issue. This is a very important issue, and a lot of people have been engaged in this issue. I really want to make sure that we give due time to this very important issue.

In their report, they provided four consensus recommendations. I really stress "consensus," that all the members of the panel that I spoke about, including the chair, agreed on the direction, the advice they wanted to give to the government. Recommendation number one was that the minimum wage in Ontario should be tied to Ontario's consumer price index—in other words, the cost of living. That's the index that should be used.

This number, by the way, as we all know, is available from Statistics Canada. Nobody will doubt the veracity, the authenticity or the kind of work that Statistics Canada does.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I thought Harper tried to close that down. Is it still going?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: They do good work, given that their wings maybe have been clipped, unfortunately, through the elimination of the long-form census, which is unfortunate, because the better the data, the better the evidence they have, then the better the analysis that we as Canadians receive from them.

Their advice was that minimum wage should be tied to Ontario's consumer price index, or the cost of living,

from the previous year. People will know that it's a determination of the cost of living in terms of how much it costs to buy your regular items or goods that we need to sustain ourselves. It's a good reflection of how costs may be increasing.

Their second recommendation, which is another very important one, is that the minimum wage should be reviewed annually—every year. Their recommendation is four months' notice. We're suggesting six months, to allow for more predictability. They said that it should be revised every year; therefore, an increase on an annual basis.

The third recommendation—again, a consensus recommendation—was that this whole system be reviewed in five years' time.

The last recommendation was that our government should put more focus on collecting all the data around labour statistics, around wages, so that this type of exercise is easier to conduct.

I'm really proud to say that we are incorporating all of those recommendations in the bill. The last one does not need legislation. The very first one—that is, that the minimum wage be tied to Ontario's consumer price index—goes to the heart of Bill 165. The second one, that it be revised every year, is part of this bill, as I explained. With six months' notice, on April 1 of every year, starting in 2015, we will announce the amount, and it will come into effect on October 1, 2015, and on and on it goes. And, lastly, that there be a review of the system every five years is also very much part and parcel of this legislation.

That is, Speaker, the process by which we have arrived here. I would argue to you that it has been a very democratic process, a consultative process. The opposition is very quick to criticize the Premier for having too many consultations, but with effective consultation comes good legislation like what we have in front of us in the form of Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act.

Our job is to listen to Ontarians; our job is to consult them. They have elected us to represent their points of view. There is no shame in going back to our constituents. In fact, I would argue to you, Speaker, that the essence, the job description, of what we do as MPPs is to find ways to consult Ontarians, take their points of view and then put that into effective legislation. That is exactly what we are doing here, through this legislation. The panel did an amazing job, and I'm very happy to see the result of their hard work being represented in this bill.

I'm going to take a few more minutes, Speaker, to make a couple of important points. One is, as I said earlier, I'm disappointed with the official opposition for not supporting raising the minimum wage to \$11. This is their position and, at least, I give them points for being consistent in their position. They did not believe in raising minimum wage when they were in government from 1995 to 2003, they did not support raising minimum wage from \$6.85 to \$10.25, and they don't believe in raising minimum wage to \$11. They're consistent. Nobody can blame them for that. That's their position, and they'll be judged on that.

0940

However, Speaker, I do want to give them credit for being supportive of this particular legislation on the notion of making sure that we have predictability in the way minimum wage is determined. I have good conversations with the PC labour critic, the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, and I appreciate his desire to bring more predictability to the way minimum wage is determined, because it's going to benefit our businesses, especially our small businesses.

My disappointment is reserved for the NDP, the party that used to claim—they don't anymore, Speaker—to stand up for the little guy. They used to claim to stand up for the vulnerable worker. They are the ones, if I can use the expression, who are MIA on the issue of the minimum wage.

Hon. Jeff Leal: MIA?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: MIA—missing in action—on the issue of minimum wage.

Speaker, don't take my word on it. As I mentioned to you earlier, we announced that we will be setting up an advisory panel on minimum wage in the last budget, a year ago. When the leader of the third party was in active negotiations with our Premier, with our government, on what should be in the budget and what it will take for her to support our budget, did she ever talk about raising the minimum wage in that process? Not at all. Not at all, Speaker. That was not part of her demands whatsoever. We still—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Not the Tea Party, but close to it.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Yes, they are getting close to the Tea Party. It's very unfortunate. The Tea Party doesn't even want them that close to them, but that's what they're striving for.

Speaker, we did still—because we wanted to do the right thing—put in that advisory panel. Then, as I mentioned, eight months ago, we announced the creation of the advisory panel. Did the NDP once submit it to the panel, to provide their position as to how they think minimum wage should be determined, what the amount should be and what formula should be set? Absolutely no. Nothing, Speaker. Nothing.

Let's go further. In this House, did they once ask me or the Premier, even in questions during question period, on the issue of minimum wage? No. You can check the Hansard; you can check the record.

It was almost a month ago when the Premier and I announced our policy position, after the work we received from the panel. We issued the report, and then we announced a few days later that we'll be raising the minimum wage to \$11 an hour, and we will be bringing legislation—as I did, that we were talking about—indexing this to the cost of living.

You would wonder that the NDP would have a response to that. You would wonder that the NDP would come out and say yay or nay or “We're neutral.”

Hon. Jeff Leal: Nothing.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Nothing.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Silence.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Silence. Their leader, according to, I think, the Toronto Star, went into the witness protection program. She disappeared. In fact, Speaker, there were two by-elections going on at that time, as you may recall. When asked again and again by the reporters—when the candidate, now the member from Niagara Falls, was asked about his or the leader's position: Silence. No position.

You scratch your head as to how the party who used to argue that they stand for the little guy, the party who always argued somehow that they had the corner on compassion, is the one, all of a sudden, that has no position. The best line they could come up with: “We need to consult with small businesses on this.”

Hon. Jeff Leal: We already consulted with small business.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: We already consulted small businesses. We actually had small business as part of our panel. If you would have paid attention to that process and if you would have engaged in that process, you would have had the information that you need to make a decision. But you know what? Absolute silence; it almost took a month for them because they were getting a lot of pressure. You have to just see what's been written out there by the Globe and Mail, the Toronto Star and even the Sun. You know, you don't expect them to be writing anything on a progressive issue like minimum wage. Everybody was saying, “Where is the NDP? What do they really believe in? Do they believe in anything whatsoever?” When they came up with a position it felt like we were in an episode of *The Price is Right*; right?

Hon. Jeff Leal: No, it's like *Let's Make a Deal*.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Or *Let's Make a Deal*, perhaps.

You know, it's laughable. In fact, I will say to you very honestly that I'm very, very disappointed because the NDP is a party that now believes in corporate tax cuts. The NDP is a party that now joins hands with the Conservatives in voting for a motion that says, “Don't raise corporate taxes.” Can you believe it?

I had constituents call me last night. I had constituents call me yesterday after the vote in this House saying, “Did we see right that the NDP voted with the Conservatives on a motion that says, ‘Don't raise corporate taxes’?” I'm sure everybody knows the Bizarro world, the Bizarro cartoons. Are we living in a Bizarro world? I said to them, “No, it is true. This is exactly what happened.”

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a coalition over there.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Yes, it's a very strange coalition—

Hon. Jeff Leal: I wonder what Tommy Douglas would have thought of that?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Actually, I think it was the Globe and Mail that said in one of their editorials that this is not the NDP of Tommy Douglas and Jack Layton. I'm not making this up. This was in the Globe and Mail.

It's interesting, when you speak with NDP MPPs on these issues and in conversations, their reaction is that they stare at their toes now. They can't even make eye

contact on this issue, which is sad because I think they need to stand up for hard-working Ontarians, like our government is doing.

I am very proud that I am part of a government, under the leadership of our Premier, that has raised minimum wage to \$11 an hour, the highest minimum wage in all of Canada. We have brought in legislation, Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act, that will ensure the minimum wage never falls behind and that it will take politics out of how the minimum wage is set, which brings fairness for Ontarians who live on minimum wage and which provides for predictability for businesses that create jobs in our economy, because that is what Ontarians are asking for.

I really urge members from all sides that they stop playing politics with people's wages. Start making sure that we are not making this into a political football. We should not be just pulling numbers out of our hats. We should be working together. We had a process in place that made sure that the views of all Ontarians are considered. That's why I can state here with confidence that Ontarians support the steps that our government is taking. Ontarians support Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act. I really hope that all members of this Legislature will support this very important piece of legislation because that will really modernize the way in which we set minimum wage in our province. It is a fair approach. It is a predictable approach and it is a responsible approach. Thank you very much, Speaker, for your time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Brampton West.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise as well in support of this legislation brought forward by the Minister of Labour.

I'm glad to hear that minimum wage workers will be getting a raise and they will be treated fairly. Increasing the minimum wage and making sure it keeps up with the cost of living is important for our workers, important for our businesses and important for our communities. It means more money in people's pockets so they can more fully participate in our economic recovery and it means more of a boost for our local economy.

Ontario is a compassionate society. The legislation before us does just that—it provides protection for some of our most vulnerable workers. We're talking about students working to put themselves through school. We're talking about parents working hard to raise their kids and newcomers searching for a better life. They deserve to know what their wage will be from one year to the next while having an opportunity to improve their lives.

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That has not always been the case. Between 1990 and 2003—for 13 years—we saw the minimum wage increase by less than \$2. That was not fair to workers who saw their cost of living increase dramatically while their wages stayed almost frozen. How could that happen? It happened because the NDP and PC governments chose not to do anything about it. When we came to power we

acted. We raised the minimum wage. I'm proud to say that we have increased the minimum wage by 50% since 2003.

Our government knows that we have to change the mechanism by which the minimum wage goes up. We need to take the politics out of setting the minimum wage; we need to make sure the minimum wage is set fairly and keeps up with the cost of living so workers do not see their hard-earned wages fall behind; and we need to make sure it is set in a transparent and predictable way so that our businesses, especially our small businesses, can plan for the future and continue to create jobs. I'm proud to say that the Fair Minimum Wage Act would achieve both of these things.

The bill brought forward by the Minister of Labour will go a long way towards helping minimum wage earners by providing them with a certain sense of security. If the proposed Fair Minimum Wage Act is passed, then beginning on October 1, 2015, adjustments to the minimum wage would be annual. Any changes to the minimum wage would be announced by April 1, six months prior to the adjustment. Then, on October 1 of each year, beginning in 2015, the minimum wage rates will be adjusted by the percentage changes in the consumer price index. This percentage increase would then be applied to the existing minimum wage. As of June 1 of this year, this general minimum wage will be \$11, which will be the highest provincial minimum wage in Canada.

Minimum wage rates for special classes, such as students under 18, liquor servers, hunting and fishing guides and homeworkers, will be increased by the same percentage. The new minimum wage would be rounded out to the nearest nickel. If the change in the CPI is negative, the minimum wage would not change. With this bill, minimum wage earners will no longer see the buying power of their wages erode.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation is not only about helping minimum wage earners, it is also about providing predictability for employers whose businesses create jobs in our economy. It is about making sure businesses, especially small businesses, know what the minimum wage will be so they can plan, stay competitive and continue to create jobs. You cannot run a business if you cannot predict with some accuracy your costs going forward. This bill will provide predictability for these businesses. If the members pass this bill, these businesses would know there is an increase coming on October 1 and they would receive six months' notice of the amount, allowing both workers and businesses time to plan ahead.

The Fair Minimum Wage Act is good legislation and it comes as a result of the Minimum Wage Advisory Panel, which was chaired by Dr. Anil Verma of the University of Toronto. Dr. Verma and the panel, made up of representatives from business, labour, anti-poverty advocates and youth, consulted across the province to get input on how the minimum wage should be adjusted. They heard from a large number of groups and individuals. They looked at the research and evidence and, after

their deliberations, came up with a consensus on how the government should approach adjusting the minimum wage. This was an independent panel, and the recommendations are based on their consultations. The result of their work is the bill we're debating here today.

As I've said, I fully support this legislation. It would help protect the most vulnerable workers and it would provide certainty and predictability to businesses employing them. It is good legislation on both economic and social fronts. I urge all members of this House to support this legislation.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: Oh, sorry—

Mr. Rob Leone: He was just fixing his hair.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Oh, okay. You had me confused.

The member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'll be doing my hour leadoff at some point, whether we start today or another day on this bill.

Of course, we've been clear that the opposition is going to support Bill 165. But we do have an issue, obviously, with the direction that Ontario's economy is going, and I'll talk a bit more about that and, of course, of our leader's plan that's going to be debated today, Tim Hudak's plan to create one million jobs in Ontario. It's a five-point plan.

This is something that we have been urging the government to come forward with, and that's a jobs plan for Ontario. In southwestern Ontario, of course, we've been hard hit, with thousands and thousands of manufacturing jobs being lost. In fact, Ontario has lost 30,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs in the last 12 months, since Premier Wynne has come to office, working with, as I like to call her, Deputy Premier Horwath.

Our five-point plan, which Tim Hudak's going to talk about today, is very clear. It's going to lower hydro rates for Ontario's families and businesses. It's going to lower taxes and rein in the government overspending that has doubled Ontario's debt over the past 10 years. We're going to promote the skilled trades and lower apprenticeship ratios; increase trade with provinces across Canada, specifically western Canada and the western Canada partnership; and eliminate the red tape that forces small and medium-size business owners to spend time filling in paperwork instead of hiring more employees. This is a plan to create one million jobs in Ontario, and I urge the House to come together and support Tim Hudak's Million Jobs Act.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to be able to stand in this House and respond to the remarks from the Minister of Labour regarding the introduction of Bill 165, the fair labour act, I believe it's called, about minimum wage. I'm not the labour critic, so I'll leave our party's comments to the labour critic when he does his lead, but there's a few things the minister mentioned that I found rather entertaining.

One is that we were no longer the party of Tommy Douglas. I took a little bit of umbrage to that, because a little bit of history on Tommy Douglas: When he was Premier of Saskatchewan, before he brought medicare to that province and before he brought electricity to the rural routes, to the farms of that province—he brought the electrical infrastructure that really pushed Saskatchewan to the road of modernization. Before he did those two things, he balanced the province's budget, because he knew, and we all know, that for a province to be healthy, we have to spend money wisely.

He also knew, as we know, that people have to have a fair wage. Once again, if you look at our last provincial platform, we were at \$11 then. So it's a bit tough to get lectured from the party across the way on how we are missing in action on this file, when actually we've been pushing on this file for a lot longer. Just because we're not jumping up and down every time a newspaper says something is not much different than actually sitting back and looking at how to develop policies that actually work for the province of Ontario.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker, what a true pleasure it was to hear the speech this morning by my colleague the Minister of Labour, the MPP from the great riding of Ottawa Centre. You know, I've been here for a decade and this is one of the better speeches that I've heard in that decade, where he clearly laid out, in very persuasive terms, why Bill 165 is so needed in the province of Ontario, to take the politics out of the settling of minimum wage. I want to give some credit this morning to a good friend of mine, a lawyer in Peterborough, one Stephen Kylie. Steven is chair of the Peterborough Poverty Reduction Network and just a great individual. He's been working for many, many years to reduce poverty within the city of Peterborough. He came to me a number of months ago. He was absolutely ecstatic when the Minister of Labour set up this panel to look at the minimum wage.

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A good friend of mine, a Peterborough boy, Allan O'Dette, who is the president of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce—Allan and I have been great friends. His mother, Rosemary, was a former nurse at St. Joseph's hospital in Peterborough. Allan was certainly very supportive of the very wise approach that the Minister of Labour has taken on what is a very important social file in the province of Ontario—indeed, Mr. Speaker, to help close the gap when it comes to wages in the province of Ontario.

But, Mr. Speaker, I was equally shocked today when I read the newspaper. I understand that there's a building permit that's coming forward in the city of Toronto to extend the Albany Club in Toronto, and they're going to name the new wing after the leader of the NDP to make sure that the Albany Club can now accommodate members of the New Democratic Party, because as my union friends say in Peterborough, they're just now Tories in a hurry.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker.

Interjection: How do you follow that?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I don't know if you can follow that. I'm just wondering about the last 10 years of speakers, when this is the best he has ever heard. I don't know; I was hoping for better on the other side.

Anyway, I sat here. It was interesting to hear about them talking about this party being so cozy to Sid Ryan—I guess we've always known that, but we've never really heard them say that—when they created the panel. In fact, we hear that they were listening to the panel, but they actually didn't—I don't know if the panel said something different than the report said, but we never saw anything in the panel that talked about setting the minimum wage at the rate they did. They talked about what this bill is about, but they never did talk about what the rate should be increased to retroactively.

So anyway, what we'd like to really see is this government talking about good-paying jobs. I mean, they're really talking about minimum-wage jobs. They've done a great job with minimum-wage jobs. They've almost tripled the number of people in Ontario on minimum wage since they took over. That's quite a feat. We take it differently over here. We'd rather see reducing that number, getting more people in good-paying jobs, and we're looking for them to support our leader Tim Hudak's private member's bill this afternoon. It has five good points.

I had the benefit of listening to more than 20 different municipalities this week, and their message was clear: We've got to get our costs under control. We just can't dump these costs down to municipalities and walk away and blame them for the property tax increases. Surely, when the waste is going on here, we can come up somewhere with the \$25 million they're cutting from OMPF funding this year—or, you know, their standard practice of negotiating terrific or almost obscene wage increases and then passing it down to the municipalities to find money and pay for it.

It's time that we actually take action in this government. It's not something we're seeing here.

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex; the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane; the member from Peterborough, also the Minister of Rural Affairs; and the member from Stormont-Dundas-South-Glengarry.

Speaker, I'm heartened to hear from the official opposition that they support this bill, and I thank them for their support. I do though—our side does not agree with their right-to-work-for-less type of policies that will bring wages down and that are going to weaken health and safety in our province. We have a fundamental disagreement with them on that very important issue. I just really wanted to highlight that.

Speaker, I want to note very interestingly that we again did not hear from the NDP on this issue as to

whether they support setting a fair minimum wage in our province, whether they support Bill 165 or not. We saw a lot of dancing and singing and humming and hawing from the NDP, again, trying to say, "Oh, we've always been there for the little guy." But, Speaker, this is the beginning of the NDT, the New Democratic Tea Party of Ontario.

I see a lot of nurses in the chamber right now. I want to welcome them and thank them for their incredible service in all our communities. But I can also tell you, Speaker, that the nurses have been asking for a fair minimum wage in our province as well, and this bill, Bill 165, is going to make sure that we take politics out of our minimum wage, that it continues to increase every year according to the cost of living, and that we in our province set a fair and predictable way of determining minimum wage.

I hope that all members will support this very important bill in our Legislature.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's an honour to rise to speak to Bill 165 today. We'll get started for a few minutes anyways, and then we'll continue the debate in the weeks ahead.

Before I get into the debate, I would really like to pay tribute to one of our mayors who is here from my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, Mayor David Bolton, who's here from Adelaide Metcalfe. The mayor was joined by hundreds of other municipal representatives from across Ontario in Toronto today for Good Roads and ROMA. I was honoured to host another mayor and some councillors from Brooke-Alvinston at Queen's Park a couple of days ago as well.

Speaker, Bill 165 is An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to the minimum wage, introduced by the Minister of Labour. It's a bill that amends the Employment Standards Act to adjust the minimum wage annually, starting in October 2015, by indexing it to the Ontario consumer price index, CPI. These changes to the minimum wage would be rounded to the nearest five cents, and no adjustment would be made if it would result in a decrease in the minimum wage rate.

The general minimum wage, currently at \$10.25, will be increased to \$11 per hour effective June 1 of this year, but of course the bill specifically deals with adjusting the minimum wage annually starting in October 2015. This is something that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce certainly got behind a while ago.

I will read into the House—and I know the member from Peterborough touched on it; the president, Allan O'Dette, is leading this charge. This is a message from the president and CEO of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and I'd just like to read it into Hansard: "Ontario is in a period of economic transition," and he's absolutely right with that first note, Speaker, because, as I said during my two-minute response to the minister, of course we are in an economic transition. We've lost over 300,000 well-paying manufacturing jobs in the last 10

years, and we've lost 30,000 in the last 12 months alone under the Wynne-Horwath arrangement. To continue: "The Ontario Chamber of Commerce and its 60,000 members firmly believe that the policy choices made today will impact our province's competitiveness for generations to come."

On that note, again, I'd like to highlight the fact that later on this afternoon, our leader, Tim Hudak, will be debating his own Million Jobs Act. I think this is a visionary policy and a visionary plan to kick-start Ontario's economy. Right now in Ontario we have nearly a million unemployed men and women. This is why our caucus agreed to clear the decks last September and pass some government bills so that the Premier and the Liberals could table a jobs plan. Speaker, here we are six months later and we have yet to see anything that resembles a jobs plan. Instead, we hear that the Liberals and NDP want to raise taxes on businesses and middle-class families through corporate tax hikes and increasing the gas tax by 10 cents per litre.

You know, I talk to many residents in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, many from Mayor Bolton's municipality of Adelaide Metcalfe, and the people of southwestern Ontario, quite frankly, do not want to pay for Toronto transit. For this Premier to talk about increasing gas taxes by 10 cents a litre is despicable and is most unfair. So I would urge the Premier and, as I said earlier, Deputy Premier Horwath to reverse course. When they're huddled debating whether this budget passes this spring—and I know both parties, by the sounds of it, want to avert going to the people—I hope they take into consideration what we've been saying in the official opposition: that the people in southwestern Ontario, northern Ontario—outside of the GTA—don't want to pay for Toronto transit. That is the last thing that Ontario needs.

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What our province needs is a plan to create jobs and attract businesses to the province. Our leader, the member for Niagara West-Glanbrook, has that plan. In fact, it's being debated later today, and we hope that every member in this House will support it. It's a five-point plan, a common-sense plan, to kick-start Ontario's economy, to create one million well-paying jobs for the people who, this morning, woke up without any hope and without any future.

Tim Hudak's one million jobs plan focuses on five points:

- (1) It lowers hydro rates for Ontario families and businesses.
- (2) It lowers taxes and reins in the government overspending that has doubled Ontario's debt over the past 10 years.
- (3) It promotes the skilled trades and lowers apprenticeship ratios.
- (4) It increases trade with provinces across Canada.
- (5) It eliminates the red tape that forces small and medium-sized business owners to spend time filling in paperwork instead of hiring more employees.

Back to what the president of the chamber was saying: "The government of Ontario is currently consulting on how to set the minimum wage." This is before the report came out and before the government announced their intentions. The chamber says, "This issue is important. There is broad consensus that the current process—or lack thereof—governing the minimum wage does not work for employers and workers."

Allan O'Dette, the president, continues: "We have consulted widely with our membership through surveys, focus groups and one-on-one interviews. Our consultations have revealed that OCC members want a process for setting the minimum wage that is based on four principles:

"Predictability"—and this is a part that our party supports, when it comes to Bill 165—"Employers want a process that provides predictability so that they can plan, grow and invest with confidence.

"Transparency: Employers need a process that is open and depoliticized.

"Fairness: Employers also want a process that considers the impact on both employers and workers.

"Promotes Ontario's competitiveness: Employers are job creators. Decisions around minimum wage should not discourage investment, job creation and economic growth.

"As such, we"—the Ontario Chamber of Commerce—"recommend that the minimum wage be pegged to the consumer price index (inflation). Of the options considered, this approach is most consistent with all four principles outlined above.

"We also urge members of the panel to consider the impacts that significant and one-off hikes in the minimum wage have on businesses and employment. For many employers—particularly those in the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors—a decision to 'make up for lost time' would exacerbate the challenges they face and hinder Ontario's economic recovery."

Clearly, Speaker, the Minister of Labour, the Premier and the government did not take into consideration, when they went back retroactively to hike the minimum wage, what the impact of that was going to be on retail, hospitality and the leisure sectors.

Again, Allan O'Dette, the president of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, said, "A decision to 'make up for lost time' would exacerbate the challenges they face and hinder Ontario's economic recovery." I think that was a warning in advance, and clearly, the provincial Liberal government didn't take into account what the Ontario Chamber of Commerce was saying.

In my riding, before I was elected, I had the honour of serving as the president of the Strathroy and District Chamber of Commerce. I'd been involved for a number of years there. Also, I made a point, as soon as I was elected, back in October 2011, to reach out to our chambers in the riding. I speak regularly with the Grand Bend and Area Chamber of Commerce and, of course, Wallaceburg and District Chamber of Commerce as well.

It will be no surprise to any member in this House that small businesses are concerned about this, specifically about the retroactive pay increase.

Allan O'Dette continues, saying that the Ontario chamber is pleased to submit their views on this matter and they look forward to participating in the continued discussion.

The consensus recommendation from the Ontario chamber was clear: "Once every two years, on July 1, the minimum wage should be adjusted based on the cumulative change to the previous two calendar years' All Items CPI for Ontario." So the government did some variation of this.

The OCC did a lot of work on this, and I'll give credit to Allan O'Dette and his team at the Ontario chamber. They are really working hard. They put out a bold plan—I forget the name of it now, but it really sets out a bold path, and I think that our leader's Million Jobs Act adopts a lot of the visionary principles that the chamber set out.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Yesterday, Speaker, I wanted to raise this point of order, but the House adjourned too quickly. It was my colleague's 61st birthday yesterday—my good friend Garfield Dunlop, and I wanted to wish him a happy birthday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My dear friend, who was elected in the same year as me.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Yes?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm with you, buddy.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm going to guess that there's going to be an outpouring of love this morning for registered nurses. I'm guessing that.

I just want to recognize a registered nurse from my riding: my good friend Denise Wood. Welcome to Queen's Park. Welcome, RNAO.

Miss Monique Taylor: I would like to welcome our page Ibrahim Oleiche's parents today. They would be Fida and Zein Oleiche. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Hon. Charles Sousa: On behalf of the Premier, the Minister of Health and all our colleagues here in the Legislature, today I would like to introduce several members of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario joining us here at Queen's Park: Doris Grinspun, Rhonda Seidman-Carlson, Pat Sevean, Janet Hunt, Carol Timmings, Mary McAllister, Claudette Holloway, Una Ferguson and Jackie Graham. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It gives me great pleasure to have with us this morning some good friends of my father-in-law, John Ryan: Mr. Wilf Kemp; his lovely daughter, Belinda Kemp, and Belinda's daughters, Avery Moorhouse and Celia Moorhouse. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue à tous les infirmiers de l'Association des infirmières et infirmiers autorisés de l'Ontario.

It certainly is my pleasure to welcome everybody from RNAO. More particularly, I'd like to mention that Maureen Cava is here, and Aric Rankin, Paula Manuel, Jody Macdonald and Deborah Kane. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a great pleasure for me to introduce a number of people in the members' east gallery today: Mary Anna Zakula, who is the mother of page Nik Skilton, from Peterborough; and grandmother Christian Walker and grandfather Harold Walker. I want to give them a big, warm Queen's Park welcome here this morning.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to introduce, from the RNAO, Jill Staples, an RN from my riding. Jill, give us a wave up there. Thank you very much, and welcome to Queen's Park. She always comes and represents the RNAO, so I thank her for that.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, just with a special edge to this, I'd like to welcome the registered nurses. I live with a registered nurse and I owe my political success to his patience and his skills.

I know how hard you work. You're a blessing on this province. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: This is a great day at Queen's Park, to have so many members of the RNAO join us. I'd like to make a few more introductions. I'd like to welcome Vanessa Burkoski, Denise Wood, Marianne Cochrane, Véronique Boscart and Rebecca Harbridge. Welcome to all of our guests.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We're pleased to welcome in the east gallery today the Honourable Diana McQueen, Minister of Energy for the great province of Alberta, and her chief of staff, Riley Georgsen. They are here at Queen's Park to participate in the Canadian Energy Innovation Summit.

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: It's my pleasure today to introduce some residents from Etobicoke–Lakeshore. First, I'd like to introduce Justin Brown. Justin Brown was the chief of staff to Bob Runciman when he was here, so it's nice to have Justin back with us. Justin is with his daughter, Rowan. Rowan is down here, I think, to get some information on the page program. Rowan, welcome.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to welcome the nurses from Hamilton. I don't have their names in front of me, but there are four or five of them, I believe, from the Hamilton area. I welcome them to the Legislature today.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Today I'd like to introduce some individuals who are here representing the Atypical Hemolytic Uremic Syndrome Canada: Sonia De Bartoli,

Michael and Margrite Eygenraam and Christopher Lee. Thank you for being with us here today at Queen's Park.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: My page from Burlington is doing a wonderful job and is very hard-working. Her mom and brother are here today in the public gallery, Diane and Zach Caton.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to introduce two registered nurses from Welland here today: Shirley Kennedy and Elizabeth Stifter.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to introduce my friend Michele Farrugia. Mikey, stand up so we can see. Mikey's visiting us from Oshawa today. I'd welcome him to his first session of question period.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to welcome nurses from eastern Ontario. We have Suzanne Lynch-Braithwaite joining us with the RNAO, Kassia Blattner and, from the great nursing program at Loyalist College, Elizabeth Edwards. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm delighted to have Candies Kotchapaw, who is a student in our office, here observing what we do.

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's my pleasure to welcome the students of Don Mills Collegiate Institute here to the Legislature today, one of the best schools in this entire province.

I'd also like to introduce attendees from the Children's Breakfast Club who are joining us here today: Richard Gosling, Zubeda Nanji, Cecilie Homer and Alexandra Fraser. Joining them from 33 division are Sergeant Rod Chung, PC Patrick Thompson, PC Timothy Whittle and PC Dale Swift. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to introduce RNAO nurse Megan Herron. She carries awhile in Tara, from the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. Welcome, Megan, and welcome RNAO.

Hon. Mario Sergio: From the heart of the riding of York West, I'd like to welcome to the House Shoreham Public Sports and Wellness Academy. They are joining us today. I'd like to say welcome and enjoy the day here.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce to the Legislature Cheryl Yost and Jane Foster here with the RNAO. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to introduce to you Brenda Jenkins and her nephew Henry, who are here today joining us at Queen's Park for some information. Welcome.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I had a very engaging breakfast this morning with nurse practitioner Alana Halfpenny, from Lambton; and registered nurse Betty Oldershaw, from the great riding of Chatham-Kent.

Mrs. Gila Martov: I'd like to welcome to the House Zehavi Zynoberg from my riding of Thornhill, whose name means "gold" in Hebrew. He has such a sunny disposition that it suits him.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Just in case there's anyone in the House who hasn't been introduced, I'd like to welcome them all here this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I believe I've got everybody in. That used to be my line from a long time ago, so thank you for stealing my thunder.

The Minister of Northern Development and Mines on a point of order.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, I think all members of the House know that my mother passed away recently. I do want to take this opportunity to thank all of them for their very, very kind and thoughtful condolences. This is a very important time for our family. In that regard, actually, I do want to introduce two of my sisters who are here with us this morning. Of course, I love them dearly: my sister Susan Houghton and my sister Sarah Mackenzie-Gravelle. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I too would like to thank all the members for their generosity of being good human beings in this place. From time to time, we all share and come together for very important moments. These are those types of moments. I appreciate all the members for their expression of solicitude and gratitude to each other. They represent their families, and I appreciate that deeply. I thank you and compliment all the members on that.

I also would offer my thanks to all of our RNAO visitors for being here. In case you got missed, we welcome all of you here.

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ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, you know, sadly, something historic happened today. We heard from the OPP commissioner regarding the criminal investigation of the OPP into the Premier's office and the Liberal Party. The unfortunate consequence of the fact that you're being criminally investigated, not once but twice, means that you're spending a lot of resources, quite frankly, protecting the Liberal Party instead of creating jobs for people in the province of Ontario. Basically, because of these scandals involving criminal activity, you don't have the focus on getting our economy moving again and creating jobs. You're spending time covering Liberal hides rather than creating jobs for our province. So, given you're so consumed by the OPP investigations, I've got a jobs plan to put people back to work. Will you support my million jobs plan, debated in the Legislative Assembly later this afternoon?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Be seated, please. Be seated, please. While the clock is stopped, I'm going to remind all members: I do not want to hear individual names. We know that that's not appropriate. The convention here is that you either say their title or their riding, and I'll stick tight to that. That includes the sidebars.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. You know, on this side of the House, we're able to manage

many files concurrently. We're able to stimulate the economy and grow our economy and create those jobs. And we put up with some of the nonsense that comes from that side of the House in regard to some of the investigations that they purport to tell. The OPP commissioner told us today, "I am told by our investigators that the OPP is receiving good co-operation from senior government officials in this matter." They have our full co-operation. They further say that the Premier has been very responsible. We've taken a stand. She's actually called for the investigations, and we're moving forward. But, Mr. Speaker, I recall, as someone who was involved with protecting the communities, the member opposite stood in that community and promised to cancel that power plant without consequences any further. Mr. Speaker, they just do the same—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let me be clear: The OPP stormed into the Premier's office, not anybody else's. Let's be clear about that. So the Minister of Finance assures us that they can handle both, that they can spend half their time on OPP criminal investigations and then half their time on the economy. Minister, I just wish you had made the right decisions so you could focus 100% of your time on creating jobs in our province.

Look, you yourself were involved in these decisions. You're finance minister. You asked for billions of dollars to be spent to save Liberal seats, including your own. You supported the Green Energy Act that has now seen hydro rates more than double in the province of Ontario. Part of my million jobs plan is to end the unaffordable subsidies to wind and solar. It's causing job losses. For every short-term job we create putting up a wind turbine, we'll lose four in the broader economy. So let me ask you directly—you're the Minister of Finance—before you signed on—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: —to these unaffordable wind and solar subsidies, did you look at how many jobs—

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

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: So the member opposite has what we refer to as the "killing million jobs act." This is about a job loss plan. This is his plan, Mr. Speaker, very thin on specifics.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have a plan, a plan that has created jobs, over 600,000 jobs—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I did not get things quiet for the member from Renfrew to get his heckle in.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I didn't see you get up, Speaker.

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

Interjection.

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

Finish.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite's plan for right-to-work is about killing jobs. It's about killing prominent jobs in our community, and it's not forward thinking. He's going backwards in time, Mr. Speaker, and you can't compete in that regard.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, with that kind of sophomoric response, no wonder we can't attract jobs to the province, Minister. I expect better from the finance minister of the province.

Part of leadership is imagining the future you want for the next generation, one full of jobs, good-paying jobs, and then you build the steps to get there. I've done that plan, and I'm ready to lead us there, to get taxes down, to get energy rates under control, to make sure we make the decisions necessary to balance our books, including an across-the-board wage freeze that you used to support but you cast aside, putting us deep in debt.

You hear the same thing I do; I know you do. Every business owner I talk to, large or small, is concerned about skyrocketing hydro rates. You know that your subsidies to wind and solar have been an economic failure. My question for you is, why are you going to dig the hole deeper? Why not embrace my plan for affordable energy so we can create jobs again?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: So, Mr. Speaker, we talk about sophomoric and simplistic plans brought forward by this man and this party.

We are the leanest government in Canada. The steps that we have taken—we are the lowest per capita government anywhere in Canada. For four years running, we have controlled our spending. We have been very disciplined, and we're the only government to have actually cut spending year over year. We're taking the steps necessary to meet our targets and balance our books by 2017-18.

But this is what they say about Mr. Hudak's—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I heard very little talking while the question was being put; I'm hearing too much talking while the answer is being put. Stop it.

Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: This is what they say about this risky and radical plan that goes back in time: "Ontario PC leader Tim Hudak's latest economic offering is a simplistic, headline-hunting plan that's more concerned with austerity than job creation. And it ignores many of the most important drivers of economic growth," said by Michael Warren in the Toronto Star.

He often quotes Don Drummond, and this is what he has to say: "It's extremely unlikely to produce many

jobs. A few calculations should have made that evident," said Don Drummond.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the finance minister. I'm just somewhat incredulous that the finance minister would describe his government as a lean government. I mean, how in the world can you say that a government with the biggest deficit in Canada and the most indebted jurisdiction of states and provinces in North America is lean? I think we need a new finance minister; I think we need a new government. I think we've got to get on a much better track.

The minister obviously wants to continue to embrace the Dalton McGuinty approach of expensive energy, so let me try a different tack that's part of my jobs plan. At least Dalton McGuinty and Dwight Duncan finally came around to an across-the-board wage freeze, legislated if necessary. That was my plan; it's part of my million jobs plan. So to help us get out of the deep debt, will you support my bill, which will bring in an across-the-board wage freeze to make sure we have less debt and attract investment to our province?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We are the lowest-cost government in Canada. We have, because of the controls and the measures we've taken, taken necessary steps to control our spending, but we've been very strategic in stimulating economic growth. That's why we've created over 164% more jobs in this province, in this jurisdiction, compared to anywhere else—compared to the United States that's only at 80%. So we're taking those steps.

Mr. Speaker, the man opposite is proposing a bill that's going to create cuts in our economy, especially now that we have a sensitive recovery. His plan is going to reduce nurses, reduce doctors, cut teachers and eliminate very valuable jobs in our communities.

We are still the top destination for foreign direct investment. They will be cautioned because of the work that this man is proposing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, Minister, respectfully, the first path to recovery in Ontario is admitting that you've got a problem. You've put us deep in debt. You've increased taxes. You've increased energy rates almost twofold. I've seen the commercials by the RNAO. You're actually the party that's laying off nurses in the province of Ontario, so let's get our facts straight on this.

So you're not going to rein in spending; you're not going to stop the energy increase. Let me ask you this: The man who seems to be calling the shots is not you, but it's Pat Dillon of the Working Families coalition. They brought in a new bureaucracy called the College of Trades, and now you want to have compulsory certification for carpenters. You'll reduce jobs there.

Look, my plan is to create 250,000 jobs in the skilled trades, to take aside this bureaucracy that stands in the way, to move to a one-to-one journeyman-to-apprentice ratio. I want a bright future for people in good, middle-

class jobs in the trades. Will you support that, or are you stuck in the past and deep in Pat Dillon's pocket?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Finance?

1050

Hon. Charles Sousa: The opposition is putting their heads in the sand. They are stuck in the past. They want to go back to the glory days of smokestacks burned on coal and compete with assembly lines. That is not where we're going to be competitive in the future. We know that we have new manufacturing. We have more sectors created in Ontario than any other province combined. We've got more start-ups in this province because of the initiatives that we've taken. The man opposite is suggesting that we provide right-to-work legislation that would cut those jobs. He wants to lower wages as opposed to provide those value added.

We're investing in people. We're investing in education. We're providing youth programs so that we get more young people employed so that they have the skills necessary to compete in the new economy of the future, of tomorrow. He still wants to go back to yesterday.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Look, I understand you were a significant player in the Dalton McGuinty government. You're convinced that you want to continue down that path. You are stuck in the past. I've got a bold, fresh plan to put people back to work in good middle-class jobs in our province. I call it the million jobs plan; it's debated this afternoon.

Here's the difference, Minister: You choose expensive wind and solar subsidies; I choose affordable energy so we can hire again. You chose 300,000 more government jobs; I choose a million good jobs in the private sector that put people back to work in our province. You choose higher taxes; I choose lower taxes that will invest in Ontario and create jobs again. You chose to double the debt; I'm calling for the debt to come down and say Ontario is open for business again. You're choosing Dalton McGuinty; I'm choosing the people of the province of Ontario, who want hope and want to get back to work in our great province. Why don't you?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have to collaborate with all levels of government for the benefit of the people of Ontario. The individual across the way is suggesting that we do across-the-board cuts and not stimulate economic growth. There's time for restraint, there is time for us to control our spending, and we've already employed many measures of austerity for the benefit of providing valuable services at lower cost. That's why we are the lowest-per-capita-cost government in the country.

But this member opposite is now suggesting that what we need to do, to create job losses that he's proposing in his act, would be to eliminate these costs and eliminate the investments that are necessary to promote economic growth. The measure of our economy is GDP. What

we're trying to do is increase our GDP, and that has increased over time. We are going to do everything necessary to grow our economy, not slow it down, as this member is suggesting we should do.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Today, the OPP commissioner testified about the serious charges they're investigating concerning the destruction of documents in the Premier's and other government offices.

Can the Acting Premier tell us whether any staff or members of the government caucus are subjects of this investigation?

Hon. Charles Sousa: To the House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think we need to correct the record here. The OPP commissioner appeared in front of the committee this morning and confirmed the following: He confirmed that there's ongoing work by the police force. He confirmed that—

Interjection.

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

Hon. John Milloy: —those involved are co-operating fully. He also confirmed that we should allow the police to do their work and to draw no conclusions.

Mr. Speaker, I would advise all honourable members of the House that we should listen to his advice and, as is the tradition of this place, allow the police to do their work, to not speculate and certainly to not interfere. I would hope that the leader of the third party would take that advice to heart.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The House leader can downplay it as much as he wants, but this is a serious matter. This is a criminal investigation, which is another thing that was confirmed this morning at committee. There could be some heavy sentences that come as a result of these investigations.

Given the seriousness of this matter and the government's stated commitment to transparency, will the Acting Premier commit today that anyone who is subject to this investigation will be asked to step aside pending its results?

Hon. John Milloy: This line of questioning really is beneath the leader of the New Democratic Party. We have a situation where the police are undertaking work and, as is the tradition of this Legislature, we should get out of the way. We should allow them to undertake their work. We should not draw any conclusions. We should not speculate.

If the honourable member wants to talk about the gas plants, then perhaps she and the members of the opposition could talk about their position going into the last election and the fact that they had the exact same position as the government. They're hoping that fact gets forgotten, but I'm sorry to say, it's not going to be forgotten. All parties in this Legislature opposed the two gas plants

and all parties would have taken the exact same action, had they been in government.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The House leader's fancy footwork is a disservice to the public of this province. The police have an important job to do here, but the government actually has a responsibility to the public. When someone is under investigation, they have to step aside. I'm asking the Acting Premier to make that basic commitment today: Either confirm that no members of the government caucus are the subject of this investigation or tell us they'll be stepping aside if they are. Will the Acting Premier make that commitment?

Hon. John Milloy: Just to repeat—and I believe the finance minister made the point clear—that when the commissioner appeared in front of the committee this morning, one of the things he stressed repeatedly was the full co-operation that he is receiving from the government. When inquiries are being made, there are no roadblocks or obstacles—I believe he used words to that effect—when they're undertaking their work.

Again, I would advise the leader of the third party that she accept the traditions of this House. They're there for a very good reason. We allow our law enforcement agencies to do their work in an unencumbered way. I also think it's doing a disservice to this Legislature to try to draw any conclusions, to try to speculate. Let's allow them to undertake their work.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Finance, but I think the Minister of Government Services and House leader needs to remember that there's a tradition in this House to step aside when you're under criminal investigation in the province of Ontario.

Yesterday, I asked the Premier whether the Liberals will keep the promises that they actually ran on in 2011. She proudly threw the 2011 platform under the bus, saying she wasn't the Premier then and she's the Premier now.

Can the minister list which promises from the 2011 platform the Liberal government will be keeping and which ones they're throwing under the bus?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the fact the leader of the third party recognizes that we have a platform; they do not. We are going to continue doing what's best in the interests of the people of Ontario. We're going to continue stimulating economic growth. We're going to continue investing in job creation measures, like our youth programs. We're going to continue combatting the excessive costs, as I believe both parties recognize is important around reducing auto insurance rates, for example. We're taking the steps necessary to maintain a very dynamic business climate that attracts those investments into our province.

We're going to invest in transit. I'm not certain where they stand on that component, but we need to invest in

those modern infrastructure projects that are going to create a very competitive environment in our province and pay huge dividends in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Maybe the Minister of Finance knows something we all don't know, if he's got a platform ready to go.

People have been let down a lot of times over the last 10 years by this Liberal government. They have a hard time trusting Liberal promises and it doesn't help when the Premier makes contradictory promises. The government starts throwing out parts of the platform that they were elected on.

Now, can the minister explain to Ontarians whether the Liberals will keep their campaign promises from last time to hold the line on taxes or whether they'll keep their new promise to raise taxes on families?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'm not certain where the member opposite is coming from now, because what we're saying is that we're going to invest in those initiatives that are going to stimulate economic growth. We're investing \$35 billion over the next three years to promote infrastructure so that we take care of the issues that created an uncompetitive environment over many years of rule by another party. We need to invest in those initiatives.

When we talk about maintaining a dynamic business climate, we are the party that actually cut taxes from 5.5% to 4.5% for small business. We introduced an accelerated capital cost allowance to enable those businesses to be competitive. We actually eliminated taxes for 90% of businesses in this province by eliminating the employer health tax. We're taking those steps. We've created over 164% more jobs in this province than ever before.

So we are being competitive, and the reason is that we have a dynamic climate in Ontario.

1100

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The last time that families had a say, they voted for a government promising not to make their lives more expensive with new taxes, tolls and fees. The Premier likes to say that this is a new government, but anyone looking across the aisle today can see it's the same old Liberals.

Does the minister really expect people to buy the idea that this isn't the McGuinty Liberal team, that the Premier wasn't the co-chair of the McGuinty Liberal campaign and therefore doesn't have to abide by the promises everyone on that side of the House made during the last election campaign?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have introduced an increase to the minimum wage. The party opposite was silent throughout the entire process. They make reference in their platform, but they didn't even discuss it during that time that we needed some deliberation.

The third party has also not even discussed what is critical for the well-being of Ontarians in the future, and

that's retirement security. No mention about this pension reform that is so important for our future.

We are taking those steps. We're taking leadership on those initiatives to protect the interests of Ontarians, both young and old.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. Minister, this morning Heinz announced that Highbury Canco will be taking over a portion of their Leamington plant as a co-packer, saving many jobs in town. This announcement is great news for the people of the town, and it's a good start, but there's plenty more work to be done in Leamington. I want to ensure that the province continues to make Leamington a priority. The town is still at a net loss of hundreds of jobs, and I will continue to work with Leamington mayor John Paterson, trying to bring new jobs to the community.

Minister, what are your next steps to help those in Leamington whose jobs won't be saved?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. I will remind the members on this side that I've been hearing a few people mentioning people's names, and it will stop—last warning.

The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm proud to say this morning that there is a great announcement coming out of Leamington. I'm not sure if the member opposite is supportive or not, from his question.

We're bringing back literally hundreds of jobs to that important community. I'm so proud at the announcement this morning by the Heinz Co. and Highbury Canco that they're investing in that community. The facility will stay open. Heinz has signed a letter of intent with this company, this good Canadian company, to bring hundreds of jobs back to that community and for them to continue as a contractor, producing food and food products for the Heinz Co.

This is great news for the Leamington area. I want to commend, quite frankly, the mayor, Mayor Paterson; the WindsorEssex Economic Development Corporation, who have been working very hard on this; certainly, the member from Windsor West, Teresa Piruzza; and all of the members in government, the officials, who have been working so hard to make this work. This is a great day for Leamington.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Just for the record, these jobs were created by the private sector, not by this Liberal government.

Chatham-Kent has lost over 10,000 jobs since this Liberal government took power in 2003. Heinz, McKesson and Worthington Cylinders are just a few of the latest to either shut their doors or reduce the size of their operations.

I'm going to tell you something, Minister: My riding knows how to turn this challenge into new opportunities, but this government is not doing enough to help. Employers should not have to pay high energy rates or struggle with red tape.

The good news is that the PC Party has a plan ready to kick-start our economy. Your government and the NDP are talking job creation. You know what? You can help us. Minister, help us help you. Will you do the right thing and—

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General will come to order.

Minister of Economic Development and Trade.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I am shocked at this response, and I think the member opposite should just say, "Thank you." Private sector jobs are exactly what this province needs. He should talk to Mayor Paterson and understand from him and others the important role that this government played to make that private sector deal happen. In fact, we did our due diligence with the investor that has the agreement with Heinz right now. We introduced that company to Heinz and worked with them on an almost daily basis to make sure that opportunity and any other private sector opportunities could come to fruition.

We're so proud, again, that hundreds of jobs are coming back to Leamington. If the member opposite doesn't like that, I think he should move elsewhere.

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am prepared to say something but I'm not going to do it until everyone's listening. I've said many times in this House I don't like it when individuals are attacked and I will not tolerate it. We're more honourable than that.

New question.

COMMUNITY CARE ACCESS CENTRES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre par intérim. Home care is a vital health service that more and more Ontarians rely on, but as questions continue to grow about CCACs, about health care dollars being diverted from front-line care to executive pay, we know that our home care system is falling short. Nurses, some of them here with us today, have spoken out; patients have spoken out, and problems just continue to grow. Why then, after years of promises, has the government yet again failed to fix our home care system?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. I appreciate the concern that we need to continue transforming and delivering good health care in our province. I congratulate the nurses who are here today who do a tremendous job on the front lines for our communities.

We have taken a number of steps to promote greater health care in home care. We recognize the work that CCACs are doing. We also recognize that we need to ensure that more attention and more support goes to the front lines so that we can deliver the health care where it's needed and when it's needed, and that's exactly what we're doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The first step to fix a problem is to admit that you have one. The NDP is giving this government an opportunity to finally take steps to fix the problems in home care. I have given the Clerk a motion for a legislative review of the community care access system, outlining a process that would allow us to immediately and publicly look at CCACs, look at their executive compensation and identify what needs to change, what needs to be done so that home care can be fixed.

My question is simple. Will the government support an immediate and public review of CCACs?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I know the Minister of Health commented on this yesterday. We're more than open and welcome to further investigations. We have always taken that step to be more transparent in the work that is being done by CCACs and throughout the system. In fact, we're going to be introducing legislation in regard to capping executive salaries, recognizing the dichotomy that exists between the very high and those on the front lines. We're taking those steps as well, so I welcome the input.

I do look forward to knowing what the third party has in store for this. We already know what the opposition wants to do: They want to cut your jobs. We're not going to do that. We do want to work. We want to continue to invest and provide support for health care and for the front lines, so I welcome your suggestions in that regard.

1110

DISASTER RELIEF

Mrs. Laura Albanese: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. On December 22 and through Christmas, municipalities across the greater Toronto and Hamilton region were affected by an ice storm that caused great damage, leading to about 830,000 people and customers losing power. Our Premier, our government, our members were out working with affected municipalities, helping constituents all across the GTHA.

Now, the fallen tree branches are being picked up. The warming centres have closed. The streets are salted and cleared. However, our municipal partners have expenses that they incurred from the storm. Mr. Speaker, through you to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, could you please explain how our government plans to support the recovery from this event?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member for this very important question. Since the ice storm, 32 municipalities have passed resolutions asking our government for assistance in helping to pay for the ice storm's

cleanup. In January, I was able to meet with the GTA mayors and regional chairs in Mississauga and hear their concerns, and have, frankly, a very constructive conversation.

After evaluating their submissions, yesterday I announced that our government will provide up to \$190 million to support affected municipalities through a one-time special ice storm disaster relief fund.

As a former municipal councillor myself, I know how important and critical the role is of the municipal government and the role that they play in disaster management. I want to thank them for their work. Our government knows that this storm had a significant impact on municipal budgets and I'm proud that our government will provide critical relief, whether through this needed assistance or the approximately \$3.2 billion that we provided in uploads last year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to thank the minister for the answer. I'm pleased that our government will continue to work with municipalities on ensuring they receive the support that they need to recover from the ice storm. However, as our government has increased support for municipalities, the federal government continues to fail to give Ontarians its fair share of federal transfers, disadvantaging Ontario cities and towns, as well as every Ontario citizen.

Ontario has been experiencing more severe weather, like the ice storm and the flooding that occurred in the GTHA region over the summer. Municipalities from across Ontario are looking to disaster mitigation to ensure that Ontarians' property and lives are protected.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, could the minister please explain to the House what action she has taken to ensure that the federal government works with our government and municipalities to ensure that we are able to cope with this extreme weather?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: As climate change occurs, events like this summer's flooding or this winter's ice storm will occur more frequently, and these problems are not just ones that affect Toronto, the Muskokas or Sault Ste. Marie. It's a nationwide issue. It's one the federal government continues to ignore. That's why following the ice storm I wrote to my counterpart, the Honourable Steven Blaney, Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness.

Because these events occur, municipalities rightly need to begin to look at how to mitigate their effects, whether it's through the redevelopment of storm water management systems or making our hydro system more resilient.

I appreciate the federal government's recent commitment to national disaster mitigation, but I fear it will not go far enough and Ontario will not receive its fair share. Ontario and the whole country need essential investments to address the priorities of Canadian municipalities. That's why I'm urging all parties in this House to stand with our government and pressure the federal government to come to the table and discuss how we can best mitigate the effects of these disasters.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Gila Martow: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. The hard-working people in my riding of Thornhill paid their fair share of transit taxes and would like this Liberal government to do its fair share. Instead of giving families in Thornhill the transit that they need and want, this Liberal government continues to waste tax dollars on scandals, and is moving forward with a \$640-million east-west bus lane plan that doesn't properly address the needs of people in my community.

Speaker, the hard-working people of Thornhill want to know if the Minister of Transportation will abandon his ill-thought-out transit plan and commit today to building the Yonge subway expansion.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to welcome the member to our House and tell her, not having been around here that long myself, and sitting up about where she is, I'm very honoured to get your first question, and I'm very glad. Welcome.

Mr. Bill Walker: She'd be honoured if you'd give the answer.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's also nice, Mr. Speaker, to know that she has better manners than some of her colleagues.

The Yonge Street extension is in the Big Move plan. It is a \$50-billion plan. We are about \$17 billion into it. Mr. Speaker, 90% of that money has come from the province of Ontario. In her area of York region, we did a partnership on development charges, so they've been extending it. You can see the commitment in our partnership with Vaughan and the city of Toronto on the subway that is now in its final stages of completion. So I'd be confident that our track record is there. I look forward to working with her to realize that project.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Again to the Minister of Transportation: Minister, for a decade under this Liberal government, residents of York region have been asking for the expansion of the Yonge subway, not just talk about it. They need it to service Thornhill, Markham, Richmond Hill, Unionville, Aurora and Newmarket. But instead of getting the infrastructure that the residents of Thornhill need, they continue to send their hard-earned tax dollars to this Liberal government, watching them spend it on everything from Ornge to eHealth and the gas plant scandals.

Minister, why do you insist on reaching into taxpayers' pockets to pay for all of your waste and scandal?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I would actually invite the member—because I'll go on a tour with you, if you'd like, of the initiatives that we have.

Mr. Speaker, we have—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That'll do.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, that's it.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: There is \$1.4 billion in GO service. The GO-Viva partnership is connecting these subway lines and our GO Transit so there will be an east-west connective piece. It's a very successful project, highly integrated transit. We have accelerated and increased the number of GO stations, building parking lots and more, and providing bicycle facilities, as well as the subway, this subway extension and others—there are a number of projects. The priorities are being set in partnership with the regional governments and the municipalities, so we think they're very reflective of that.

I really would invite her to a tour. I'd love to spend some time with you, and I welcome you again to the House.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Yesterday, the respected hydro watchdog, AMPCO, released its annual comparison of industrial hydro rates in North America. Once again, Ontario had by far the highest rates of industrial users of any comparable jurisdictions: \$94 per megawatt hour compared to \$56 per megawatt hour in New York state and a very low \$32 in the US industrial Midwest, which competes with Ontario for good-paying manufacturing jobs. Tens of thousands of jobs have been lost in the Niagara region and southwestern Ontario because of this government's high hydro rate policies. How does this government justify its job-killing hydro rate policy to the people of Niagara and southwestern Ontario?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: As we know, we've invested \$31 billion in the sector in the last 10 years because the system had been left to deteriorate. That put pressure on prices. We all know that. We therefore created a number of mitigation programs to help individual customers as well as industrial customers.

Mr. Speaker, the member may not be aware of the Industrial Electricity Incentive Program, which we started about 18 months ago. This uses surplus power to give discounted power to our own industrial customers. Last month, we announced some of the people who had been successful in that program. Detour Gold was one of the successful proponents in the first round, and they issued a press release claiming that the program will save them \$20 million this year.

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: As if the present industrial hydro rates weren't bad enough, the government's own long-term energy plan calls for a 30% increase in the industrial hydro price by 2018. This is going to result in the loss of thousands more good-paying jobs.

How does this government justify a 30% increase in what are already by far the highest industrial hydro rates in North America?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We have a plan for the electricity system. The 20-year plan projects cost increases annually of 2.8%, which is better than most other provinces.

That party, the third party, has no policy on energy. They will not plan new nuclear. They are against refurbishment. That represents over 50% of our generation, and here's their policy. They have no policy on replacing 50% of our energy. How will it be produced? Nothing. They stand up and criticize, and they close their eyes to the very significant mitigation programs we have to help our industries in Ontario.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Our priority as a government is our economic plan to invest in people, to invest in infrastructure and to create the right business climate for job creation. We've had great success so far. Employment across the province is up by 440,000 jobs from the recessionary low of June 2009. Just last year, employment rose by 95,000 jobs.

Speaking with constituents, neighbours and friends across Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, they constantly agree with me that jobs and the economy are a priority for them and should be a priority for our government.

Our government has made tremendous strides throughout the province through our regional economic development funds. Could the minister please provide an update to the House on the funds and how they're creating jobs across this province, including in eastern Ontario and Glengarry–Prescott–Russell?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for this question. Just this past October, we celebrated the one-year anniversary of the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, a fund that was actually modelled after the Eastern Ontario Development Fund that's been around for nearly five years. Through these, we've committed as a government over \$100 million to these two regions in regional economic development, but, importantly, leveraging a total private sector investment of \$980 million, almost a billion dollars.

These investments are helping to create and retain, so far, over 24,000 jobs in Ontario communities, jobs that are a direct result of this government's initiative to help companies invest in employment. Of these jobs, 95% of them are manufacturing jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister, for sharing with this House the great work that our government is doing to help create jobs and grow the economy. Our province's success relies on working together with all sectors to spur growth and create good-paying jobs at home.

From my own experience in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, I know that the Eastern Ontario Development Fund has created and retained jobs in and around my riding. They have included new jobs in the agri-food, aerospace and construction sectors. Dart Aerospace in

Hawkesbury, Holder Tractors in Embrun, Beau's beer in Vankleek Hill and Alexandria Moulding in my hometown of Alexandria are just a few examples.

Speaker, through you, could the minister inform the House of specific investments we're making in communities across the province to get the economy moving and provide employment for Ontarians?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: This government has created the conditions for companies to thrive here in Ontario. We have a competitive tax rate and a labour force that is one of the best-qualified in the world.

Recently, I attended an announcement of Original Foods in Dunnville, in southwestern Ontario, who are expanding their operations to hire 150 people out of that important community. We also supported a company called Pillar5 Pharma in Arnprior. Through our investment, our partnership with them, the company is adding 56 new jobs and retaining 94 more. In the member's riding, we partnered with Dart Aerospace in Hawkesbury, creating new manufacturing jobs for local families.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like the official opposition, who voted against and did not support in any way whatsoever these two important regional economic development funds—we believe it's important to consider industry as important partners in supporting the growth of our economy, and we will be there to support them when they need that support.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. My constituent Shay Nakhdjavan was placed on a wait-list for residential care at the age of 14. She is now 34 years old—20 years on a wait-list.

Shay suffers from multiple health conditions, including epilepsy and seizure disorder; Dravet syndrome, a severe brain disorder related to epilepsy; cognitive delay; autism; diabetes; and obesity. She has behavioural problems that often result in seizures and self-inflicted injury.

Her aging parents have done what they can over the last 20 years to look after her. They now have their own health issues. For years, specialists have recommended 24/7 residential care. I trust the minister will agree that 20 years on a wait-list is not only unconscionable, it is immoral.

I'm asking the minister today: Will you intervene on behalf of Shay and her parents and ensure that her care is looked after through resources in your ministry?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I thank the honourable member opposite for his question. He's a champion of people with developmental challenges and the families that support them, and he was kind enough to bring this particular situation to my attention.

He knows I can't comment directly on the case—it would be against the law to do that—but I can say here that we're aware that some individuals have very complex needs that make it very challenging to find a place-

ment. It's the responsibility of Developmental Services Ontario and community agencies to work together as best they can with families to explore possible solutions. It's my job to make sure that that's done as effectively as possible, and I believe, on the whole, it is.

That said, I need to note, of course—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: —it's helpful that the extra \$42.5 million we invested this year is bringing more developmental services to the fore and some—

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

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I did bring this matter to the minister's attention and I can't tell you how disappointed I am in the response. What I was hoping to hear from the minister was that, given the fact that his own ministry has agreed to put this woman on a priority list, and she has been there for years, he would ensure that his own ministry's priority would be honoured.

Here's what's happening: Shay is being put on a priority list. Residential providers are skipping her in favour of other patients who don't require the same complexity of care. I call that discrimination. What should be happening is that his ministry should be honouring its own recognition of Shay's condition.

I'm asking the minister one more time: Rather than giving me platitudes and generalities, will he commit to work with me to ensure that Shay and her family are looked after?

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Without the extra comments, please.

Minister?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to continue working with the member opposite. I appreciate his advocacy, truly. In fact, I appreciate the advocacy of all the folks in this House who work together to support, as I did, the creation of the developmental services special committee. That's important work.

In the meantime, let me make it clear: We need to focus, I think, on four objectives: expanding direct funding; supporting people better in key life situations; responding to people who have urgent support needs—I agree with the member opposite—and broader options for residential supports.

We know, for example, that improving housing options is critical. That's why we created, upon the advice of our partnership table, an Inter-Ministerial Housing Task Force to recommend a broader set of options.

We look forward to working together—

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

Hon. Ted McMeekin: —with all members of the House, and I await with breathless—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Time's up.

New question.

1130

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Acting Premier. Earlier this week, a media exposé forced the government to finally fund the nine empty beds at St. Joseph's Health Care's newly built forensic hospital. These beds were desperately needed to treat mentally ill offenders who are found not criminally responsible in the place where they should be treated: a health care setting instead of a jail.

Today, Londoners are learning more about the impact of the funding cuts to St. Joseph's Health Care that were announced this week. Just as they funded the empty forensic beds, will the Acting Premier commit to Londoners that his government will address the new problems that are sure to arise as St. Joseph's Health Care deals with the loss of funding?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you for the question. I'm proud that our government has provided the necessary supports to build the state-of-the-art Southwest Centre for Forensic Mental Health Care, which was completed in June 2013. It's important that we continue to provide the services for the individuals that are affected, and I recognize, especially for those with developmental services needs and with mental health issues, that we need to find the proper support systems for them. So we'll continue to do that. But since 2003-04, the number of forensic mental health beds has increased by 42%, from 556 to 789. We're doing what's necessary and will continue to take those recommendations under consideration, as we must, for the benefit of the people of Ontario and those that are affected.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Back to the Acting Premier: Last week, we learned that a health care CEO in London received a 144% pay increase. Today, we learned that St. Joseph's Health Care in London will be cutting 23 positions, including eight nurses in the sexual assault, surgical recovery and acquired brain injury programs, among others.

We know that cuts to nursing care directly impact the health of patients. A study released yesterday provided clear proof that increasing RN workloads resulted in higher death rates for patients. It was further reported, Acting Premier, that Ontario has the second-lowest registered-nurse-to-person ratio.

Will the Acting Premier tell us whether his government will intervene this time around, or will cuts to patient care be allowed to continue?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have made a number of investments to transform the way we deliver health care. We are the party and the government that has increased the number of nurses in this province. We've added more than 20,500 nurses in Ontario since taking office, and that's more than 4,000 new nurses in 2013. In addition, the number of nurses who are now working full-time has increased by 50%.

We recognize how important it is to have front-line health care. We know what is necessary. The member opposite cites probably a transformation of nurses from one site to another. The net result is more nurses in our province. We know how valuable the work is that you do and what you do for us, and we will continue to invest in that. We know that we need to make those transformations for the benefit of health care and we've got to find better ways of delivering that health care in a more fiscally responsible manner. It's not enough just to do across-the-board cuts that would sacrifice the needs of the community and—

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

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Joe Dickson: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. It is good news that Ontario is up 440,000 net new jobs since the recession began. However, there are still people out of work even though the unemployment rate is moving steadily downward.

But I remain concerned for our youth. The youth unemployment rate continues to be double the overall rate. Young constituents in Ajax–Pickering, as recently as last night, have told me how challenging it can be to land that first job and to get real work experience. Whether they are out of high school or the post-secondary level, young people need opportunities. We must engage employers in this solution as well.

Can the minister advise this House what this government is doing to help young people get that job experience opportunity?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I want to thank the member for the question. I also want to thank him for his many, many years of service and as a champion of youth in the Ajax–Pickering community. We all know that he has done a lot of work in that area.

Ensuring that our young people have opportunities in our economy is a top priority for our government. One of our key initiatives is to create job opportunities for youth, and we're doing that through our youth employment fund. The program offers young people an opportunity to gain some real work experience and learn work skills while earning an income.

The youth employment fund was set up to help 25,000 young people over the next two years. I'm very pleased to announce that in less than six months, as of Friday, this fund has already created 7,934 job experiences for young people right across this province, something we're very, very proud of.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Joe Dickson: It was really good to hear that the youth employment fund has helped so many young men and women find employment, and it's great that the minister mentioned that this fund is also helping youth facing greater barriers to employment.

It sounds to me like this program has been very successful and I can see where it may be working in big

cities like Toronto, but I'd like to know how successful it has been in the rest of the province. Youth in rural and mid-sized urban communities face some of the greatest barriers to employment, and I want to know what we're doing, whatever we can, as a government, to help them, too, especially ensuring that the success of this program is going to reach them.

Can the minister please advise me and others on the success of this program outside the large urban areas of Toronto?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The youth employment fund is serving youth right across this province. Since September, we've created 1,899 job experiences in the west, 1,278 in the east and 969 jobs in the north. This means that this program is reaching out right across the province of Ontario.

Last month, I travelled across the province talking to youth and thanking our front-line service providers and local businesses for making this program the success that it is. I had an opportunity to meet a young man in Oshawa with a great name—his name was Brad—who, after years of unsteady work, secured a job at Durham Pallet Services through the youth employment fund. This is what he had to say: "I love my job and I love learning new things. The youth employment fund allows Durham Pallet to invest in me and cross-train me in other areas of business, and allows me to learn at my own pace."

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, two weeks ago, I wrote you a letter regarding the lack of road maintenance service in my riding of Northumberland—Quinte West. Sadly, yet not surprisingly, I have not had a response. Stretches of the 401 in my riding have been unplowed for over 24 hours in some cases, which is three times longer than it is supposed to take in order to clear a class 1 highway.

Minister, your government has cut the number of plows on the road in my riding from 17 down to nine, and the number of salt and sand stations from four to two. For up to two years my colleagues and I have shown you areas where you and your government can save money without cutting services. You decide to cut funding to road maintenance and now my constituents are paying the price.

Minister, when will you be increasing the resources for road maintenance services in my riding, and will you commit to not cutting these services next year?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I listened very carefully yesterday to the honourable member's comments about the accidents on the 401, about which he and I share a great concern. The difference is that I actually waited until the OPP report came out before I commented. He was saying

that it was bad plowing that caused the problem; the OPP reports that the roads were perfectly fine and that it was a fog condition. Maybe the members opposite can control acts of God, but—so that road was in good condition.

The member opposite may want to look at his own party's platform, because the reason that there are changes in the assignment of trucks and vehicles is because we, as a government, no longer decide how many vehicles there are. The contracts that they put in place when they laid off 3,000 people in the Ministry of Transportation allowed the contractors to decide to do that, so he can talk to the contractor. We will be changing some of those contracts, so this problem no longer exists.

1140

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: But you also—

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

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Minister, the 401 in my riding is not being kept safe. This needs to change before someone loses their life due to your reckless cuts to service. Just yesterday, as you alluded to, the subpar road conditions were responsible for yet another wreck along the 401, just east of Cobourg. This one forced the highway to remain closed for most of the day, costing millions of dollars in productivity to this economy. This is all because you wanted to save \$800,000 in cutting services. Only in the world of Liberal economics would this be considered a good business deal.

Your government has wasted billions on eHealth, gas plant scandals, expense accounts to Pan Am executives and a cushy severance payout to Chris Mazza, and now you decide to try and save money by reducing the scope of services that protect the lives of millions of Ontario drivers. Minister—

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

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: —when will your priorities return—

Interjection.

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

Minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is a member of a very respected profession; he's a teacher. Last time I looked, they taught civics and history, and they teach kids how to read and do research. So I assume before he decided to become a member for the party opposite, he would have actually looked at what their record is. Because prior to him presenting himself as a candidate, your party in government had laid off 3,000 staff in the MTO. Those staff were the people who actually did the plowing in your area. You decided, as a government, to introduce performance-based contracts, and that allowed contractors to use as much equipment and as many staff as they do. So if you would like to change that, as I would, I hope you'll support the reforms I will be bringing forward to restore the system before you lay 3,000 people off.

CHILD CARE

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Education. Speaker, we learned tragic news this morning. Another child, a baby boy, has died in an unlicensed day care. We know almost nothing about him, except that he should be alive today. Instead, his parents are devastated, and parents right across this province have another reason to worry about their children's safety. One death is too many; four deaths in less than a year is a crisis for families in this province. The minister's bill will do nothing to ensure that we have enough inspectors to keep kids safe, and her ministry will still be in the dark about unlicensed day cares that are operating. She's also increased the size of groups and staff ratios, meaning younger kids will receive less care.

Speaker, did her ministry know about this location, and how many families will have to be failed before this government gets it right?

Hon. Liz Sandals: My heart does go out to the family, who are absolutely devastated by the loss of their little four-month-old boy. In this particular case, Speaker, my ministry was informed on February 18 that there had been a death at a home on the preceding Friday, February 14. When my staff investigated, they discovered that this was, in fact, an unlicensed home child care. My staff have done a preliminary review of the records, and in fact there were no complaints about this particular facility, ever. So there is no reason that the inspectors would have gone there, because there have never been any prior complaints. It is my understanding that the police continue to investigate, as they do all deaths of young children, as are my officials.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Northern Development and Mines on a point of order.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Let me make a point of order, Mr. Speaker. I just want to remind all the members of the House that the Prospectors and Developers Association conference begins this coming Sunday. Twenty-five thousand delegates from all around the world are coming to look at the great investment climate of the province of Ontario. There is an Ontario government reception you've all been invited to this coming Sunday, 5:30 at the Steam Whistle. We would love to have you there and the opening, of course, of the Ontario pavilion on Monday afternoon at 1 o'clock. We welcome you all there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1145 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is quite a long list, so hunker down: Vince Savoia, executive director, Tema Center Memorial Trust—these are not all in the House, but they will be coming; Allan Rewak, Pathway Group; Jim Christie, president of the OPPA; Chris Hoffman, director and president, Ontario Provincial Police Association;

Thomas Kaudelka, president, Ontario Provincial Police Association; Lee McBain, president, Ontario Provincial Police Association; Terri Hilborn, Police Association of Ontario; Wayne Omardeen, president of the Peel Regional Police Association; Todd Sepkowski, president of the York Regional Police Association; Paul Atkinson, Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association; Geoff MacBride, president of the Toronto Paramedic Association; Laura Bell, Unifor paramedics; Gord Mathers, Unifor paramedics; Steve Olsen, Unifor; Corey Vermey, Unifor; Charles Telky, Unifor; Mike Chad, Unifor; Emily Visser, OPSEU; Laurie Miller, OPSEU; Jason Brearly, OPSEU; Jeff Van Pelt, CUPE Ambulance Committee of Ontario; Andrew Phillips, CUPE; Corey Nagelesian, CUPE; Mike Merriman, CUPE; Annik Allard, CUPE; Terry Lear; Tammy Clarke; Shannon Bertrand; Bruce Kruger, OPP; Jeffrey Balch, Barrie firefighters' association; David Whitley, York EMS paramedic; Mike Abbott, Toronto Police Association; Lynn Kruger; Joe Gajcevic from OPPA; Ron Smith, Unifor; Benoit Williams, OPPA; Cameron Ritchie, Hamilton fire; Dave Hewitt, CUPE 416.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Is that all?

Introduction of guests?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm very proud to introduce a good crew of our Hamilton paramedics who are here with us today, and I'd like to name them: Jamie Ramage, Mario Posteraro, Brad Thomson, Jaime Heikoop, Mark Thomas, Kevin Redman, Dan Fleury, Peter Morgan, Edward Harris, Adriana Baker, Tony Filice and Craig McCleary. Speaker, we're very proud of the work they do.

Mr. Frank Klees: I want to extend a special welcome to grade 5 students from École élémentaire catholique Saint-Jean in Aurora and their teachers.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I forgot somebody very important. My son, Damien, is here with his girlfriend, Raki.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, you left the best for last. You don't say you forgot.

Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MEMBER FOR NEWMARKET-AURORA

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Skywatchers know that an aurora is an electromagnetic event, a natural showstopper that makes us sit up and take notice, so maybe it's fitting that the member from Newmarket-Aurora, Mr. Frank Klees, is also known for his magnetism and his ability to command our attention.

It is rare to encounter a great public speaker who also has a sharp investigative mind. It is rarer, Speaker, to find such an individual with a sense of humour as well developed as his sense of style. That rarity will be more obvious when he leaves this place at the next provincial election.

Colin Powell once said, "The day the soldiers stop bringing you their problems is the day you stopped

leading....” The confidence and trust that Frank’s constituents have placed in him time and time again speaks volumes of his leadership as MPP. In particular, his work on the Ornge file has been an inspiration to us all.

Frank, thank you for the dedication, guidance and friendship that you have provided to me during my time at Queen’s Park. You will leave this place as you arrived: full of class, dignity and a true sense of duty to those you represent. You will not be forgotten or easily replaced.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN’S DAY

Mr. Rosario Marchese: In a little over a week, we will be celebrating International Women’s Day and recognizing the achievements of exceptional women and girls who are making a difference in their communities and the world.

In partnership with Scadding Court Community Centre, my office will honour such women from Trinity–Spadina who have been nominated by the community. One such woman is Angela Bischoff, who was recognized by *Now Magazine* in 2013 as Toronto’s best activist for her work with the Ontario Clean Air Alliance as well as environmental initiatives such as the Toronto Atmospheric Fund.

Shaunna Bruton has been an outstanding volunteer for organizations like the Equal Pay Coalition and the Canadian Centre for Diversity.

Krista Fry leads a community kitchen program where she welcomes women who are homeless and teaches cooking skills.

Robin Linton is a volunteer with the Cross-Cultural Community Services Association and has donated hundreds of hours of her time to organizing activities and workshops for girls and women, as well as seniors in long-term care.

Yin Shen is another active volunteer with the Cross-Cultural Community Services Association, where she promotes multiculturalism and diversity by organizing activities and workshops to help youth develop self-esteem, leadership qualities and a sense of identity.

Women like Angela, Shaunna, Krista, Robin and Yin, and many others, engage, mobilize and inspire the Trinity–Spadina community. I am grateful for the contributions of these women and look forward to recognizing them and other exceptional women next week.

MOHAMOUD ABDULLE

Mr. John Fraser: I rise today to pay tribute to Mohamoud Abdulle, a member of my community of Ottawa South.

Mohamoud was a humble and hard-working man who dedicated his life to helping his community and those in need. He spent 11 years at the Youth Services Bureau of Ottawa, where he helped young people find jobs and get prepared for the workforce and for life. He started a homework club at Ridgemont High School. He was a constant support to the members of Ottawa’s Somali

community. His work touched the lives of hundreds of young people.

Mohamoud believed strongly in giving back, which is what led him to return to his home country, Somalia. It was there, while serving the Prime Minister, that he lost his life in an attack.

What people will remember most about Mohamoud is that he was a joyful person whose face always bore a smile and who always had time to listen.

To his wife, Awrala Nur, to his children, to his family, to the community for whom he worked so tirelessly, to all those whose lives were touched by this tremendous man, on behalf of the people of Ottawa South, I want to extend my sincerest condolences.

In honour of Mohamoud Abdulle, I’d like to suggest that all of us take a moment out, whether it is now, later this evening or this weekend, to think about that kind of service and what people like Mohamoud mean to our community and how we can honour those people in our actions.

SID McLEAN

Mr. Robert Bailey: I rise today to wish a very happy 90th birthday to a constituent of mine, Mr. Sid McLean of Petrolia, Ontario. Mr. McLean will celebrate his birthday on Sunday, March 2. He was born in beautiful Oakdale, Ontario, in the late spring of 1924.

In 1941, Sid enlisted and became a Canadian artillery gunner. He was part of Canada’s greatest generation. Underage, Sid lied about his age in order to join the forces and go over to England. He had to behave himself, he said, so he wouldn’t get caught and shipped back.

Sid later served in both the 4th Light Ack-Ack Regiment, 62nd Battery; and the 5th Canadian Anti-Tank Regiment, 3rd Battery.

Between 1941 and 1945, Sid and his regiment would see action in France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. Sid served for five years in World War II before returning to Lambton county to begin a long career at Imperial Oil.

Just a few years ago, I had the opportunity to travel with Mr. McLean and members of the 1st Hussars to Juno Beach and other European battle sites to commemorate the service and sacrifice made by brave Canadians like Sid to the Allied war effort. It was an experience I’ll never forget.

Sid is a regular viewer of the Ontario legislative television network and a big fan of question period and the Legislative Assembly debates that take place in this place. I know Sid is watching today, so on behalf of the Ontario Legislative Assembly and the province of Ontario, I want to say happy birthday to Mr. Sid McLean, 90 years young on Sunday.

CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL GOVERNANCE INNOVATION

Ms. Catherine Fife: I would like to recognize the important work being done at the Centre for International

Governance Innovation in my community of Kitchener-Waterloo.

1310

Since its founding in 2001 by Canadian philanthropist Jim Balsillie, CIGI has become a leading research organization in Canada and internationally, with important contributions to policy debates on global economy and global security issues.

I would like to congratulate CIGI, its researchers and staff, on the recent launch of two exciting new initiatives: the International Law Research Program and the Global Commission on Internet Governance.

CIGI's new international law program will be based at CIGI's award-winning Waterloo campus. Through partnerships and collaborations with Ontario universities, it will provide great dividends to Ontario and the development of our knowledge economy. CIGI's program will focus on intellectual property law; international economic, financial and investment law; regulation and governance; and environmental law and treaties. It will attract leading minds in the field of international law by providing up to 19 fellowships for exceptional researchers and legal practitioners, and up to 20 scholarships for promising graduate students.

Congratulations, CIGI, on these exciting initiatives. Our community and province look forward to the insightful research you will publish on international law, your findings on the future of Internet governance, and the contributions both will make to the province of Ontario. It's a wonderful contribution to the entire Waterloo region.

EVENTS IN UKRAINE

Ms. Dipika Damerla: On Sunday, February 23, the grounds at Queen's Park were a sea of people who had come out in solidarity with the people back in Ukraine struggling for freedom. It was a bittersweet moment—sweet, because Mr. Yanukovich had been ousted; sad, because of the close to 100 lives that had been tragically lost in the latest struggle for democracy and freedom in Ukraine.

The crowd had come out to pay their respects to those who had died, and the chants of, “Heroes live forever” rang through the cold air on the grounds of Queen's Park. The recent events in Ukraine have been a powerful reminder of the power of people. What is going on in Ukraine is indeed an inspiration to anyone, anywhere, who is fighting for freedom. I stand here and salute the great people of Ukraine.

Closer to home here in Canada, Canadians of Ukrainian descent have, from the very beginning, stood in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. It's a heartfelt and poignant reminder to Ukrainians that they are not alone. Now the Canadian government and governments around the world must do the same. We must ensure that we stand with Ukraine in this historic time, and work for a free and united Ukraine. That is the best tribute the world can pay to those who gave up their lives for freedom.

That is when the words, “Heroes live forever,” will truly ring true. Slava Ukraini.

RAIL SAFETY

Mr. Ted Arnott: Last summer's train derailment and subsequent explosion in Lac-Mégantic, Quebec was a previously unimaginable human tragedy which cost 47 people their lives. It was also a wake-up call for all of us that rail safety in Canada cannot be taken for granted.

Knowing we must be more vigilant on rail safety, I am compelled to inform the Minister of Transportation of a safety issue in Wellington-Halton Hills that he cannot ignore and must address. Within the township of Guelph/Eramosa, there is an intersection of a provincial highway and a county road, Highway 7 and Wellington County Road 29. Running very closely parallel to Highway 7, just north of this intersection, is a busy rail line, which I believe is part of the Goderich-Exeter Railway. The rail line is so close to the road intersection that a tractor-trailer stopping at the signal lights, in some cases, can actually have its trailer straddling the rail tracks. If you think about that, just for a minute, Mr. Speaker—a tractor-trailer stopped at a traffic light, straddling a rail line—you would conclude that this intersection is inherently unsafe.

Last month, at this intersection, a freight train actually collided with a transport truck, which was stopped at the lights. The driver was taken to hospital with minor injuries and, thank God, no one was killed.

I call upon the Minister of Transportation to take immediate steps to avert another accident, which, I'm afraid to say, is just waiting to happen. I urge him to instruct his staff to do an immediate safety study of the intersection of Highway 7 and Wellington County Road 29, with a view to ensuring that this intersection, so close to the rail line, is made safe for the travelling public.

OLYMPIC ATHLETES

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It was great, last weekend, as nationalism swept this country. We saw the dramatic and magnificent conclusion to the 22nd Olympic Winter Games in Sochi. The collective pride in our great nation always reaches an apex at times like this in sport, and it was a wonderful thing for us all to be able to see.

Our province of Ontario sent 63 athletes to compete on the world stage. They competed in 93 of the 98 events. These 63 individuals helped form the largest Canadian contingent that we've ever sent to a winter Olympics. Most notable for me are the three Olympians—three gold medallists—from my town of Oakville: Kirsten Wall, who was part of the women's curling team; Brienne Jenner, who was part of the women's hockey team; and of course, John Tavares, who was part of the men's hockey team and got injured partway through.

As we look back at the success of our Olympic athletes, we have the privilege of looking forward to another tournament featuring the best Canada and Ontario have

to offer. Greg Westlake, another proud resident of Oakville, will be competing for gold in the Canadian sledge hockey team in the 2014 Paralympic Winter Games.

On behalf of the people of Oakville, Ontario and Canada, congratulations to all who competed. Thank you for representing us and making us all so proud as Canadians.

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY

Mr. Rod Jackson: I spent a lot of time, as did a lot of people in this chamber recently, in Niagara Falls and had the privilege of talking to many of the hard-working citizens there. Unfortunately, these conversations in many cases disturbed me, because the people of Niagara Falls are worried about their future and, quite simply, they have good reason to be.

It's no secret that Niagara Falls is hurting: 40% of all the 300,000 good manufacturing jobs that have been lost in Ontario come from Niagara Falls. From the closing of the John Deere plant to the shutting down of the Bick's plant, to Jarvis Street Pharma—the list is endless, it seems—there's no doubt that unless something changes quickly, the bedrock of Niagara's economy will crumble.

This all comes at a time when families in Niagara Falls cannot afford any more job loss. At 8.8%, its rate of unemployment is already the highest in the province and indeed one of the highest in the country. There's no sign that things will change. After all, the government's own energy plans call for a 30% increase in hydro prices over the next four years, which will only serve to drive thousands more jobs out of Ontario. Years of Liberal government policies have failed this community, and it's obvious that Niagara Falls needs bold change.

Unfortunately, Niagara Falls has a new member whose party seems intent on maintaining the status quo. Every chance they get, instead of standing up for job creation, they choose to stand by a government whose policies represent simply more of the same.

Niagara Falls cannot wait any longer for smart policies that will bring back stable, good-paying jobs. The people of Niagara need hope—hope they can get back to work. This can only happen if the New Democratic Party decides to stand up and have the courage to do what's right, standing up against this unelected government's job-killing—

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

VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: A point of order: I'd like to put on the record the name of two Olympians from my riding of Durham. One was Tara Watchorn, and she scored the first goal for the Canadian women's hockey team; as well as Matt Morison. I'd like to make a proper statement next week.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay. You're introducing a guest, I suspect.

I thank all members for their statements.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

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

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

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot items 78, 79, 80, 82 and 83 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those agreed? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

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STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Hon. Michael Coteau: I rise today to acknowledge February as Black History Month. This month is an important celebration of the accomplishments and the history of black Canadians.

The black community is diverse. Many can trace their origins back to places like Africa, the Caribbean, Latin America and many other places.

As February comes to a close, I'd like to reflect on some of the people I had an opportunity to meet over the last month and some of the great work they're doing to strengthen the black community and also Ontario.

Last Saturday, I participated in the Markham African Caribbean Association discussion panel on leadership. I also attended the African Canadian Achievement Awards ceremony. Members of these organizations embody what it means to be an active citizen. They are improving the quality of life of our province for generations to come.

The history of blacks in Ontario mirrors the history of our country. It is primarily a story of strength and triumph. Our history begins much further back than people may think.

Mathieu Da Costa, a black man from Africa, was a translator on a ship that arrived at what we now call Canada with Samuel de Champlain in the early 1600s.

We know that Canada was a sanctuary for slaves during the 18th and 19th centuries. It's the birthplace of some of the greatest role models. The first living person to be awarded honorary Canadian citizenship—someone this world recently lost—was the late Nelson Mandela.

Mandela embodied the spirit of what we celebrate during this month. He was a man who fought for his nation and, after 27 years, rose above his struggles and succeeded to create peace, progress and change not only for black South Africans but for all South Africans and—I'll even go further: for everyone on this planet. He was a symbol of what was right and fair.

In Ontario, we have many black leaders who have also stood for the fairness that we value here in the province of Ontario: Heroes whose activism led this province to outlaw discrimination in the workplace; heroes who continue to work in their daily lives against discrimination in many forms; and heroes like Leonard Braithwaite, who is credited with the introduction of female pages in this very Legislature and is credited with the end of the Ontario segregated school act, which terminated racially segregated schools in Ontario.

Our community is strong because of people like Mary Anne Chambers, someone who has dedicated her life to enabling others; and other people like Alvin Curling, who entered into new territory, becoming the first black cabinet minister here in Ontario and Speaker of this House.

Other black Ontarians like Jean Augustine, who in 1985 put forward a motion to create Black History Month; Herb Carnegie; the late Lincoln Alexander; and Mary Ann Shadd have all demonstrated what it means to challenge the status quo and achieve greatness. These achievements attest to the rich tradition of leadership and activism in the black community.

Diversity is our greatest strength. Today, more than 60% of black Canadians live here in Ontario. We welcome immigrants from around the globe, immigrants who come with skills, knowledge and a desire to put their abilities to good use in this province.

Each of them is drawn to Ontario by the search for success, opportunity and fairness. Immigrants know that Ontario is a place where we have the right to be free from discrimination and we are protected from it. Any man or woman of any race, any gender, religious belief or sexual orientation can come here to Ontario and find success.

These are the qualities that define us as Ontarians, but this identity did not form overnight. It took years of activism and engagement to make Ontario the progressive place that it is today.

So to commemorate this month, let us all celebrate the contributions made by black Ontarians from our past, recognize the role models of today, and look forward to the great heroes who are helping build the strong, fair and prosperous society of the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries? The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

ASSISTANCE TO ATHLETES

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity.

I'm thrilled to congratulate all of our athletes who brought their best to the world stage at the 22nd Olympic Winter Games in Sochi.

Sixty-three Ontario athletes represented Canada at the 2014 Sochi Winter Games. These Ontario athletes were a part of the largest Canadian team ever to be sent to a Winter Olympics.

Thirty-four Ontario athletes reached the highest level of their sport by securing a spot on the Olympic podium for Team Canada. Most of these talented athletes are

funded by our Quest for Gold program—athletes such as Dara Howell from Huntsville, who won the gold medal in the ski slopestyle event, and Kirsten Wall from Milton, who is one of the five women on the gold-medal-winning curling team.

Brad Jacobs, Ryan Fry, E.J. Harnden and Ryan Harnden from Sault Ste. Marie and Caleb Flaxey from Caledon won the gold medal in men's curling.

Heather Moyses is one of the two members of the gold-medal-winning bobsled team.

Ten of the 21 athletes on the gold-medal-winning women's hockey team include Meghan Agosta-Marciano, Rebecca Johnston, Laura Fortino, Jennifer Wakefield, Gillian Apps, Jayna Hefford, Brienne Jenner, Haley Irwin, Natalie Spooner and Tara Watchorn.

Nine of the 25 athletes on the gold-medal-winning men's hockey team are from Ontario, including Mike Smith, Drew Doughty, Alex Pietrangelo, P.K. Subban, Matt Duchene, John Tavares, Corey Perry, Rick Nash and Jeff Carter.

Patrick Chan from Ottawa won the silver medal in men's figure skating.

Tessa Virtue from London and Scott Moir from Ilderton won the silver medal for ice dance.

Seven of the nine athletes on the silver-medal-winning figure skating team are from Ontario, including Patrick Chan, Scott Moir, Tessa Virtue, Meagan Duhamel, Eric Radford, Dylan Moscovitch and Kirsten Moore-Towers.

Our Canadian athletes who are showcasing what they are capable of not only fill us with nationalistic pride and joy, but also unite us as a people, as a country.

The games are a unique and rewarding experience of a lifetime that will certainly create long-lasting memories for our athletes. Having the world come together in peace and harmony in one place to perform the best in sport is a truly special event.

While Sunday's closing ceremonies marked the end of the 2014 Olympic Winter Games, we look forward with great excitement to watching Ontario's top para-athletes compete at the Paralympic Winter Games. Starting March 7, 21 para-athletes from Ontario will represent Canada.

Mr. Speaker, I want to recognize our talented Ontario para-athletes who have trained so hard to proudly represent their country on the world stage. On behalf of the government of Ontario, I would like to wish them all the best of luck at the 11th Paralympic Winter Games in Sochi, and we eagerly await their safe return with many, many medals and accomplishments.

Speaker, I'm pleased that the province's Quest for Gold program has played an important role in supporting our athletes in their pursuit of athletic excellence. Since 2006, Quest for Gold has provided Ontario athletes and coaches with approximately \$80 million in support. Ontario's direct financial investment in our athletes through Quest for Gold means that our athletes can access enhanced coaching and training and more opportunities to compete.

Programs like Quest for Gold provide vital support to Ontario's high-performance athletes so that they have access to all of the tools they need to succeed at the highest levels of competition, including the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games.

Of the 84 Team Canada athletes who won medals at the 22nd Olympic Winter Games, 34 are Ontario athletes. Most of them are Quest for Gold recipients.

The great achievements of Ontario's athletes and para-athletes at international competitions such as the Olympic and Paralympic Winter Games will inspire our summer athletes, who will compete with some of the best in the world right here at home in the 2015 Pan American and Parapan American Games. We are working to provide our athletes and para-athletes with the best possible chances of success.

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The Pan Am and Parapan Am Games will be an opportunity to showcase our province to an international audience of 250,000 visitors and 10,000 athletes and coaches.

In addition to the economic benefits that the Pan Am and Parapan Am Games will bring to Ontario, hosting the games has leveraged an investment in sports infrastructure that will provide a legacy of world-class facilities. These are facilities where our amateur athletes can train and compete, and where Ontarians will have access to improved community facilities for generations to come.

The 2015 games will unite Canadians in our appreciation for sport and in celebrating the performances of Canadian athletes.

Mr. Speaker, supporting high-performance athletes is a priority for this government.

Our athletes are remarkable role models who inspire pride among us all. Through their pursuit of athletic excellence, they have demonstrated that they are all champions.

I hope everyone will join me in offering congratulations to all of our Olympians and in wishing our Paralympians the best of luck at Sochi.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Hon. Mario Sergio: The Seniors Community Grant Program is the first grant program in Ontario dedicated solely to seniors. It was introduced to give seniors more opportunities to participate in their communities by providing funding to non-profit community groups for projects that encourage greater social inclusion, volunteerism and community engagement for seniors. Applications will be accepted between February 21, 2014, and June 30, 2014. Projects must be completed by March 31, 2015.

Speaker, senior citizens have made a lifetime of contributions to this country, this province and the communities we live in today. Strong community and family relationships lead to a high quality of life for many Ontarians, especially seniors. Reduced social contact, or social isolation, has been associated with a reduced

quality of life for seniors. Social isolation has also been associated with a number of negative outcomes, such as poor health and depression.

Today, I would like to bring to the attention of the Legislature what the government of Ontario is doing to help seniors stay connected to their community.

Ontarians are living longer, healthier lives than ever before. Ontario's landscape is changing as a result of an aging population. Ontario is currently home to approximately two million people over the age of 65. Over the next two decades, the number of seniors in North America is projected to more than double. In fact, by 2036, Ontario is projected to be home to nearly 4.2 million seniors. We don't have to go that far; by 2016-17, we are going to have more people over the age of 65 than young people under the age of 14.

Everyone in this Legislature knows that seniors have much to offer. Senior citizens play an active and important role in our province's communities and economy. We know that growing old does not mean losing our place in society; it does not mean that we can no longer contribute.

Speaker, our government remains committed to keeping seniors connected to their community. This past November, I was pleased to join Premier Wynne in introducing the Seniors Community Grant Program, the first program of its kind in Ontario dedicated solely to seniors. The program will give seniors more opportunities to participate in their communities by providing funding to not-for-profit community groups for projects that encourage greater social inclusion, volunteerism and community engagement for seniors. Again, applications will be accepted between February 21, 2014, and June 30, 2014, and the projects must be completed by March 31, 2015.

I want to encourage all the members of this Legislature to think about organizations in their community and to encourage them to apply. We will be looking for initiatives and projects in the not-for-profit sector to encourage greater social inclusion, volunteerism, education and community engagement for seniors across our province. The grants will range from \$500 to \$10,000 each.

The Seniors Community Grant Program is part of Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors. Through the action plan for seniors, our government is addressing the challenges and opportunities of an aging population.

We launched the Age-Friendly Community Planning Guide to help seniors stay connected to their community by creating physical and social environments that support independent and active living.

This January, I was pleased to join the Alzheimer Society of Ontario to announce an expansion to the Finding Your Way program. Through the Finding Your Way program, the first of its kind in Canada, we are helping people with Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, and their caregivers who live at home. The materials were originally released in English, French, Cantonese, Mandarin and Punjabi. This year, we made the materials

available in three additional languages: Italian, Spanish and Portuguese. This program will also help families and caregivers and people who may encounter someone with dementia to recognize and reduce the risk of people with Alzheimer's disease and dementia from going missing.

Speaker, we introduced the first provincial protections for seniors living in Ontario's retirement homes. Regulations brought into force on January 1 outline new requirements, including mandatory insurance, emergency funds and a complaints process for the Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority.

Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors builds upon a solid foundation of work that has already been done. We launched the Healthy Homes Renovation Tax Credit. For the first time in Ontario's history, the care provided to retirement home residents is regulated under provincial legislation. And we launched the Aging at Home Strategy to make it easier for seniors to live independently, and for as long as possible.

Our government remains committed to improving the quality of life for seniors and families across our province. Speaker, we want Ontario seniors to remain healthy and independent for as long as possible and to feel safe and supported. My goal and my personal commitment is to get it right, and I know I will have the support and wisdom of the people here in the Legislature to help me do just that.

Speaker, I thank you for your time.

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

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm honoured to rise today and speak on behalf of the Ontario PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, to recognize Black History Month.

The month of February is set aside as Black History Month to remind us of the struggles of African-Canadians for fair treatment and equal opportunity. It's also a chance to celebrate the achievements of the black community. Throughout Black History Month, we reflect on the history of those slaves who escaped the oppression of slavery and on the freedom found for over 30,000 slaves by way of the Underground Railroad.

Ontario's black community has a long and proud history in our province. In 1979, Toronto became the first municipality in Canada to formally designate February as Black History Month. It's also true that over half of black Canadians live in the province of Ontario.

Rosemary Sadlier is president of the Ontario Black History Society and works tirelessly all year long to prepare for the programs for the Black History Month of February, and I thank her for that dedication.

African-Canadians have made many important contributions to Canada's diversity, culture, economy, literature, sports and politics, including my fondly remembered family friend Lincoln Alexander. On January 21 of each year now, Lincoln Alexander Day is proclaimed to celebrate his life and achievements, thanks to

Ted Arnott, MPP for Wellington-Halton Hills, Bas Balkissoon, MPP for Scarborough-Rouge River, and Paul Miller, MPP for Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, who all co-introduced Bill 125.

It is my privilege to speak and recognize Black History Month as both an opportunity to reflect on and celebrate the history and achievements of African-Canadians, and I encourage everyone to take this time to learn about their rich history, culture and traditions.

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SENIOR CITIZENS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It is my pleasure to respond to the statement of the minister for seniors on the government's Seniors Community Grant Program. Our PC critic for seniors, the member from York-Simcoe, could not be here to deliver this response herself, due to an event she had to attend in her role as PC critic for the Ministry of the Attorney General.

This new grant program will be a good thing for the province's seniors. Organizations that work with our seniors need funding like this to hold events, offer learning programs or provide other help.

The government says the primary goal of this program is to help isolated seniors, yet isolated seniors are often not involved with the groups who would receive funding under this program, Speaker. This may be another example of politics from this government, to win support from a stakeholder group they want to keep onside.

If this government actually wanted to help seniors, it wouldn't eliminate on-site care for seniors at risk by cancelling the Alternative Community Living Program—care for seniors who may need help getting out of the shower or out of bed. This grant program does not make that wrong right.

ASSISTANCE TO ATHLETES

Mr. Rick Nicholls: As the critic for sport, recreation and youth, I'm very pleased to stand in the Legislature, on behalf of all the members of the Legislature, and to speak specifically about the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics.

Over the past weeks, the world has watched as Canada sent its best athletes to compete in the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympic Games. Team Canada won 10 gold, 10 silver and five bronze medals. This is an extremely exciting accomplishment.

This year, 63 Ontario athletes were a key part of the largest Canadian team ever sent to the Winter Olympics.

The Sochi games provided many memorable moments. London's Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir gave a figure skating performance for the ages. And Canada held its collective breath as the women's hockey team battled back to defeat the American rivals for gold. We looked on as our curlers, freestyle skiers and bobsled athletes triumphed. And on the last day of the games, nearly half of the country woke up to watch our men's

hockey team cap off the games with yet another gold medal.

Our athletes represent the best that Ontario has to offer, and serve as an inspiration for all of us. If only for a moment, the Olympics allow us to forget our differences as we come together to celebrate our great athletes.

Just as families, friends and communities come together to support our athletes as they train, we must also support our Olympians and Paralympians from Ontario, who, by the way, will be representing Canada at the Winter Games from March 7 to 16 in Sochi.

To our athletes, I offer my sincerest thanks for all that you do. Ontario is truly proud of you.

ASSISTANCE TO ATHLETES

Mr. Paul Miller: It is a great honour to stand here today to celebrate another successful Winter Olympics by our athletes.

Our athletes won, as was said, 25 medals, including 10 gold. They represent a lifetime of dedication and hard work. When the pressure was on, they put their best foot, ski and skate forward, doing our province and country proud.

While we are often quick to celebrate the accomplishments of the victors, it is important to recognize all those who competed. They competed with humility and class. They displayed great character and stand as an excellent role model for our youth. Our athletes have shown us what hard work and dedication can accomplish, and illustrate a relentless pursuit of their goals.

There is no finer example than the gold-medal-winning women's hockey team who, despite being down 2-0 to the United States with under five minutes to go, rallied not only to tie the game but to win it in overtime. That team illustrates the very best of Canadian spirit.

I'm proud to note that included in that victory was Hamilton's own Laura Fortino.

We also need to celebrate the families and coaches who have spent years supporting these athletes, often with great personal sacrifice. Without their commitment, and the communities who have rallied to support these athletes, their accomplishments would not have been possible.

I offer the warmest of congratulations to all the athletes who competed, and wish the best of luck to our Paralympic athletes set to compete in Sochi next month.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I am pleased to rise today to respond to the statement from the minister responsible for seniors. The announcement of the new Seniors Community Grant Program is a welcome announcement for seniors and community groups working so hard to improve the lives of seniors throughout the province.

Let's be honest for a moment, Speaker. Seniors in Ontario are facing greater challenges than ever before. The non-stop cuts to health care and skyrocketing hydro

fees and auto insurance rates force many seniors into precarious living. Of course, New Democrats are very supportive of a program that provides funding to community groups and that can increase participation and the well-being of seniors. But we are less certain that the Liberals are able to roll this out in a manner that works for seniors. We know that the government has made big mistakes when it comes to delivering other programs for seniors. For example, when the government changed the way that physiotherapy was delivered to seniors, this caused chaos and concern across the province.

We also know that too many seniors have problems accessing health care services when and where they need them.

While we are happy to celebrate this day and eager to support a program where seniors are empowered to be active participants, we urge this government to show caution and care in the delivery of this new program.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Michael Prue: In response to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, it is my honour to stand here today to talk about Black History Month. Much has been said by my colleagues, and all of the great names have been mentioned. So in the time limited to me, I just want to go to a couple of different places.

First of all, we need to recognize that black history in Canada involves all of those people who trace their roots from Africa. But those people did not come from one single place. They came from the United States. They came from the Caribbean. They came from South America. They came from Europe. They came, as well, directly from Africa. Each one of them brought with them a culture and language and traditions which are unique and which they have shared with us here in this great country of Canada.

They came here to find freedom. They came here to find opportunity. I hope that they have been successful, because I know, if you read the history books, that it was not always easy for those who came first. But they displayed, throughout the time that they were here, a loyalty that was unmatched. They served in two world wars. They sought political office. They were great leaders in their community amongst all of us. They went on to do great things in science and the arts. They are to be held up to great esteem.

As time permits, I just want to talk a little bit about Dr. Rosemary Sadlier, a woman whom I've known for many years, and the enormous effort that she puts into bringing black history to life so that all of us might know that part of Canadian and Ontario history that we might otherwise not have known, and how literally she has dedicated so many years to this endeavour.

In the last few seconds, I'd like to talk about the little town of Amherstburg, just south of Windsor—

Mr. Taras Natyshak: In my riding.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, in the riding of Essex. There's a wonderful black history museum there that I

think everyone should have an opportunity to go down and look at. It shows how the first settlers who escaped to freedom across the Detroit River were able to integrate themselves into the local community, how they prospered, and how they were the voice for all of us about what freedom really means.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport on a point of order.

Hon. Michael Chan: In my statement, I missed a name on the men's hockey gold-medal team. He was a member, and his name is Patrick Sharp. Thank you, Speaker.

PETITIONS

EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition which reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas servers and bartenders in Ontario earn \$8.90 an hour, far less than the minimum wage; and

“Whereas tips are given to servers and bartenders for good service and to supplement the lower wages they receive; and

“Whereas Ontario law allows for owners and managers to pocket a portion of servers' and bartenders' earned tips or total sales; and

“Whereas thousands of servers across the province have asked for this practice to stop;

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

“Support the swift passage of Bill 107”—that's what it reads; it should be Bill 49—“An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act with respect to tips and other gratuities and thereby end the practice of ‘tip-outs’ to management and owners.”

It is signed by a number of people. I'm pleased to affix my signature thereto.

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Joe Dickson: I have a petition from the constituency of Ajax-Pickering.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I will sign my name to it and pass it on to Owen.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

Mr. Rod Jackson: I have a petition here from the people of Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the nation of Israel is a great friend to both the province of Ontario and the nation of Canada with many important economic and cultural ties; and

“Whereas Jewish Ontarians have served Ontario in a variety of political, cultural and economic roles and have brought great distinction on the province; and

“Whereas the comments made by the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport regarding the relationship of the government to the state of Israel and the ties of Ontario's Jewish community to the political process demean that relationship by pitting two of Ontario's great cultural communities against one another;

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

“That the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport immediately apologize to the Jewish community for his comments in public at the next available opportunity or, if he will not do so, that the Premier reprimand him for his comments by asking for his resignation.”

I agree with this petition. I affix my name and give it to page Aqil.

FIREFIGHTERS

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

“Whereas firefighters are routinely exposed to burning chemicals and other toxins in the course of protecting the lives and property of fellow citizens; and

“Whereas even with the best respiratory practices and protective equipment, exposures will continue to occur due to absorption through the skin once a firefighter has become soaked during fire suppression activities; and

“Whereas epidemiological, medical and scientific studies conclusively demonstrate an increased rate of

diseases such as cancer in firefighters versus the general population;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“Amend the regulations of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act ... to include cancer of the lungs, breasts, testicles, prostate, skin and multiple myeloma in presumptive legislation for occupational diseases related to firefighting.”

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

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Phil McNeely: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current enrolment of Avalon Public School ... is 732 students, with 11 portables onsite;

“Whereas under current projections, by 2014, enrolment at the Avalon Public School is forecast to be in the 900 range increasing to approximately 1,359 students by 2022;

“Whereas the issue of overcrowding and lack of space threatens the OCDSB’s ability to offer full-day kindergarten in Avalon under the Ministry of Education’s targets;

“Whereas the enrolment at Avalon Public School is expected to continue rising at a rate of 10% to 15% a year for the foreseeable future;

“Whereas the staff of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, following an objective, evidence-based process, recommended Avalon PS II as its top priority for a new school, calling the need ‘urgent’;

“Whereas the board disregarded independent staff counsel and ranked the school from number 1 to number 7;

“We, the undersigned, call on the government of Ontario and the Ministry of Education to provide the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board with the necessary funding to build Avalon Public School II in the next round of capital projects.”

It’s signed by Anick Tremblay, Frederique Herbert and many others. I put my signature thereon and I send it forward with Abbey.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Ms. Laurie Scott: Stop the trades tax petition:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario College of Trades introduced new membership fees on April 1, 2013, which hit hard-working tradespeople to the tune of about \$84 million a year;

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

“That the Liberal government stop this job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately.”

It’s signed by many people from my riding, and I sign my signature and give it to Anne.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas full-time minimum wage workers are living at nearly 20% below the poverty line as measured by the Ontario government’s low-income measure (LIM); and

“Whereas those working 35 hours per week or more should not, as a matter of principle, be living in poverty; and

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

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

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

I will affix my signature thereto and send it down with page Emily.

LCBO OUTLET

Mr. Joe Dickson: I present a petition in concert with the member of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the LCBO is opening a new location in Lindsay at Kent Street and requesting closure of the town’s original location at Russell Street; and

“Whereas we the residents, with the support of current and past MPPs, councillors, BIA and other local businesses and we, the undersigned, request the province of Ontario to encourage the LCBO to leave our downtown LCBO in place for our residents and a large number of tourists;

“Therefore, we recommend the LCBO reconsider and leave our Russell store open as a pilot project to assist the business areas and maintain jobs in Lindsay.”

I attach my name to it and pass it to Michael.

MINISTER’S COMMENTS

Mr. Todd Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the nation of Israel is a great friend to both the province of Ontario and the nation of Canada with many important economic and cultural ties; and

“Whereas Jewish Ontarians have served Ontario in a variety of political, cultural and economic roles and have brought great distinction on the province; and

“Whereas the comments made by the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport regarding the relationship of the government to the state of Israel and the ties of Ontario’s Jewish community to the political process demean that relationship by pitting two of Ontario’s great cultural communities against one another;

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

“That the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport immediately apologize to the Jewish community for his comments in public at the next available opportunity or, if he will not do so, that the Premier reprimand him for his comments by asking for his resignation.”

I agree with this, will sign it and send it with page Meera.

GASOLINE PRICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was actually collected by Lynn Vanstone, one of my constituents from beautiful Westree, northern Ontario.

“Whereas northern Ontario motorists continue to be subject to wild fluctuations in the price of gasoline; and

“Whereas the province could eliminate opportunistic price gouging and deliver fair, stable and predictable fuel prices; and

“Whereas five provinces and many US states already have” done some sort of price regulation; and

“Whereas jurisdictions with ... price regulation have seen an end to wild price fluctuations, a shrinking of price discrepancies between urban and rural communities and lower annualized gas prices;”

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to “mandate the Ontario Energy Board to monitor the price of gasoline across Ontario in order to reduce price volatility and unfair regional price differences while encouraging competition.”

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

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O’Toole: It’s a pleasure to have this opportunity on this Thursday afternoon. The petition, on behalf of my constituents, reads as follows:

“Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of 20 and 64 from receiving 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” with pride;

1400

“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; and

“Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature, forcing university/college students and other Ontarians to wait until age 65 to receive more OHIP-funded physiotherapy”—it’s tragic;

“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” for physiotherapy treatment after a stroke—shameful;

“Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition 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” under the Wynne government.

I’m pleased to sign and support this and give it to Sarah, one of the young pages here.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

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

“Whereas Winchester District Memorial Hospital provides essential health services to the residents of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengary” and the residents of Nepean–Carleton “and was awarded ‘accreditation with exemplary standing’—the highest award by Accreditation Canada earlier this year; and

“Whereas the projected increase in Ontario’s senior population demands that facilities have the resources and capacity required to accommodate increasing demand; and

“Whereas Ontarians cherish access to high-quality local health care; and

“Whereas the recent closure of 14 beds at the WDMH and the loss of over nine full-time skilled staff positions at a time when Ontario has experienced unemployment above the national average for over seven consecutive years are the result of ongoing silent funding cuts that are threatening our cherished health care system;

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

“To immediately reinstate adequate funding levels for the Winchester District Memorial Hospital that would allow the reopening of local beds and the rehiring of local qualified front-line health staff.”

I agree with this petition and will be passing it off to the page.

COAST GUARD AUXILIARY

Mr. Todd Smith: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Coast Guard Auxiliary units are oftentimes the first responders to any emergency situation that occurs on our waterways;

“Whereas the use of green flashing lights by Coast Guard volunteers in their vehicles would help to cut down on their response time by alerting others on the roadways to their presence;

“Whereas these flashing green lights are currently prohibited from use in Coast Guard volunteers’ vehicles under regulations in the Highway Traffic Act that restrict the use of flashing green lights to only the vehicles of volunteer firefighters and ministry-prescribed medical responders;

“Whereas the flashing green lights cost nothing to the government as they are bought and paid for by the volunteers themselves;

“Whereas, if the Coast Guard Auxiliary units were allowed the use of these flashing green lights in their vehicles, it would cut down the transportation time on the roadways, and this cut in time could very well mean the difference between life and death;

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

“That Coast Guard Auxiliary units either become prescribed medical responders, or a change to the act that adds ministry-prescribed volunteer first responders access to the use of the flashing green emergency light.”

I agree with this and will send it to the table with page Abbey.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for petitions has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

WORKPLACE SAFETY AND INSURANCE AMENDMENT ACT (POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER), 2014 LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE ET L’ASSURANCE CONTRE LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL (TROUBLE DE STRESS POST-TRAUMATIQUE)

Ms. DiNovo moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 67, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder / Projet de loi 67, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la sécurité professionnelle et l’assurance contre les accidents du travail relativement au trouble de stress post-traumatique.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The first thing I want to do is to acknowledge the presence of all of the folk here in the galleries: paramedics, firefighters and, of course, our

police officers. I wanted to ask members to give them a round of applause for all that they do for us.

Applause.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: In particular, Mr. Speaker, I want to note Bruce Kruger, David Whitley and Jeffrey Balch, who this morning took part in a panel. That panel talked about post-traumatic stress disorder. All of them have suffered from it—a paramedic, a firefighter and a police officer—and outlined exactly why we need this bill. The reason we need this bill is that we need to accord dignity and support to those first responders who rush into danger when we rush out, who look after us. We need to begin to look after them today.

Let me tell you why. I’m going to give you some stories. First of all, the story of Officer Bruce Kruger, who’s now retired—here’s a little glimpse into the life of a police officer. Kruger insists, by the way, on having the right seat. Bruce is over here. He has fled airplanes, he has cried in restaurants and he has rearranged furniture at friends’ homes—all for the perfect seat. That seat is backed against a wall so no one can attack him from behind.

Kruger says that the sitting issue goes back to the murder of fellow OPP officer Tom Coffin in 1997. The killer came from behind and shot Coffin in the head at close range while Coffin was off duty in Penetanguishene.

Kruger has been diagnosed with PTSD connected with his 30-year career. Here are some of the things he has experienced: shooting and killing a prison escapee who was pointing a shotgun at his partner in 1977; finding slain OPP officer Rick Verdecchia frozen solid in a snowbank with three bullet holes between his eyes in 1978—Kruger, by the way, stayed with the body to protect the scene for several hours; and coming upon the bodies of a father and his six-year-old son who had drowned in 1978 and having to row the bodies back to the shore of Healey Lake—just a glimpse, Mr. Speaker, into the life of a police officer.

Here’s a glimpse into the life of a paramedic. This is from paramedic Ryan Cotton. He says, “In December 2006, a woman had thrown her two-year-old off the Morningside bridge at the 401. Shortly after throwing her two-year-old off the bridge, this woman, after fighting with bystanders, had successfully thrown herself over the Morningside bridge onto the 401. I was there, the very first paramedic to the two-year-old. I was the second first responder to this child, as the first responder was a fireman who I found kneeling beside the child as he hung onto life, slowly dying. I never found out what happened to that fireman.” What happened to Ryan was that he came down with post-traumatic stress disorder, from that and other events.

Here’s a glimpse into the life of a firefighter. This was written by his spouse. This is Tony Holubeshen’s story. She writes, “My husband, Tony, had been a Hamilton firefighter for 30 years. It was a job he loved and one he was cut out to do. He had many close calls: having all his hair burned off, caught in flashovers, and electrocuted.

But in February 2002, something happened that would change our lives forever. His station was called to an apartment building at 181 Jackson Street in Hamilton. While Tony was on the main floor, the two-inch concrete ceiling collapsed on him, and he was buried. After some time, he was found by his brave co-workers. I got a call in the middle of the night telling me there had been an accident and I was to go to the hospital. It seemed like a nightmare. At the hospital, Tony had visible physical injuries. Little did we know about the other injuries.” Tony came down with post-traumatic stress disorder.

This is what our first responders do for us. This is what they do for us. It’s incumbent upon us, I feel, that we should protect them when they succumb to post-traumatic stress disorder.

I want to give you a little bit of history on this bill. In 2007, the government brought in a bill that, originally, our leader, Andrea Horwath, coined, and that was in relation to firefighters. That was a presumed diagnosis of certain kinds of cancers. This came out of the Plastimet fire; many who are here from the fire world will know about that. It’s almost impossible to prove that you got those cancers from your work. When you go to WSIB and you try to prove it, it’s re-traumatizing. You can imagine that if that’s true for cancer, it’s even more true for post-traumatic stress disorder.

1410

We heard on the panel this morning about the long and gruelling mechanism of having to prove you actually acquired post-traumatic stress disorder from your job—virtually impossible to do, by the way, but in the process you have to provide names and dates, breach confidences. You have to bring into play all of the events that brought on your PTSD in the first place. This is not the way to treat our first responders.

I want to read you something from the Clinical Psychology Review. They wrote, in 2012: “There are a limited number of occupations and professions that repeatedly put those so employed squarely in harm’s way; two prominent examples are combat soldiers and first responders. Indeed, the latter group often comprises members of the former.”

We recognize PTSD in our soldiers and all of our military, but we don’t recognize it as part, sometimes, of the job they do, in our first responders. Today, I hope to rectify that.

I want to give a shout-out, too, to a special young woman, because she was the inspiration for this bill back many years ago. It first came to my attention by a constituent, Shannon Bertrand, who’s here in the gallery as well, a young paramedic. She outlined what you had to go through just to try to get, unsuccessfully, really, some coverage from WSIB.

I want to say a few things, too, about maybe some of the concerns members might be having. One of the concerns that was brought to my attention was the possible cost to the municipalities about this, and I can tell you, there is an answer to that question.

First of all, Alberta has had this legislation in place as law since 2012. My constituency assistant—I want to

give her a shout-out, too; she’s watching in her office: Bhutila Karpoche—phoned all the cities in Alberta and asked them, “Has this added to your expense?” They all said, “Absolutely not.” In some cases, they say it streamlines it, because you can imagine that the whole diagnostic process and assessment process that WSIB has to go through and that employers have to go through with them takes time. That would be eliminated because, again, we’re presuming that somebody who gets PTSD and who’s a first responder gets it from the job.

“Did the cases go up?” we asked them. They said absolutely not; the same number of cases, really, they said, as before. The difference was the dignity and support with which those who made claims were dealt with. These are important items to keep in mind.

I know the government has put in place a panel to look at post-traumatic stress disorder, but that’s really in the Ministry of Labour, to look at prevention and awareness. I think we’ve come to the point in Ontario where we understand that post-traumatic stress disorder, in fact, all mental illness—we understand it’s truly an illness. These are not folk who are malingering.

We’ve had Ombudsman oversight and actually Ombudsman input into this as well in Ontario. We’ve done a gamut of looking at the problem, and now it’s time really to look at a solution.

I had a superintendent in my own riding, a police officer, who said that in the ceremonies to honour those who fall in the line of duty, all he could think about was one member of his force who had committed suicide, and he suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. The superintendent said, “I wished we could honour him.” Again, we want to honour those people.

What does post-traumatic stress disorder look like? Well, you’ve heard from the wife of a sufferer. What you didn’t hear from her are the separation and divorce statistics associated with it, the alcoholism associated with it, the flashbacks, the anxiety disorders, sometimes obsessive-compulsive acts, terrible nightmares, sleeplessness, insomnia. It truly is a debilitating disease, and we can’t make that point often enough. It truly is a debilitating disease.

Again, I want to thank those who are brave enough—I have a file folder in my office about this thick of stories from people who have suffered from PTSD. They’re first responders. I know that every one of those stories is not only a story of suffering for them and their families, their units and their friends, but also a tale of bravery, that they were even able to put it to paper and send it to me, even able to say and speak about it on a panel this morning. That takes immense bravery.

Why would we ask them to go over and over and over it again, once the diagnosis is in place? It’s cruel, it’s unusual punishment, and it shouldn’t happen.

I want to talk too—I only have a few minutes left—about who supports this: The Ontario Provincial Police Association; the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, including the Toronto Professional Fire Fighters’ Association; the Police Association of Ontario, which

includes regional police associations; the Ontario Paramedic Association, which includes the Toronto Paramedic Association; Tema Conter Memorial Trust; OPSEU; Unifor; CUPE; ATU—a host of people, in fact, almost 20,000. Almost 20,000 members across Ontario will be covered by this bill if we pass it, and I hope we will.

There's a hashtag, and it's #heroesarehuman. I believe that, as we sit in this Legislature this afternoon, as we look around at the faces of those who have come, some of them in terrible weather, some of them driving long distances on the 400—some of them are watching, by the way, on televisions in offices because they are still on call because of that terrible weather on our highways. But they are watching and they are here, and they're here, I'm sure, with somebody in mind: some family, some person, someone who has put their life on the line and this has been the result. It doesn't happen to everyone any more than cancers happen to every firefighter who runs into a fire, but to those it does happen to, we owe a huge debt. To those, we offer some support in this bill, and to those, I hope, if we all agree in this House, we will actually offer some help, finally.

So I urge every member around this House to vote for this bill. The vote will come at the end of private members' public business. I look forward to what you have to say and to responding to what you have to say.

Again, let's give a round of applause to those first responders who came out today in support of their colleagues and themselves and their families.

Applause.

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

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'm very happy to speak on Bill 67. This bill seeks to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997, so that all claims related to PTSD for emergency response workers are presumed to have been as a result of their work. The bill defines "emergency response worker" to mean a firefighter, paramedic or police officer.

We all know that police officers, firefighters and first responders are vital to keeping our communities safe from life-threatening dangers. Every day, they risk their lives to protect us and our communities. In return, we must protect them.

I'd like to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for introducing this bill and engaging in debate on this very important issue. Our government is supportive of the intent of this bill and would like to see this go to committee for further review.

Mr. Speaker, as the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour, I have taken special interest in the health and safety of Ontarians at work. Post-traumatic stress disorder is a very serious condition. It often affects those who protect us from harm as they work through difficult and trying situations daily. I think it's important to note that the WSIB currently provides compensation for traumatic mental stress when there is a clear link between the work and the injury or illness.

Claims for post-traumatic stress disorder, PTSD, are adjudicated by a specialized team of case managers on a case-by-case basis according to WSIB policy. By using this specialized team, the WSIB has significantly reduced their adjudication time. In 2006, the average time it took for a decision relating to a police officer's claim for PTSD was just over 150 days. In 2011, the average was 70 days.

In addition, our government has been very active on this issue. In September 2012, our government launched a round table to help workers who suffer from job-related traumatic mental stress injuries. The focus of the round table was to enable workplace parties to share approaches and best practices to deal with traumatic mental stress in the workplace through prevention, early diagnosis and intervention. The round table includes approximately 20 labour and employer representatives, with a focus on the following sectors: police, firefighters, emergency medical services, transit services, and health care, primarily nursing. The round-table report will be published shortly and includes recommendations on how best to address this important issue in the workplace. We're hopeful that this round table will help us significantly to identify and share best practices in the following areas to ensure that we're doing everything we can to protect Ontario's workers.

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Over the past several years, the WSIB has been involved in leading research that examines stressors in policing as well as factors that facilitate or act as barriers to seeking treatment and returning to work after an acute traumatic event. I understand that the Police Association of Ontario, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards have been working with the WSIB regarding PTSD claims for police officers.

The WSIB has assigned dedicated case managers to handle all police officer traumatic mental stress claims. The WSIB has been working hard to improve the claims process for PTSD amongst police officers and raise the profile of PTSD amongst other police services. The WSIB is looking at ways to increase PTSD education and awareness among individual police officers. The WSIB is also looking at diagnostic tools for police PTSD cases.

These are key to the early recognition and treatment of PTSD. I encourage employers and employees to work together to develop workplace practices to combat stress and promote healthy living.

Mr. Speaker, there's a lot of work being done to address this issue: with the WSIB having a specialized team of case managers for claims regarding traumatic stress; with the round table our government launched to address the issue head on; and with a PTSD working group between the WSIB and the Police Association of Ontario, the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police and the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards. But there's always more to be done.

Ontario's first responders put the safety of our communities before their own, and our government recognizes the debt all Ontarians owe them for protecting us every day.

Once again, I'd like to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for introducing this very important bill. I'm very happy to support it at second reading today. I look forward to this bill going to committee.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm very pleased to rise to speak on this bill this afternoon. This is an important bill, and I know that a number of my colleagues from our PC caucus are wanting to speak to this as well, so I look forward to sharing my time with them today.

First off, I'm proud to join with the PC caucus in supporting this bill. It is important for us to stand with our front-line workers and support them in their difficult tasks. These are the people we call when things get tough, and we are all thankful for the first-class police, fire and paramedics that we have here in the province of Ontario. I have met and worked with emergency and front-line workers since my election back in 2011, and I look forward to working closely with these fine people as we move forward with this bill.

Speaker, we're blessed to have amazing front-line workers like Dale Blanchard from my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex. In December 2012, 47-year-old Gary Smits was playing a pickup hockey game and felt some chest pain, but continued to play. As the Medway High School teacher skated back onto the ice for another shift, he passed out. Fortunately, Dale, who works with the Middlesex–London EMS, was among those playing in the same game and was able to get the arena's defibrillator equipment and use it to restart his heart while the team was waiting for emergency services to arrive. Dale was able to save the life of a man who suffered a heart attack in an arena in the town that I live in, Mount Brydges.

Doctors later told Gary one artery was 80% blocked, and without Dale's help, it could have been a lot worse. While Dale is a spare in the hockey league—he was called in when his team needed it—it didn't take long for him to forget his goaltending skills and put all his focus into his paramedic skills.

Dale doesn't have PTSD, but this bill is important so we can protect people like Dale in case that does happen. So I'm proud to be standing with my colleagues today, protecting people like Dale Blanchard.

I'd also like to thank MPP DiNovo, who has listened to our concerns from her previous versions of this bill, and we look forward to continuing to work on this bill, to supporting it, to getting it through committee. Thank you, again, and I'll look forward to voting in favour of this bill later this afternoon.

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

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: J'ai le plaisir et aussi, en même temps, la responsabilité de soutenir le projet de loi 67, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), 2014.

At the outset, I would like to as well join my colleague the MPP for Parkdale–High Park, Ms. DiNovo, in

welcoming all our various firefighter, paramedic, police service, front-line folk who are here today, who, as has been mentioned, keep us safe and secure in our various domains, whether it's at home, the office, work or even outside in the streets.

As a physician, as a parliamentarian, someone who actually treats post-traumatic stress disorder, I thought, with your permission, MPP DiNovo, I might highlight for not only the audience but also Ontarians what precisely is post-traumatic stress disorder.

At the outset, of course, the first requirement for that is a level of stress, a level of traumatic stress—high-end, indigestible stress—whether it's, as we said, a gunshot wound or a stabbing or more particularly for our front-line workers today, entering a burning building, certainly seeing one of your colleagues suffer great harm, perhaps even being the person who dispatches them to that particular location.

What also happens within the mind—and there are lots of different theories, but I'll simplify it—whatever you've experienced, you cannot get over it. It continues to play in the mind. The video, the audio, the sense of smell, the burning, the different sensations that you experience are embedded—literally burned—into your sense of self, and you cannot go beyond it. That same trauma can be replayed.

I, particularly, for example, having patients who come from war-torn countries, experience the challenges of dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder. Folks, for example, will hear loud noises, whether it's a car explosion, or let's say something on the street or a muffler or whatever, and it immediately, within a microsecond, within the millisecond transmission of a neurotransmitter in the brain, reverts them back to whatever that war situation was. Even folks who, for example, hear smoke alarms in their home think somehow that's the war air-raid siren from whatever country they happen to come from, and it immediately sets them back into that frame of mind.

What do they experience? There's a long, long list, unfortunately. As a family physician, as well as a parliamentarian, these are the things that we have to deal with. They will lose their sleep, whether they have non-restful sleep, are unable to sleep, they have nighttime awakening—even if they spend eight or 10 hours in bed, they may emerge unrested.

They lose interest in what previously was very absorbing for them. They kind of withdraw from life. They lose the colour of life. They feel guilty. For example, we've chatted with some of the dispatchers. "If I had sent a different crew," "If I had been more active," "If I had called," for example, "extra support on the ground"—that sense of guilt replays again and again.

They lose energy. As I said earlier, they tend to withdraw or, as we say, involute. It's kind of like a plant that doesn't receive sunlight: It's still there, but just barely functioning.

They lose their concentration, not merely forgetting about where the keys are or "Did I turn the stove off?"

but a deeper sense, where, for example, they're attempting to learn something, read something, navigate something, and they're just not able to introduce it into their mind and latch hold on to it.

They may have changes in appetite, usually to extreme, or actually lose it. By the way, there's a whole psychological theory that goes on and says if you find emptiness over here—maybe, for example, the loss of a friend or a loved one, whatever—you actually fill your life up with things over here, meaning, by the way, in this case, food.

They may have what we call psychomotor agitation or retardation, which are fancy doc-talk billable words that essentially mean they get angry to the point where they may want to smash walls or even self-harm or, by the way, wash away their blues with various substances, some of which have become famous in the city of Toronto.

1430

Unfortunately, they may even have what we call suicidality. Doctors have this strange term called “successful suicides,” meaning fully completed suicides: no survivors. I never quite understood the sense of that term. We deal with these types of patients on a regular basis, whether it's, as I say, my broader colleagues in the medical field, in the post-traumatic situation, or I personally—more often, folks who are coming from, for example, civil wars or war-torn countries.

In any case, all of these things merge. There's a confluence. It's like your mind is fighting on too many fronts and cannot handle it. Of course, everything suffers: their performance; as I said earlier, their colour of life; their relationships; their ability to earn and so on.

That's, of course, why MPP DiNovo's bill, Bill 67, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Amendment Act (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder), 2014, is so very, very important, because individuals who have chosen to secure our lives should at least remain secure with the knowledge that those of us who are stewards of the governing bodies and the regulators and governance are there for them in their time of need, when they're there for us in our time of need.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to join in the debate. I want to commend my colleague the member from Parkdale–High Park for bringing this bill forward. As my colleague has already indicated, those of us from the PC caucus will do what we can to ensure quick passage of this bill.

In fact, I'd like to make a suggestion to the government. I want to thank all of my colleagues in the Legislature who supported my bill, the First Responders Day Act—that was passed unanimously in this place, received second and third reading unanimously on December 10, and received royal assent on December 12—which declares May 1 of every year as First Responders Day.

My colleagues will remember that what inspired me to bring that bill forward, first of all, was my engagement

over the last number of years on a number of files that brought me face to face with the men and women who serve on the front lines as first responders.

I was also given a book entitled 911: True Tales of Courage and Compassion. It was written by a constituent of mine, Vali Stone. It's 34 stories, true recollections, from first responders about their experiences. It was really the first time that I came face to face with the reality that men and women who put themselves in harm's way every day have personal effects on their lives. These are not men and women who don't have feelings.

I wanted to just read one excerpt from veteran police officer Brent Pilkey, who was quoted in that book: “There are many cops like me who walk around hurting and hide their feelings because they are here to protect the public, solve problems, uphold the law and be the strength and backbone of society. We are tough. We take people to hospitals—we don't go there ourselves. We don't feel. We don't break down.”

Well, the truth is, they do, and it's no wonder that they do, given the engagement that they have, every day in their lives, in events that most of us would be incapable of coping with.

And so, we honour them with a First Responders Day, and I would encourage my colleague that we all work together to ensure that this bill can be celebrated as having been passed into law on First Responders Day, May 1, of this year.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm pleased to stand here today on behalf of my constituents in London West, and I want to say a special hello to Jim Holmes, who's here from the London Professional Firefighters Association, representing the OPFFA.

I'm also, as members of this House know, the NDP critic for community safety and correctional services. I want to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for her initiative in bringing forward Bill 67, the legislation to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

As a relatively new member of this House—not so new anymore—and also someone new to the community safety critic portfolio, I had the privilege during the fall session of this Legislature to stand up and speak on behalf of NDP leader Andrea Horwath and members of the NDP caucus on a number of occasions about the important contributions of police officers, firefighters, paramedics and other emergency service personnel who risk their lives in the call of duty in order to keep all of us and our communities safe. In particular, my very first statement as community safety critic was the tribute to the fallen, which was a moment when MPPs from across this House came together to honour fallen first responders, those incredibly brave and selfless individuals who arrive on the scene of an emergency ready to do whatever it takes to save lives, even at the cost of their own.

I listened closely to the minister and to the PC critic as they spoke eloquently and passionately about the debt we

owe to those who lost their lives and to all first responders in Ontario. I know that first responders appreciated this acknowledgement of their sacrifice, the fine words and the lofty rhetoric that we exchanged in this House.

I'm so incredibly proud to hear what I've heard today from members across this floor about their commitment to moving forward on this legislation, because if we're serious about truly honouring the work that first responders do and if we really mean what we say when we talk about the debt that we owe to them for their service, then we must be unanimous in this House in supporting the passage of this bill.

Health care professionals have learned a lot—and we heard that from my colleague across the floor—over the years about the causes of post-traumatic stress disorder and some of the treatment that is available. But there have also been changes in the nature of the trauma and the violence that first responders face in their daily work. All of this increases the risk that they will develop PTSD in the course of their careers.

Instead of being leaders in this area, Ontario has lagged behind other provinces in recognizing the presumptive principle for PTSD as a work-related injury. Instead of supporting first responders to seek the help they need and to access treatment for PTSD, Ontario has re-victimized those who stepped forward, as we heard from my colleague the member for Parkdale–High Park, by forcing them to go through a lengthy, exhausting and intrusive process to prove that their illness is work-related in order to establish their right to be compensated. As a result, as we saw in an editorial today from the police, many first responders simply won't seek help, even though the research shows us that PTSD affects up to 15% of police officers, as many as one quarter of paramedics and numerous firefighters over the course of their careers.

As someone who worked in the women's shelter system, dealing with women who had experienced abuse, I myself had an incident of vicarious trauma as I witnessed a violent situation. I remember the uncontrollable weeping that I faced for about a 24-hour period afterwards. I can't imagine the anguish and the stress that first responders have to try to make sense of as they see the things that they see in the course of their daily lives.

I am very pleased to support my colleague and to stand in this House in support of this legislation. My congratulations to all those who have expressed their support as well.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: As the Ontario PC critic for community safety and correctional services, I'm pleased to join with my colleagues in debate and in support of Bill 67. I also want to take the opportunity, as many of my colleagues have, to congratulate the member for Parkdale–High Park for re-introducing this legislation and for all of her advocacy.

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I also want to take this opportunity to thank our first responders who are here in the gallery today. I want to

thank you for the service that you give to your communities and to the province of Ontario. As first responders, you are willing to put your lives on the line and be there when we need you. The price of keeping us safe is one that can come at a very steep price for your physical and mental well-being. I want to say this very clearly: It's not asking too much for you to expect that when you need help because of what you've encountered on the job, the help you need, including WSIB, is there.

Ontario PCs understand that for police, firefighters and paramedics, every shift has the potential to expose you to the kinds of traumatic experiences that can be understood only by someone who has walked in your boots. It's true that the average person can't imagine what you experience at the scene of a crime, a fire or a fatal collision, but society is waking up to the realization that our mental health is just as important as our physical health for our overall well-being.

As that happens, there's a recognition of PTSD for the debilitating condition that it is. PTSD isn't something you can shake off, a belief that for far too long left people to suffer in silence, or take their own lives to finally make the nightmare stop. PTSD is real, and we need to make sure we're providing our front-line emergency services personnel the help they need when they need it. If you're a front-line emergency services worker with PTSD, you shouldn't have to spend years fighting the WSIB bureaucracy to prove it. That's why I'm proud to support this legislation. I'm proud that all three parties are supporting this legislation to ensure that it gets to committee, where we'll have an opportunity to discuss it. The member for Newmarket–Aurora made a great suggestion about First Responders Day. Wouldn't it be great if we could all co-operate and get that done?

You don't have to spend long as an MPP in a constituency office to hear from workers and the horror stories they have to tell about their experience with their claims. Add to that the cost of the system to employers and an unfunded liability that's on its way to \$20 billion, and you've got a WSIB system that we charitably refer to as broken.

I appreciate all the support that members are giving the member. I'm proud to support the legislation, and I'm proud to be a member of the Ontario Legislature today.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm truly honoured to take part in this debate today and to add my support for this bill that I believe corrects an injustice. I believe it does something that we all need to do, and that is to acknowledge the role that our first responders play in our society and the role and job that we ask them to do.

Before I begin my thoughts, Mr. Speaker, I just want to introduce some guests I had the opportunity to meet as they were coming in to witness the debate. Natalie Harris and Ian McLean are here. They're paramedics from Simcoe county. They're here to witness today's debate, and also Paul Roberts, Marcus Kirton and Scott Macdonald. I don't know if they're still in the building,

but they also came in during their break to bear witness to today's debate.

It's not often that such a compelling case for support of a bill has been made in the short span of 12 minutes. As I listened here today as my colleague the originator of the bill, the MPP for Parkdale–High Park, spoke so eloquently and so clearly and passionately about the need to support this bill and our obligation to make this change, it's difficult for me to add anything of incredible substance to what she has already said. I think she definitely had the head-nod test after her speech here in support of this bill. I want to simply commend her for being relentless and such a passionate advocate on behalf of our first responders and the need to move forward on this legislation.

What we are asking of this body is fairly simple. It is an acknowledgement that we ask our first responders to witness what we ourselves couldn't imagine we should witness. We ask them to do and to perform the job that we ourselves are not equipped to perform. We ask them to bear witness to catastrophe, to disasters, to incredible trauma and situations that are incredibly unique. Some have raised scenarios that highlight those disasters, those catastrophes. But it doesn't always have to end in tragedy to be traumatic. There are some victories, there are some scenarios where all is well at the end of the day, but the pressure and the strain and the stress put on the mind, the heart and the body, day in and day out, would be enough, in a cumulative effort, to cause these effects of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Above that, the other indications and the other examples, we have to acknowledge that we are asking our first responders to do what we could not do ourselves. We also ask them, through legislation, to go to work without having the ability to remove themselves from a dangerous situation. They have to go to work. When we run away from a fire, they are legislatively, legally obligated to run in. That has to be acknowledged.

Today, I simply want to thank our first responders. I want to stand here with my colleagues and to provide, I guess, an opportunity to show the best that this House can be, that we can absolutely do the right thing and make these positive changes to honour the sacrifices that are made by our first responders each and every day.

It has been, again, an honour to rise today on behalf of the Ontario New Democratic caucus. I fully endorse the spirit of this bill and hope that it receives quick passage through the Legislature.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: First, I want to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for bringing that up, and I also want to thank the first responders for being here today. I think everyone in the House is impressed with your show up, and we're all here to support the important contribution you make to our community.

I would say that, in this particular bill, the member from Newmarket–Aurora has made it very clear that we'll be supporting the legislation. I think he has made

some very excellent observations and recommendations, I might say as well.

This really does shift the burden of proof from the plaintiff to the defendant, meaning that the police force or fire department or ambulance service would have to prove that their employee does not have PTSD. So, in fact, it should go to committee. In committee, it could be your opportunity to bring a voice to the debate so that we can all do the right thing to protect you in the workplace. That's the real intent here of WSIB.

I would like to thank the member from Leeds–Grenville as well, who has had some say on this file to the greatest extent.

I only say this, that the final remarks that I have to make are that to understand what has been said today about post-traumatic stress syndrome—I did have a son who served in the forces for 12 years. The only time I was actually ever worried about him was when he was a navigator on the Hercules aircraft, when they were actually in Bosnia delivering supplies. So he really wasn't in a position with direct fire or anything like that, except when they landed, and he sent back a little note to us, that the first time they were under fire was when they were going across the runway. As a parent, you just feel the shock.

My next experience, to bring some understanding and respect for what you do, is that I was driving to work, as I have for 18-plus years, down the Don Valley, and a young woman—it was so surreal—was standing on the top of the bridge. There used to be a woman who was dressed up as an angel standing there. I looked at it—and, you know, you don't really know what's going on—and she jumped and landed on the car in front of me. I was just stunned. I lost all sense of reality for the moment. And so I understand what you would discover. A suicide or some other event, it must be traumatic. It would have an effect on you, and I hope that this genuinely remedies the issue, but it never really solves the problem.

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I thank you for putting yourself in danger each day to keep us safe. That's what we're all here to say: Thank you.

Doing the right thing is actually the right politics. I think the member from Parkdale–High Park has it right this time. Congratulations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Parkdale–High Park, you have two minutes for a reply.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Actually, a little longer, but thank you, Speaker.

I want to first of all commend everyone who spoke to this bill. Thank you so much.

I would like to start by just referring back to my friend from Brampton West and some of his concerns. Whether it's 70 days to process a claim or two years, it's too long. It's re-victimizing the victim here. It's dragging our first responders through a kind of hell—that's parliamentary—that they don't need to be dragged through. They've already gone there, and we don't need to take them back.

That's the whole purpose of this bill, to dispense with that.

It's not a slap in the face of WSIB. In fact, when I first tabled this bill, I went to speak to Steve Mahoney, who was then the chair. He was quite supportive. This would simplify the work of WSIB. This makes their job easier. They don't have to give this to an adjudicator; it doesn't have to take up their time. They have other things to do.

I want to give you some examples of how awful it is—but when it moves to committee, which I'm hearing it will, that's a very good place for first responders to come and testify and tell the government exactly what it does look like to try to get a claim through WSIB on post-traumatic stress disorder. That's a good opportunity to let them know. I've heard from first responders that they have been turned down simply because they had a divorce in their past, and they can't prove that their post-traumatic stress disorder didn't come from the divorce, even though they're running into burning buildings or saving children or watching colleagues be killed. This is patently absurd, and it's patently wrong.

I want to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora, of course, for his work on First Responders Day, and also to say that it's a wonderful suggestion. Your leader is here. Talk to your House leader as well. Maybe we can get this going.

Yes, the sooner the better, we want to go to committee. We want to hear from you at committee to make a case. Then we want a speedy turnaround of this bill so that we can actually see it put to law, because our first responders—you all who are here and took the time to come out—you deserve absolutely nothing less. Thank you.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote at the end of private members' business.

MILLION JOBS ACT, 2014
LOI DE 2014 SUR LA CRÉATION
D'UN MILLION D'EMPLOIS

Mr. Hudak moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 158, An Act to promote job creation in Ontario /
Projet de loi 158, Loi visant à promouvoir la création
d'emplois en Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, Ontario is at a tipping point, and let's face it, our great province is in a mess. It is on this note that I rise today with my private member's bill, the Million Jobs Act, because Ontario has veered off the path that leads to prosperity and desperately needs to get back on track.

In 1913, the Battle Creek Toasted Corn Flake Co. built a plant on Dundas Street in London at the corner of what was then called Festubert Lane. The plant was there on Dundas through World War I. In 1924, it became the

head office of the Kellogg Company of Canada. It lasted through the Great Depression and the Second World War, and it grew.

And then, some eight weeks ago, 110 men and women went to work at Kellogg's for the last time. Later this year, some 565 more workers will face the heartbreaking experience of walking out of that Kellogg plant on Dundas Street forever, without a job. Then, after 101 years, that plant will be gone.

When I talk to workers who have lost a job, and many of them have held those jobs their entire lives, they often say it makes them feel unbearably alone. But they won't be alone when they go to that unemployment office. Instead, they'll be joining the 190 workers from Timken Bearings who lost their jobs when the plant closed last summer, and another 450 from Caterpillar, and from Ford, and from Daimler Trucks.

This is so very wrong. Ontario-wide, some 300,000 men and women have lost manufacturing jobs in this past decade. To make this point, if we wanted to meet all of those workers individually to hear what they had to say, we would fill up this Legislature with a different group of laid-off workers every day, seven days a week, for eight straight years.

I've talked to a lot of those workers, and they did everything they were supposed to do. They worked hard. They developed their skills. They stayed loyal to their company and to their co-workers. But through no fault of their own, they faced that awful moment of telling their kids that there wouldn't be hockey this year because mom lost her job.

I met a worker in a similar circumstance from John Deere in Niagara—a good, secure, middle-class job. Now he is working part-time, parking cars outside of one of the hotels, at far, far less than half the wage that he used to make. He talked to me about what it meant for his budget and what it meant for his family. But he started with what it did to his pride as a human being.

My Million Jobs Act is the antidote this province so drastically needs and the catalyst that will put Ontario's economy back on track.

There are five key things that my bill will do, and it is imperative that this House recognizes that action is needed now, today, to get this bill passed—not just second reading, but passed into law.

My million jobs plan will produce more jobs and increase take-home pay through lower taxes and less debt. Well-run businesses will invest in well-run provinces;

It will ensure affordable energy that will actually create jobs, not eliminate them;

It will train more skilled workers—in fact, 250,000—to meet the huge potential in the trades and help put young people into good, steady, middle-class jobs;

It will increase trade with our neighbours and will put high-quality made-in-Ontario products on the shelves across Canada and around the world—it will put a swaggering strut back into manufacturing in our province; and

Fifth, it will end the bureaucratic runaround that inhibits job creation, that has entrepreneurs from small to

large companies snarled up and handcuffed in red tape. I want them innovating, putting new products out there, hiring men and women again, not filling out useless government forms.

Not that long ago, Ontario was what they called the “have” province; now, it’s a have-not. For 86 consecutive months—that’s over seven years—our unemployment rate has surpassed the national average. In my home, the Niagara Peninsula, once a hub for manufacturing and food processing—it’s now being called the rust belt. Its unemployment rate is the highest in the entire province.

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My Million Jobs Act has never been more desperately needed. The problem is that under this government, the only jobs that they seem to create are part-time minimum wage jobs. In fact, there has been a doubling of minimum wage jobs since this government came to power. And its reward to hard-working people trying to get ahead, Speaker? They want to give them 75 cents more an hour, and that’s it: no prospect for a better future; three quarters more, every hour they work. That worker who talked to me, who lost his pride: He needs his pride back, with a steady, good, middle-class job, not 75 cents more an hour.

My plan will see our young people pursuing their dreams right here in Ontario, not taking their university or college educations to another province or across the border to the States. They’ll find their career and their path here. My plan will spring them from their parents’ basements and put them in their own home and on their own path to prosperity. My plan won’t let them down. It’s going to lift them up and move them forward.

Producing more jobs and increasing take-home pay through lower taxes and less debt will mark the rebirth of hope in the province of Ontario. Our young people need hope. They need to know that their goals can be achieved right here at home.

For Ontario to strut again, we have to unleash its incredible power. My million jobs plan will be the economic motivator that this government just can’t seem to find. It will turn this province around; it will put us on that path to prosperity.

I believe in the people of Ontario. They’re hard-working, they’re industrious, and, yes, of course, they’re proud, and justifiably so. None of them would ever dream of giving up on this province, and they don’t expect their government to give up either. I am with them. Successful leaders are the ones who embrace the need for change, not those who pretend that that need does not exist.

The ideas I laid out in my million jobs plan—look, they’re not without political risk. But the future of Ontario is too important not to be bold. It won’t be easy, but it can be done, and it will be worth it.

As I’ve said here many times, I did not get into politics to hedge my bets. I got into politics to put Ontario on the path to prosperity, to set it up for success. The problem facing Ontario families is that hard-working, middle-class men and women, and the million people

who are out of work—well, they don’t have it so good. The special interests, the insiders, the friends of the Liberal government—well, I guess they’ve got it pretty good right now. They’re on the inside. But for hard-working Ontarians who are falling farther and farther behind, they need hope, they need a plan, and they need the Million Jobs Act put into action today.

Speaker, I began my comments by talking about the hard-working men and women in London who, through no fault of their own, lost their jobs, and they’re losing their hope in the future of this province. I make no apologies for telling this House that that’s who is at the top of my mind today, and that every decision I make is about those front-line workers and how to help them out to move ahead again. Ontario held a promise for them when they were raised here or moved here. When they entered the workforce, Ontario held promise. I’m absolutely convinced it should hold even greater promise today, just as our young people deserve their future to be bright and purposeful. That path won’t be easy, but we know where it lies. I think Ontario is ready to go there, and I’m ready to lead.

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

Ms. Sarah Campbell: For those who are watching at home, Bill 158, which is a bill that has been brought forward by Tim Hudak and the PC Party, would, if passed, allegedly create one million jobs in the province of Ontario. But first and foremost—

Interjections.

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

The member for Kenora–Rainy River.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: First and foremost, it needs to be said that creating jobs in this province is a very good thing. With an unemployment rate at about 7.5% and the fact that this province has become a have-not province under the Liberals, it is very much needed, especially in the north and in Kenora–Rainy River. Across the north, we have lost 27,000 jobs, many of them in the forest industry.

I don’t think you’ll find anyone in this province who disagrees that work needs to be undertaken to create many jobs, at least 588,000 jobs.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask members of the opposition if they would keep it quiet. I think the House was respectful to your leader when he was speaking, and we should give some respect to our member for Kenora–Rainy River.

The member for Kenora–Rainy River.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Thank you.

We actually need 588,000 jobs in this province. To be clear, that’s to clear up our unemployment, because that’s how many Ontarians we have out of work.

This PC plan would see that—just in a nutshell, they want to freeze public sector employees’ pay for two years; make amendments to the FIT program that would give municipalities the responsibility of issuing approvals

for large-scale projects; reduce the corporate tax from 11.5% to 10%, the same as Alberta; and it sets targets for ministries to cut the amount of their regulations by 33% in three years.

But I fail to see, and I'm sure many Ontarians fail to see, the correlation between these proposals and creating the jobs that are necessary. We know that there is no positive correlation between no-strings-attached corporate tax cuts and job creation. If there was, the billions of dollars of investment that the federal and provincial governments have spent would have created the 588,000 jobs that we need.

There are things the NDP proposes that are very tangible, realistic things like a job creator tax credit, which would be a two-year refundable job creator tax credit that would be administered through the existing corporate tax system and would be simple and straightforward.

We know that cutting regulations willy-nilly is reckless and irresponsible, and it's typical of the PCs to cut without thinking about the impact. Northerners were left shaking their heads when PC MPP Norm Miller introduced a bill in 2012 that would repeal the Far North Act. That would have done nothing to help mining and the development of the Ring of Fire. It would have created a Wild West situation that would have just created further delays and further payouts of mining companies. Northerners said that the Far North Act was filled with problems, but we didn't need it repealed without a replacement.

In contrast, the NDP proposed to implement a consultative process that would consider changes where northerners, including First Nations, are listened to and respected, where we can actually expect to see mining jobs.

The other thing is, although it's not particular in this bill, the PCs are always talking about reducing the number of public service employees, which may sound good, but it can have drastic effects. It has an impact on mining right now, and I want to bring that perspective forward. In Kenora–Rainy River, we saw some recent cuts that were made to the Ministry of the Environment that resulted in significant delays of environmental assessments being approved for projects, one of those projects being Rainy River Resources, now New Gold. We almost saw 500 jobs just completely cut out.

The other thing is, economist Mike Moffatt says that the PCs “would need a great deal of good luck because much of what happens on the provincial job creation front is outside the provincial government's control.”

The fact is that our economy and unemployment is very dependent on how well the US is doing. “Moffatt has crunched Statistics Canada data on job growth in Ontario and found that since 1976, the province has created an average of 85,000 jobs per year”—and that this province typically creates about 600,000 jobs over the same eight-year period. So it's quite lofty.

Another question that we have to consider is what kind of jobs are they proposing, especially when there's

specific mention in this bill of freezing wages. It makes me think of how just last week, the PCs backed down from their right-to-work plan.

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Sun columnist Peter Epp writes: “One question that ought to be asked of Hudak, the Tories, and the other political parties whose leaders also desire more new jobs for Ontario, is about the quality of the employment they believe their leadership can foster. It's one thing for unemployment in this province to be magically wiped out with the stroke of a legislative pen, but any new jobs must pay much better than minimum wage ... they must also hold the promise of a bright future.”

Another question I have is, why do the PCs think it is achievable or necessary to create one million jobs when we only need 60% of that to put everybody back to work? Presently, there are 588,000 people out of work in Ontario.

Again, I'm going to quote Sun columnist Peter Epp, who writes: “In using the ‘million’ word, Hudak and his colleagues are overreaching. We don't need to create one million jobs in Ontario; but we do need to find work for the approximately half a million Ontarians who are out of work”—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): There are at least 10 conversations going on to my left. I think every one of you who is in those conversations knows who you are. I need to hear the speaker, and I can't.

The member from Kenora–Rainy River.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm just going to skip to my summary real quick since the Progressive Conservatives ate up most of my time.

I just think it's ridiculous. Experts say that it's unachievable, it's irresponsible to throw out “one million jobs.” Yes, creating jobs is our number one priority. We are already onto it with things like targeted investments linked to job creation; the job creation tax credit; working with business operators, making operating a business desirable rather than a struggle; cutting red tape to let Ontarians enjoy their occupations; removing the “us and them” kind of feeling that companies feel when they are dealing with government—because we're here to work together; and ensuring that workers are well paid and safe. But we won't go promising one million jobs in a province that has seen successful days on approximately 60% of the number. The PCs are overpromising, and Ontarians deserve better and a more realistic number, especially in light of the impact that the US economy has on us. It's just a fact of life. Job creation, yes; overpromising, no.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I've been sitting here. I could barely hear the member from Kenora–Rainy River over

the heckling. My colleague hasn't even got a word out of his mouth and I can barely hear anything. I'm just wondering if we can have a little order, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): You'll notice I did not recognize your colleague as yet.

Before I go to the next speaker, I'll remind everyone that we are to recognize members of the Legislature by their ridings, not their names.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: She was quoting—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I know she was quoting, but it was also said out at times. I respect your comment.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Nepean—Carleton, I would ask you to come to order.

The member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you very much, Speaker.

It's an interesting exercise to comment on this proposal which, from its contents, is incorrectly named. It should properly be called the "chasing jobs away act" for its proposals to neuter the province's ability to create opportunity, to chase leading-edge companies and technology out of Ontario, and for its endless attempts to rehash failed right-wing nostrums.

The best way to show Ontarians what an unworkable mishmash of ideological rhetoric this bill is would be to hold as much of it as I can up for scrutiny in the time allotted to me. Now, this non-plan is only an inch deep, so most parts of it won't take all that long to debunk.

Schedule 1 of the bill proposes freezing the annual compensation of public sector employees for two years. In short, to try to enact this section requires the government to rip up legal, binding collective agreements and to try and regulate employees outside the reach and the scope of the government of Ontario. It would be struck down in court, giving rise to larger wage settlements in arbitration. Oh, and by the way, Ontario has already achieved a zero-growth level in wages for the past two years. Speaker, this dog just won't hunt.

Schedule 3 is a corporate tax cut. Well, if firms are not profitable, they don't pay any income tax anyway. And if they are profitable, they can afford to help fund the province that provides them their employees, their resources, their markets and their communities. Ontario's corporate taxes are already lower than anywhere in the industrial heartland of North America, so this PC proposal merely sends more Ontario money offshore to corporate and personal tax havens where it benefits nobody in Ontario ever.

Schedule 2 begins by tossing some 30,000 people out of work and destroying Ontario's world-class renewable energy industry. If a proposal like this had been enacted a century ago, our hydro dams would be private sector profit machines to send ratepayers' money out of the province. If this proposal had been enacted in the 1960s, we would not have our world's best Candu nuclear technology that generates half of our province's electricity

and, by the way, employs 30,000 high-skill, high-value people right here in Ontario.

Just like the recent failed opposition day motion, this proposal represents the energy equivalent of the "yesterday's status quo" that is the hallmark of the ideological diatribes that masquerade as PC Party policy. It kills a "tomorrow" high-value, high-skill renewable energy industry. It puts us back on track to burning coal again. It costs jobs, and it makes Ontario, once again, a net electricity importer—bad idea, bad economics. That boat won't float.

Schedule 4 makes an incorrect allegation about regulation in Ontario. The PCs pull a figure out of thin air, as well as an arbitrary time frame by making an unsubstantiated assertion that Ontario should eliminate one third of its regulations within three years. Speaker, during the eight lost years between 1995 and 2003, the Conservatives had a whole ministry dedicated to this function, and they couldn't meet this target in eight years of government. What they did manage to do was create the conditions that led to the deaths of seven people in Walkerton and to the PC tainted-meat scandal.

When those functions were effectively regulated once again, the problem ceased. This government enacts only those regulations that it needs, and ministers must work to an overall government target of eliminating or consolidating two existing regulations for every new one it must enact. Now, that's responsible government—not this proposal. This cut-regardless-of-the-consequences approach to regulation has been tried and failed. This lead balloon won't fly.

Schedules 5, 6 and 7 wreak the Harris-Eves Tea Party anti-labour havoc that we had in the late 1990s on a 21st-century trade workforce. Our trades need to sharpen their continuing-education edge, and they need to attract talented youth. These proposals, which include abolishing the Ontario College of Trades, would send trades back to the 1950s instead of enabling them to attract and teach talented youth to work in tomorrow's Ontario trades. This idea is a black hole of reactionism.

Schedule 8 presumes a great deal about the will of BC, Alberta and Saskatchewan voters and contains no details whatsoever about what difference it would make. It also ignores Ontario's historical business relationship with Quebec and the Great Lakes states. Oh, by the way, that's where about 90% of our trade goes. Schedule 8, as they might say in Stratford, is much ado about little.

Schedule 9, about immigration, is nearly as empty. Clause 1 of schedule 9 is as aspirational as it gets. There's just nothing there. It says we have to attract the number and quality of newcomers to Canada that Ontario needs. Now, that's news. It says the minister will publish a report on the ministry's website. That's action? Come on. Give us a break.

1520

We need Ottawa to get out of the way, take apart its ineffective and expensive citizenship bureaucracy, and let Ontario have the flexibility that Quebec and other provinces do. If the member from Niagara West—Glanbrook

had roasted the feds and said, “Citizenship and Immigration Canada is doing a terrible job,” I might have said that was the one thing about the bill that I liked. Prostrating himself and showing his underside to Ottawa doesn’t help his credibility.

This is just not a good bill. The parts don’t connect. It’s a grab bag of old, failed, right-wing slogans and neo-conservative articles of faith that have never worked. This backward march to yesterday’s status quo is unworkable law and bad policy. It shows why the PC Party is out of touch with its time and out of touch with the needs and the hopes of Ontario.

Two thumbs down. This does not deserve to pass second reading. Thank you very much.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate? The member for Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. Where to begin?

I’m going to quickly correct a few things that we’ve just heard about. When we heard that there was a 0% increase amongst wages, I must remind this Legislature that 98% of all managers in Ontario received a wage increase last year in the form of a bonus. When we hear that Ontario has the lowest corporate taxes, I have to correct that statement by saying that when this government passes this additional half per cent, we will have the highest corporate taxes amongst the large provinces in this entire country. We already have the highest payroll taxes. We’ve seen them double the debt, and we’ve seen them triple hydro rates so that now we have the highest hydro rates.

Something needs to be done. That’s why I stand today to support our leader, Tim Hudak, and his million jobs plan. But let’s hear from some people around Ontario, from when we did our pre-budget consultation.

Art said, “Ontario’s manufacturing sector has suffered thousands of job losses in the recent past and clearly illustrates the results of lost competitiveness.”

All of us were here to listen to Jordan say, “The College of Trades is inhibiting a lot of these contractors from expanding. Realistically, there are challenges with these issues.” These are issues that our leader, Tim Hudak, is going to correct through his Million Jobs Act.

Matt from the Greater Kingston Chamber of Commerce said they “believe it’s a key priority for the provincial government to address the fiscal situation. Eliminating the deficit and tackling debt is absolutely critical.”

Frank said, “I don’t think increasing the cost of gasoline is actually going to help the family budget.”

Steve said, “You’re right that having a job is the most important pathway out of poverty.” He also went on to say, “The fundamental thing is that we need to make sure that the jobs that exist are available, and that they are good jobs, as well.”

The mayor of Enniskillen said about hydro, “They continue to be the main reason for losing manufacturing jobs in the area. Something has to be done. To see the bleeding” from these job losses “is heartbreaking, to say the least.”

The list goes on and on. My favourite was Liam. You know which Liam I’m referring to: McGuinty. He said that “the bulk of studies show that lowering corporate income taxes has a significant impact on investment.”

Here’s what Andrea said—not that Andrea, the other Andrea: “The first thing that we urge the government to do and that we hope will make the province prosper economically is to tackle the deficit.”

When talking about red tape, Eric said, “It’s overwhelming industry.”

The list that we all heard goes on and on.

I’ll share the time with my fellow colleagues.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. Further debate? The member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I’m happy to have this opportunity to speak to Bill 158. I will tell you right off the bat that I’ll be opposing it, and opposing it aggressively. I have to tell you that I don’t doubt the sincerity of the motion or the sincerity of the leader in his desire to create well-paying jobs. I just don’t think their plan does that.

When he speaks about the loss of good-paying jobs, many of those good-paying jobs were unionized, something this party has been aggressively attacking for years. It will continue attacking unions for years to come. Those good, well-paying jobs were unionized. And he speaks about good-paying jobs that we have lost. What would he do to replace them? I don’t have a clue, and I want to speak to that.

Not once does he talk about the North American Free Trade Agreement; not once. You will recall my good buddy Mulroney with his mellifluous voice talking about the millions of jobs that would be created once this free trade agreement was in place. Where are those jobs? Where have they gone? They left the country and they left North America, and they went into Asia, for the most part. But not once does the leader of the official opposition talk about how those good-paying jobs left North America and left Canada—not once.

We’re about to engage with the Europeans in a comprehensive trade and economic agreement, something the Tories are about to institute again. I’m telling you, we’re going to lose more good-paying jobs. And I know what your special interest is: It’s the multinational corporations. That’s your special interest. But not once do you talk about your special interest, friends—not once.

You talk about lowering taxes. It’s a spent idea. You talk about lowering corporate taxes. It’s spent; it’s an old idea. You guys need to move on. Mike Harris gave enough of that. The Liberals gave enough of that because they’ve helped you with \$4.5 billion. In fact, they proudly say, “We cut corporate taxes,” helping you, and they say, “Together on this, we’re creating jobs.” But we don’t see those jobs. They’re part-time jobs. They’re contract jobs. Your strategies—yours and theirs—have not worked. The jobs are not there. You cannot lower taxes and get the jobs we need. The evidence is clear: It’s not there.

You talk about getting rid of bureaucratic red tape. It doesn’t work. And we saw, in the 2008 financial fiasco in

America that caused a worldwide fiasco, that it was the elimination of regulations that some of us call red tape. And God bless Canada and that we have a little more red tape than the Americans because it saved us a little more than it saved the Americans. My friends, red tape is not the problemo. A little red tape helped to save our economy from the ravages of what the American financial institutions did.

Lowering corporate taxes will not do it. There is no evidence that the good-paying jobs have arrived as a result—absolutely no evidence. And the Liberals, having helped you out with that, haven't helped at all.

When you talk about the special interest groups, talk about your investor friends, talk about your multinational friends with the big bucks, the pecunia, your champagne capitalists. Talk about those kinds of friends, with whom you meet on a regular basis and with whom you have a very close, close relationship. You never talk about them.

If you want good jobs, think about what New Democrats have proposed. It might help some of you a little bit. But the whole idea of going after job training and saying, "We're going to create 250,000 jobs," a number you pulled out of a hat, is inane. It is utterly inane. It makes absolutely no sense. There is no evidence for that.

Your whole idea of a million jobs strategy is not only fanciful; it's farcical. The invention of such a number makes people think you guys are not fit for the job.

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

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Speaker. I commend my colleague from Trinity–Spadina and his passion and theatrics.

I would, with your permission, Speaker, like to directly address the Leader of the Opposition, the MPP for Niagara West–Glanbrook. I take him at his word when he says that he is concerned about job loss and unemployment and, of course, the psychosocial effects that that has on the various communities that are affected. I take him at his word.

1530

I would, however, like to cite that the strategy that the Conservative side, that the opposition is citing, is probably misguided, probably expired ideas and, essentially, recycling of initiatives and programs that have been tried not only in this province but continue to be in effect across the border. When we were seeking to rename this particular act, Bill 158, the Million Jobs Act—so far the brain trust has come up with this phrase of the "killing jobs act" or "chasing jobs away." I thought perhaps it would actually better be named as the "Americanization of Ontario act," because I think if you read this bill, you will see echoes of initiatives that have been tried and have, yes, benefited a certain portion, perhaps the top 5% or 10% or the multinational companies that have been cited earlier—because what this program seeks to do is to freeze, cut, lay off, sell off, deregulate, restructure and abolish so much of the superstructure that makes Ontario great.

What I would say with respect to my honourable colleague the Leader of the Opposition and to his advisers

and to my MPP colleagues is that this is a country, not a corporation. We are citizens, not merely taxpayers. And that distinction, that fine balance, is something that I think the Tea Party Republicans, in their divide-and-conquer, us-and-them mentality, neither recognize or appreciate—but probably strive to blur. It's sort of an ideological pose of privatizing the gains and socializing the losses, and turning everything, whether it's health care, education or infrastructure, into profit centres. That is precisely what has happened in places like Alabama, Wisconsin and Detroit.

There's a word, Speaker, that I think is very important to introduce to the economic debate here, and that is "arbitrage." Originally, it used to mean that you buy gold at this amount in Paris and sell it at a higher rate in London. But unfortunately, there's an arbitrage going on in business throughout the world, whether it's seeking jurisdictions which have weaker union laws, weaker environmental laws, yes, lower taxes, less regulation, less red tape—and all of those things are not an unqualified good.

I think this idea of stopping the gravy train—especially those of us here in the GTA are well familiar with the aspiration that that had, the sloganeering value that that had, but at the end of the day, when all you're seeking to do is freeze, cut, lay off, sell off, deregulate, restructure, abolish or "modernize," that is not, I think, the way forward.

By the way, you really need to read some of the recent speeches and the most recent book and documentary of the honourable Mitt Romney, the expired candidate for the presidency of the United States, and you will see an extraordinary concordance—at your peril, sir—between your plan and Mitt Romney's plan. It's a different age. It's a different mindset. There's a definite technology horizon out there, and we are not, I think, going to be able to go back to that privatize-the-gains, socialize-the-losses, divide-and-conquer strategy.

I commend you for your realization of that on the right-to-work plan. My colleague from Durham, the honourable John O'Toole, was quite right, but I think many, many other issues, you will find, sir, will play themselves out in a similar manner once the election is called, whenever.

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

Mrs. Jane McKenna: First of all, I just want to get the facts straight for the member from Trinity–Spadina. The facts are that you left the Ontario people with an \$11.3-billion deficit—

Interjection.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: —with your buddies over there; they've got the same amount now. We, as the PCs, when we came in, said we were going to have a zero deficit within the first four years. We did it in three, and we continued on four after that. People want the facts, and they want someone in government who is going to turn it around.

As the critic for economic development, trade and employment, it is my pleasure to join this afternoon's debate

around the Million Jobs Act. For the last 10 years, Ontario has been on the wrong path. The party opposite has used the power of government to reinforce its political advantage, run up the debt and deficit, and has left the public to pay the bill. Putting an end to the shameful status quo begins here and it begins now.

The Million Jobs Act is Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC Party reminding the party opposite what true leadership is about. Government's most basic responsibility is to create the conditions for business to thrive, for the economy to grow and for families to prosper. The first step is getting the fundamentals right.

Under the Liberals, Ontario's debt has doubled, and our deficit is higher than all the other provinces combined. It's shameful. The government's reckless spending costs us all because interest payments divert precious resources from priorities like great schools and quality health care. Tim Hudak has his priorities straight, and the Million Jobs Act would balance the budget quickly.

Ontario's skills gap robs our economy of \$24 billion every year. Our youth unemployment hovers over 16.5%. That's the reality of 10 years of Liberal government. The people of Ontario deserve better. Ontario's skills gap is the result of government policy being out of step with the reality of the marketplace. This bill would align the training system with the needs of the marketplace and help our young people find good jobs.

Tim Hudak is going to take back this have-not province with his Million Jobs Act and we will be open for business again. The people of Ontario are depending on it.

Past behaviour is indicative of future behaviour, and I'll say this: When the PCs were in, we said we were going to create 725,000 jobs in five years. We created 1.1 million in eight. We're overachievers.

I want to thank Mr. Hudak for your vision and your leadership. I am honoured to support this—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): To the member from Burlington, I said it twice today and I'll say it again: We're to refer to members of the Legislature by their title and not their name.

Further debate?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is my pleasure to join my leader and my colleagues in debate today to support the Million Jobs Act.

I spoke with my constituency office today and they said to me that the phone calls have never been coming in more fast and furious. People in this province are hurting. They're relying on a political party today to change the direction of this province so people can get back to work, they can pay their hydro bills and they can have a sense of security in the province in which they live. I believe the Million Jobs Act is precisely what they are looking for.

In my brief moment, Speaker, I would like to talk a bit about energy, as the Ontario Progressive Conservative energy critic. We know in our province today that energy is unaffordable, not only for residential consumers but also business consumers. In fact, AMPCO, the Associa-

tion of Major Power Consumers in Ontario, has said, "Our analysis shows that Ontario has the highest industrial rates in North America." They further say, "Ontario not only has the highest delivered rates of all these jurisdictions; the disparity in" these rates "is growing." Speaker, we can't do that anymore. The Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association is also saying the same thing.

They are putting at risk the very thing that makes Ontario a powerhouse in Confederation: jobs. If we can't get our energy rates under control, we're going to continue to lose more jobs. That's why we have a plan, the million jobs plan, to get those people back to work.

I'd like to address very quickly the issue of debt and deficit. It is very clear to me that as the third-largest spending priority in Ontario, the debt and deficit, and servicing it, are going to erode our public services. Earlier today, my colleague Jim McDonnell and I learned that our local hospital, Winchester District Memorial Hospital, will be closing 14 beds. They will lose 10 full-time jobs and they will have to increase their parking at their hospital. That is the real consequence of the Liberal-NDP policies of the last decade.

We need to move on, we need to do better, and we can do it with the million jobs plan put forward by my leader, Tim Hudak.

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

1540

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, 9% of my constituents are out of work. Obviously, top-of-mind concerns revolve around jobs, unemployment and the economy. This is where opposition leader Tim Hudak's million jobs law comes in.

In 1995, Tim Hudak and I first ran for election on a promise from Mike Harris to create one million jobs, and that promise became a reality. Fast-forward 18 years: We see another one million people—our friends, our neighbours—without jobs. Again, it's time for Ontario to put people back to work.

Ontario truly is in trouble, both fiscally and economically. To say Ontario's economy has stalled would be an understatement. Heinz, Bick's and Kellogg's need to be lured back. The economy of Ontario is supposedly in recovery since the economic shock of 2008, but it's the slowest and most agonizing rebound since the Depression, with nearly seven years of an unemployment rate above the national average. Poverty, welfare and disability rates have skyrocketed.

These economic, fiscal and political models in Ontario cannot continue forever in their present form. For the sake of coming generations, we can rebuild an Ontario that we can once again be proud of. Without some form of revolutionary change, Ontario may limp along for a while yet; however, the fundamental problems will continue to grow. By continuing irresponsible government taxing, spending, and borrowing, survival could be short-lived. Don Drummond projects a \$411.4-billion debt.

So our best course is to find the wherewithal and the leadership to build something better, as we see in this

legislation, the Million Jobs Act. It will be difficult, not without controversy, but it will be necessary. Believe it or not, government does have a role to play, and it lies in the realm of common sense tax policy, labour policy, energy policy, and addressing the myriad of bureaucratic rules and regulations that suffocate progress. Regrettably, our present government in Ontario has become increasingly dysfunctional, self-serving and, obviously, crushingly expensive. Moreover, it is failing to fulfill its most basic obligations.

We need real jobs, high-tech jobs, capitalizing on the inherent capabilities traditionally found in Ontario's workforce. Tax cuts create jobs. It makes more sense to have money in bank accounts to save, invest or spend as people and businesses themselves see fit.

Constituents continuously tell me they can't keep up with their bills, especially for electricity. Instead of keeping power rates down to help create jobs in the broader economy, this government has chosen to create jobs for people working within the power sector itself.

Colleges Ontario estimates there are 46% fewer tradespeople per capita in Ontario compared to the rest of Canada. The Million Jobs Act will create an apprentice-to-journeyman ratio of one to one and scrap the Ontario College of Trades, the costly bureaucracy that imposes a tax on workers.

My time has run out. Let's get Ontario back to work.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you, and my apologies for recognizing the member as Halton; it should be Haldimand-Norfolk.

The member for Niagara West-Glanbrook, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you very much, Speaker. I thank all my colleagues for their comments.

Look, just when you hope the NDP is starting to understand the economy, they break my heart every time when I hear those—it's just shattering, and to hear their critic, the member from Kenora, say that a million jobs is too ambitious, that they only want to create half of those jobs, that we don't need them.

I was proud to be part of a PC government that led North American job creation, 1.1 million new jobs to lead this continent, and we can do it again. Look, I know Bob Rae and the NDP—I'll admit it—did create jobs: in New York, in Michigan, in Indiana. I want to create jobs right here in the province of Ontario. I'm proud of my plan, and I'm proud of my team that's going to help deliver that plan and turn our province around. I'm proud that the million jobs plan will have a government that actually sets clear priorities, sticks to them and spends within its means, a government that will get its taxes down and energy rates under control, because I believe that affordable energy is the foundation for industry, to help seniors be able to pay their bills—an energy policy that's going to attract jobs, not chase them away.

I see immigration as an engine for economic growth, to pull us out of the hole and pull us forward; to offer that top student from India, China or Brazil studying at U of T an accelerated path to citizenship, to contribute to our economy, to raise a family here and to create jobs.

I say yes to 250,000 well-paying jobs in the skilled trades: carpenters, electricians, plumbers, precision machine operators, technologists. I want to fill up our rigs, our trains, our boats, our planes and fill up the Internet with Ontario-made goods and services, and sell them across the world. That's my plan.

Speaker, I'm ready. I've got a plan; they don't. I'm ready to lead. I'm ready to bring jobs back to our province. All I've got to say is, let's get going and get this on the road.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We will take the vote at the end of private members' business.

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government should protect taxpayers from higher property taxes by implementing a comprehensive, long-term solution to reform joint and several liability insurance for municipalities by no later than June 2014, addressing the alarming rise in insurance premiums due to rising litigation and claim costs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Perth-Wellington, you have 12 minutes for your presentation under standing order 98.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Rising municipal insurance premiums must be reined in. Under the Negligence Act, damages can be recovered from any defendant, even if they are found to be only 1% at fault. Municipalities often targeted as insurers of last resort can be on the hook for massive damage awards.

If adopted, this motion will send a clear signal to municipalities: We hear you. It will send a clear message to taxpayers: We respect you. It will say that this House stands ready to support real, comprehensive reform to protect you from rapidly rising insurance premiums.

The current liability model is driving these increases, and leaves the door open to massive damage awards. Facing added risk and increasing costs, insurance premiums must go up. To afford those higher premiums, municipalities often have no choice but to increase taxes or cut services. For taxpayers, this is a lose-lose situation.

Speaker, before I became an MPP, I served as a councillor in North Perth. Even then, our council had to grapple with this issue. Since I was elected to the Legislature, I have spoken up many times for the municipalities I represent.

At the 2012 ROMA/OGRA conference, I supported the town of Minto in a meeting with the Attorney General. Along with many others, we asked for reform. That was two years ago. Last April, I wrote to the Premier on behalf of the municipality of West Perth. We told her how this is affecting us. Again, we called on the government to fix the problem.

I want to read a letter of support endorsed by many municipalities: "If this situation continues, the scaling back on public services in order to limit liability exposure and insurance costs will only continue. Regrettably, it

will be at the expense of the communities we all call home.”

1550

In a resolution from the township of Lake of Bays, Mayor Bob Young said, “It is unfair to ask 444 municipalities in Ontario to carry the lion’s share of a damage award when at minimal fault or to assume responsibility for someone else’s mistake.”

At last count, a total of 187 municipalities across the province have endorsed this motion. I thank them for their overwhelming support.

I would also like to thank those who have given their guidance and advice on this resolution. Thank you to Larry Ryan, Derek Sarluis and Bryce Sibbick from the Frank Cowan Co.; Pat Vanini and Matthew Wilson from AMO; Matt Hiraishi, Doug DeRabbie and Ralph Palumbo from the Insurance Bureau of Canada; and Bill Nelson and Miles Dadson, who are trusted insurance brokers in Perth–Wellington.

Small and rural municipalities, often least able to afford rising premiums, are supporting us. In Perth–Wellington, municipalities including Mapleton, Minto, Perth county, West Perth, North Perth, Perth South, St. Marys, Stratford and Wellington North have passed resolutions supporting my motion.

Municipalities are demanding action, and action is long overdue. In fact, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario has been calling on this government to reform the joint and several liability system for years. In 2011, an AMO survey found that municipal liability premiums had increased 22% over five years. At the AMO conference, former Premier Dalton McGuinty promised to ask his Attorney General and Minister of Municipal Affairs to “sit down with you and see how, together, we can address your concerns relating to joint and several liability.” By the way, that was just before the current Premier took over as Minister of Municipal Affairs in 2011. But today, almost three years later, the problem has worsened, and the government has yet to act. Municipal liability reform is still among AMO’s top priorities. We need to know where it stands among the government’s priorities or even if it’s on the list.

In November, I met with representatives from AMO. They stressed the need to reform the joint and several liability model to relieve the burden on municipalities. British Columbia has enacted a form of proportionate liability. Other provinces have also taken action. According to the American Tort Reform Association, 42 American states have undertaken legislative reforms.

Speaker, I want to share with the House a few examples of how municipalities in Ontario have been affected. This year, the city of Brantford’s insurance premiums went up almost 20%, coming in at \$2.3 million. The township of Wellington North faces a 6% hike in its insurance premiums. They were advised to double their liability coverage from \$25 million to \$50 million.

The warden of Renfrew county wrote to me—

Mr. John Yakabuski: A good guy.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: —a good guy in Renfrew, yes—“The current situation is not sustainable, and a

long-term solution is required that is beneficial to all parties. This solution is critical to providing future financial stability for municipalities, and action must be taken now so that a proactive approach can be achieved and a crisis averted.”

Insurers have also expressed concerns. In November, I met with representatives from the Frank Cowan Co., who stressed the urgency of getting the system under control as soon as possible. I was told that many would say we are in a municipal insurance crisis—I repeat: a municipal insurance crisis. I was told we need sustainability and stability in the insurance marketplace.

I want to read a letter of support I received from Ralph Palumbo, vice-president, Ontario, Insurance Bureau of Canada: “In recent years, municipalities have seen a dramatic increase in their insurance premiums, primarily due to rising litigation and claim costs. Unfortunately, these cost increases are absorbed by ratepayers in the form of higher residential and commercial property taxes.

“IBC welcomes the debate on the implications of joint and several liability on Ontario municipalities.”

We’ve heard many examples highlighting the need for reform. In 2004, a woman drove her sister and three friends down a rural road dividing the city of Oshawa and the township of Scugog. Believing a car was coming at her from the opposite direction, the driver veered into a ditch. She lost control, struck a culvert and flipped her car. Tragically, the driver and her sister suffered serious injuries, leaving them quadriplegic.

The sisters filed a lawsuit against Oshawa and Scugog. While the driver was found one-third responsible because she was speeding, the municipalities were assigned the majority of fault at one third each. The judge concluded that the road presented an unreasonable risk of harm and should have had a painted line, even though the Ontario manual of uniform traffic control did not require one.

The case cost the municipalities, their taxpayers and insurers more than \$20 million. To be sure, no one would deny anyone the lifelong medical care they need. But it is not fair for municipalities, where they took every reasonable step to ensure public safety, to pay up when a massive and unexpected award for damages comes their way.

We need reform that recognizes that. We need reform that is based on fairness to all concerned. Joint and several liability insurance reform is, I recognize, very complex. It involves existing provincial laws, it involves years of legal precedent, and it concerns many competing interests. All of these must be considered. That is why this motion does not dictate a specific avenue of reform. It is not intended to. The government needs to listen to the advice it has received from AMO, from municipalities, from insurers, from the legal profession and from its own public service. Solutions are not straightforward, but we know they are possible.

No longer can the government point to complexity as an excuse to keep putting off meaningful change. We need to see the government give this issue the attention it deserves. That is the reason for this resolution. It is my

understanding that the Ministry of the Attorney General has held ongoing discussions around reform. I am encouraged to hear that the ministry staff recently reached out to the legal community and have been working with insurers and other stakeholders to find a solution that will work for Ontario. But after all this consultation, action is overdue.

It is time for this government finally to make this a priority. On this issue, and so many others, municipalities want to see action. They are tired of bringing their concerns to the government and receiving in return little more than an excuse or a pat on the head. I call on the government to take all the feedback they already have and use it to bring about real reform. I call on them to do it now. I hope that all members from all parties will come together today to represent their communities. I asked my colleagues to support us, including those from Mississauga, Ottawa, Hamilton and St. Catharines. All have endorsed this motion.

Municipalities and taxpayers cannot afford further delays. They cannot continue waiting on their insurance premiums to continue to skyrocket. I ask for the support of this House, and I look forward to questions and comments.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'll be supporting this bill and I will—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Some things we agree on.

I am very happy to send this bill to committee because I am persuaded or convinced that there will be different kinds of opinions that will come forward that will educate, possibly enlighten and help to deal with this particular problem. There is simply no doubt that the lawsuits facing municipalities that relate to fire, police, leisure services, snowplowing, drinking water, road maintenance, bridges and culverts—it's a long list that brings many, many different problems and lawsuits to municipalities, and that brings additional costs to municipalities. That is a concern to municipalities, to be sure, and it's a concern to the property taxpayers and renters who pay huge amounts of taxes as well, because they see their costs going up each and every year, and sometimes they don't see the concomitant benefits that come with those rising taxes. So it's a huge concern.

1600

I want to hear from the Ontario Trial Lawyers Association, because we know that they have raised concerns about this. Clearly, lawyers, when there is an individual problem, will go after the municipality because there's more money to be made than going after a homeowner, and even if the homeowner has or 99% of the responsibility and the city 1%, they'll go after the city, because that's where the money is. We understand that. But we have to worry about how we protect individuals from lawsuits that could potentially be very, very high, assuming you could squeeze money out of homeowners if someone went after the homeowner and not the city. So

it's a concern with how we protect some of those individual rights.

The other concern that we need to worry about is: Does this have any other implications for other laws and/or other citizens who might be affected by merely changing this particular Negligence Act, which deals with the reform of joint and several liability insurance? So there may be implications if we move in this area that could affect other laws and could affect citizens in an adverse way, and I would be very interested in listening to people who come in from the community to see what they have to say.

But I wanted to make reference to something that a government did in 1995, and some of you will remember that because you were here. I know that the Leader of the Opposition was here in 1995. I know that the member from Wellington–Halton Hills was here in 1995, and he would remember. My friend from Timmins–James Bay was here and, of course, I was here, and one or two other Liberals, but not many others. You'll remember the who-does-what committee, headed by one of my favourite Tories, David Crombie.

I like him a lot; I think that he's a good Tory. He's a red Tory. He produced this report that talked about who does what and who should pay for what, and as a result of that report, 30% of the education taxes were uploaded, taken out, and a commensurate amount of social services, the Tories argued, would be downloaded to the cities across Ontario. Mike Harris, at the time, and his minister argued that this was an even swap.

Those of us who were in the know never felt that it was an even swap. Speaker, you were there at the city in 1995, I think. I know that you and various Conservative members, including Councillor Denzil Minnan-Wong, were concerned about this uneven swap, and he understood that it would not be—and the member from Peterborough, when you were a city councillor, you, I'm sure, felt the effects of that. But the point of that exercise was not only to amalgamate cities, which the Tories argued would save money—and we have seen no evidence for that except the opposite. The other effect of downloading services to the municipalities caused tremendous fiscal problems for each and every municipality across Ontario, and they just don't know what to do. And so the only problem that we've got is that we've shifted the load onto the municipalities—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The member from Durham, I can't hear you, so I don't know what you're saying.

We've shifted the responsibilities onto municipalities, and now, of course, to make up for that lack of balance, they've got to raise taxes.

Remember, they downloaded public housing, which is close to a \$1-billion cost, social housing—the only jurisdiction in the world that has downloaded public housing to the municipalities. No one else does it in the civilized world. So they've got to deal with that huge amount of infrastructure problems from property taxes. That's what we have given them as part of that swap.

I just wanted to remind the member from Perth–Wellington that we recognize the problems municipalities have, but would that some of you would make the link between what you did in 1995 and simply take a little modicum of responsibility and say publicly, “Yes, maybe we made a mistake.” If I were to hear that, I wouldn’t feel so bad; but for you not to acknowledge that you have created this fiscal imbalance and this problem for municipalities and for the taxpayer, it just annoys me a little bit.

With respect to this bill, I’d send it to committee. Let’s get people to talk about it and see what they feel, but I think they’re on the right track.

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

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It’s a great honour, as always, for me to stand in my place and provide some comments and thoughts with respect to this particular matter that’s being discussed here today.

I want to begin, Speaker, by offering my congratulations to the member from Perth–Wellington. I did have the chance to hear his remarks and his comments with respect to his private member’s bill. Of course, I also had the chance to hear the member from Trinity–Spadina speak about this bill. I want to echo at least the first half of what I heard from the member from Trinity–Spadina with respect to the importance, at this stage of second reading, of supporting this particular private member’s bill to make sure that it does get to committee so that there can be some additional examination and analysis brought to bear. It is obviously an issue that has caused, I suppose, some concern with respect to what’s taking place with our municipal partners across the province of Ontario. I know that was referenced in remarks made by both the member from Perth–Wellington and the member from Trinity–Spadina.

Earlier this week, I, along with many of my colleagues from this side of the House, had the opportunity to attend the ROMA/OGRA conference here in Toronto. I was privileged to have the opportunity to speak, on behalf of the Ministry of Finance, with close to 30 delegations from municipalities across the province. I was also in attendance during what we like to call the bear pit session to hear some of the questions that came from the floor. It won’t come as a surprise to most in the chamber right now, and perhaps many watching at home, that municipal leaders from across the province have expressed a desire to continue to work with the Attorney General and our government and all members on all sides of this House to try to come to a resolution on this matter, a matter that is, as I said a second ago, causing some angst and some concern within the municipal sector.

So I do, as I say, want to congratulate the member from Perth–Wellington for coming forward with this measure and this proposal today. As the member from Trinity–Spadina said, I think this is the kind of matter that deserves greater discussion and greater analysis, and I hope that it will be supported by members on all sides.

The other thing I would mention is that in those delegations, in those conversations that I had with folks

from municipalities representing the north, the south, the east and the southwest of this wonderful province that we call home, there was broad recognition that under the leadership of the current Attorney General and current Premier, there have been some very fruitful ongoing conversations about exactly what needs to occur here to make sure that we get it right.

Now, the member from Trinity–Spadina did talk a little bit about some of the history from further back, a number of years ago in the mid- to late 1990s, about how certain of these decisions were made by previous governments that perhaps impact the situation today. I take the member from Trinity–Spadina at his word. Obviously, that predates me as someone who has only served in this Legislature as the MPP for Vaughan for about 17 or 18 months. Having said all of that, in terms of moving forward, Speaker, I think it is important that we have a comprehensive discussion in the chamber today around this particular matter and that we continue to work together on this. This is one of those issues that from time to time come forward in this chamber, that takes a little bit less of a partisan tone, which is good news. I know that our municipal partners from right across the province certainly want to understand and want to have that confidence that we are taking this matter seriously.

1610

But as I was saying a second ago, there was fairly broad recognition, from the conversations that I had at ROMA/OGRA, that our government is moving in the right direction, that we are listening, that we are being responsive; that the Attorney General, in particular, is working hard, and his officials are working extremely hard, to make sure that we strike the right balance on something that is complicated, taking into account that there are examples from other provinces across Canada about how to move forward on this, taking into account that other jurisdictions south of the border deal with this in particular ways, and making sure that we don’t make any rash decisions, that we don’t do anything that perhaps is a bit of a knee-jerk reaction to a problem that has existed for a little while.

From my perspective, there seemed to be a fairly broad willingness on the part of our municipal partners to work with us; to continue to exhibit the kind of patience that’s needed; to want to work with the Attorney General and our government and members from all three caucuses, from all three parties represented here in the chamber; to collectively roll up our sleeves; to make sure that as we move forward, we come forward with proposals and ideas and solutions; that they won’t find themselves back in a situation, and they won’t find themselves being confronted by unintended consequences; and that they will find a way and we will find a way, working with them—in a very non-partisan, constructive way, hopefully—to come forward with a solution and to come forward with ideas that are sustainable.

There is probably nothing that’s more frustrating than for other levels of government—partners, stakeholders,

let's call them—from across all sectors to see proposals and solutions emanate from this building and then realize a month later, six months later, two years later, we're right back here again; we're right back to basics, trying to solve a problem that we'd hoped to solve in the past.

I'll wrap up my comments by once again repeating that I congratulate the member from Perth–Wellington. I hope that others will join with me and the member from Trinity–Spadina in supporting this initiative. I look forward to the rest of the debate and discussion that I'm sure will take place over the course of the rest of the afternoon.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: With pride, I rise to talk to the bill from my colleague from Perth–Wellington.

This past week, I sat in on approximately 35 delegations from different municipalities, and the message was always the same. We were talking about municipalities that are in trouble, municipalities that are receiving a lot of feedback, a lot of flak, from their residents about their property taxes, which are just escalating out of control.

They mentioned issues of cuts in funding from this government, four years of \$25 million each, the OMPF funding of \$100 million, from a government that sees fit to cancel a gas plant at a cost of over \$1 billion, but they're attacking municipalities who just have no choice but to either cut services or pass it on to their property taxes.

They talked about policing costs escalating, a contract that they had nothing to do with. The McGuinty–Wynne government negotiated the rates and just simply passed them down to them. In my riding of SD&G, we're talking around a million-dollar increase in policing costs alone. Those are huge additions.

Hydro rates, policing costs—joint and several liability was one of the other issues. Their insurance rates over the last number of years have escalated. I know, myself, as mayor of South Glengarry, we were in court a number of times, drawn in because of the threat—really, at no fault, and, in almost all cases, proven that way in court. But our insurance company was in there because there was a threat of hundreds of thousands of dollars of liability. Because we were the municipality, 1% could bring us in.

Those are costs that we've heard about for years and years, and this government has been talking about it, but I guess we're getting tired of talking about it. We need action, because these insurance rates have almost doubled over the last 10 years, and it's hitting the bottom line. There are numerous cases where we have to get into things. Everybody remembers the original pledge by this Liberal government to freeze insurance rates. Of course, we've seen what happened, so we're not expecting a lot of work on this.

I think I hear a lot of talk from the member from Trinity–Spadina on the downloading and uploading. That was revenue-neutral. I have to remind him that, at that time, our school board costs were around 60% of the tax bill. That was taken away from us, so there were issues.

We know we need to look ahead. We need some changes that are going to make a difference, because the property taxes are getting out of hand.

The other thing I heard loud and clear was, people are getting tired of seeing bankruptcies and companies moving, and a big part of that is the cost of doing business in Ontario. Everybody knows that when costs of business go up, businesses close and jobs go down. They're wanting help and they're desperate to see help.

I know many of my colleagues want to talk on this issue, so I'll pass my time on it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Hamilton—

Miss Monique Taylor: Mountain.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker. I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak to this motion that's before us today.

The motion speaks to problems municipalities are experiencing with the rising cost of their insurance premiums. At the end of the day, we know who pays the bill for that, and it's families, who are already feeling the pressure on their wallets. They know very well that rising insurance premiums are having a direct impact on the costs that they face every single day. Normally, they see it on their own auto insurance, but others are seeing it when they open their property tax bill, with that increase, because that money has to go somewhere.

Municipalities have spoken out about the effect that these rising insurance costs are having on their ability to deliver services that people rely on. In 2011, AMO reported that the municipal liability premium costs increased 22% from 2007 to 2011. That year, they paid a total of \$155 million for insurance and \$85 million for liability premiums. That's just for the insurance; that doesn't include the legal fees, settlements and court-mandated awards.

Municipalities already have to contend with the cost of the responsibilities that these governments and the previous Conservative government downloaded upon them. This motion won't help municipalities deal with those costs, but it does give the Legislature an opportunity to discuss the important rising cost of insurance.

Joint and several liability is a very complex issue, and I would note that the motion before us today is opposed by many in the legal profession. They voiced their concerns to the Attorney General after it was reported in January of this year that he was considering changes to the Negligence Act, one of those being that there had been a lack of consultation, and more time was needed to do meaningful consultation. Speaker, those concerns need to be heard, but this discussion has to happen.

Municipalities are paying more for insurance than they are for items like bridge and culvert maintenance and street lighting. Why is it costing us so much? It's because of the joint and several liability they have with respect to claims and the possibilities of being liable for huge costs when they're only partially at fault.

I called the risk management division in Hamilton and had him explain it to me in terms that I understand, and I do get it now. He told me to think about it this way: Two trucks are driving toward each other on a country road. They collide and one veers off and hits a tree on a municipal easement. The judge in this case has an award of \$5 million and finds the municipality 1% at fault. The driver, who is significantly at fault, only has \$1 million of liability coverage. Thanks to joint and several liability, the municipality is on the hook for the remaining \$4 million.

This is an issue that municipalities would like to see addressed. It has also been a long-standing concern for them. They want a change to joint and several liability laws that would provide a proportionate liability, and they would pay the percentage that they were actually responsible for in any lawsuit.

Like I said, Speaker, I will be supporting this motion. I found it very interesting that this conversation was brought up. I myself, as an MPP, found it very educational for me, and what happens with municipalities and how those insurance costs vary for municipal insurance, and what that does to the taxpayers' pockets, because municipalities are always the deep-pocketed ones. Well, it's not really the municipality where those pockets are deep. It's the taxpayer who is always feeling the heat at the end of the day—and to think that there's no cap on insurance premiums that a person could be awarded. In that case, it just puts the city on the hook for any amount of money if they're 1% at fault.

Thank you for the time to allow me to speak to this important matter. As I said, I will be supporting it and I look forward to hearing other debates.

1620

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's been enjoyable listening to the debate today, but I am a little perplexed by the party opposite. I always think that there are opportunities to build bridges in this House to actually do something, and I actually have started to understand the gaps between each of the parties around the economy, around city building and around the fairness of municipalities. I don't have any issue with this, particularly. Joint severance is something that we're working on with ROMA, and I think there are solutions that are emerging. I think this is a fairly harmless piece of legislation. I think it reinforces a process that all members of this House see as useful.

But it's been interesting, because as I listen to these things, they are indicative of how we understand the economy. This bill, and the other one presented by one of the members earlier, explains to me how—we often joke that it's hard to find a political party to support sometimes if you're actually a thinking person who has a critical view. As many of you know, I was a big fan of Brian Mulroney because of free trade and the tax reforms that he did. I think a lot of the wealth in this country—as you know, I agree with Jim Flaherty on HST reform,

because it took eight and a half billion dollars of cost out of our economy, that we, as governments, were able to see.

But I now understand the problem. As my friend John O'Toole said, I was the keynote speaker in 2010 to the Progressive Conservative—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would remind the minister to refer to ridings, not names.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: My friend from Durham knows that I was a guest of the member from Newmarket–Aurora and gave the keynote speech to the Progressive Conservative annual policy convention, largely because of Frank, my friend from Newmarket–Aurora.

It's interesting to me, because what I'm noticing—and this is something that I think is an interesting discussion if we don't want to be partisan for a sec. Municipalities are important, but how do they grow their tax base to deal with issues like joint and separate severances?

Well, what are the problems in the economy? One of the problems in the economy is lazy capital.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm very serious, if you're interested in a non-partisan conversation. I listened carefully to the Leader of the Opposition; I wouldn't mind the same in return. I'll talk to the member from Cambridge, who seems to be interested in this.

So we have a problem, as you'll know, coming from Cambridge. In that municipality, one of its big risks isn't this, it's risk-tolerant capital. One third of our GDP right now is sitting in banks. There's nothing I'm hearing right now that deals with trying to lower the effective tax rate on risk capital—not the corporate tax rate, but if you actually reduced the effective rate of risk capital. What would that do, Mr. Speaker? Well, that would mean that small businesses would be able to grow, they estimate, at about twice the rate. Why is that important? Because 5% of companies right now are generating 50% of our jobs. Those 440,000 jobs that we talk about aren't created by manufacturing or agriculture, they're created by small, innovative start-up businesses in new materials, engineering, new fuels, information technology, new management systems, risk capital. That's the new economy.

One of the challenges for the industrial economy—and this is where I disagree with some of my friends in the third party. Let's take Hamilton as an example: We keep on hearing about manufacturing jobs. Pittsburgh makes more steel today than it ever has in its history. Pittsburgh makes more steel than it ever has before. But Pittsburgh only has two steel plants today and only 300 people working in them; 25 years ago, Pittsburgh had 104 steel plants and 243,000 people working in them.

I would ask the party opposite, given the two motions today, what is your position on manufacturing? Do you not understand that advanced manufacturing is growing, that the reason we make more automobiles and we're the largest automobile manufacturer with 150,000 fewer people is because that is the new economy?

When it comes to joint severance, when it comes to these financial risks—

Interjections.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I would just like to know if the Minister of Transportation could actually get back to the motion that's before the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): That's not a point of order.

Minister.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: When it comes to—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Well, why don't you answer the question?

When it comes to joint severances and the other challenges, we are finally uploading health and social services and things that shouldn't be. These kinds of risks, of which this is one—the member from Huron-Bruce, it's important. You need a strong tax base to do this. What is your position as a party on manufacturing?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the minister to speak through the Chair, please.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: What it has to do with it is, it has to do with—

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I think you got a sore point.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes, absolutely.

It has to do with the idea that, without strong economies, there is no resilience.

As I said, again, there's not much to debate, Mr. Speaker, in this particular motion because we agree with it. It's already well in progress. We're working with AMO and ROMA to a solution.

The challenge is, how do you secure the financial security and tax base of our municipalities? If you want to do that, you need a steady pipe of infrastructure. We've gone from \$3 billion to \$14 billion. What does that mean? That means 1.1% more GDP growth, if only the federal government would match us. For all of these communities—the party opposite was at 0.25%, as their federal cousins are. That loses us, over the next 50 years, about \$7 trillion in revenue. It means that the average Ontario family—thank you, Mr. Speaker; it was a pleasure.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to rise and support my colleague from Perth-Wellington. I want to thank him for moving forward with this motion.

I was fortunate, as were many other members of our caucus, to attend the ROMA/OGRA conference this week. The conference is a great opportunity to talk to municipal leaders as they come and discuss some of the pressures they have in the municipal sector. I think it's very important that we sit and listen to some of their concerns because, as legislators, we can make decisions that directly impact the property tax bill.

Certainly, one of the things that I heard about loud and clear at the conference was the OPP billing reform, where the government has made a complete disaster of

the process, basically going back to the drawing board after a year. Policing costs were a hot-button issue at ROMA/OGRA, but many other municipal officials talked to me about this issue of the need for reform of joint and several liability for municipalities.

There's no question that municipalities across Ontario welcome this motion and were very clear that they expect the three parties to co-operate and to get this passed. As the former municipal affairs critic for the party, I too have met with AMO on this issue. We heard some numbers from earlier speakers. I'm not going to revisit those numbers, but I know, as a former municipal politician, a former mayor of Brockville—and some of the municipal officials who now are MPPs—we know the challenge of balancing a budget, particularly when dealing with costs like insurance premiums that we have no control over.

In my riding of Leeds-Grenville, there are 13 municipalities. I want to thank the town of Gananoque's mayor, Erika Demchuk, for a letter I received at the constituency office today. One of those municipalities, the township of Edwardsburgh/Cardinal—I was with Mayor Bill Sloan this weekend at a fundraising event for the Food For All Food Bank. I want to take a moment to read from the letter Mayor Sloan sent to the Attorney General regarding what he calls “the punishing impact of joint and several liability on municipalities.”

Mayor Sloan wrote, “If this situation continues, the scaling back on public services in order to limit liability exposure and insurance costs will only continue. Regrettably, it will be at the expense of the communities we call home.”

Now, Edwardsburgh/Cardinal is a township where, last year, they opened a brand new Ingredient Centre arena in the beautiful village of Cardinal. It was a \$6.3-million project—a huge undertaking for Mayor Sloan and his council. I know it's projects like the Ingredient Centre that he's talking about when he talks about the challenges that municipalities are facing.

I know some of my other colleagues want to speak to this motion. I want to give them ample time, but I want to thank the member for Perth-Wellington for putting this important issue on the floor today.

1630

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm very pleased to have this opportunity this afternoon to express my support for the resolution brought forward by my friend and colleague the member for Perth-Wellington, with respect to calling upon the government to solve the problem of joint and several liability. He's calling for the government to undertake reforms to ensure that municipalities don't have to struggle with ever-escalating insurance premiums.

When I think of the member for Perth-Wellington, who has done an outstanding job in this Legislature since he was first elected to the House in October 2011—

Applause.

Mr. Ted Arnott: He sure does deserve our applause for the work that he does. He is solid. He's someone that

his constituents can count on. He is trusted by his constituents, and he has earned that trust through the years, through his public service, even before he came here, for all the things he was involved with, including municipal council for many years. He is very persistent when there is an issue that is brought to his attention that he knows needs to be addressed, and he has demonstrated that with this particular resolution.

I also want to give credit to his staff, some of whom I've worked with in the past: Stephen Yantzi, Sara Cleland, Martin Dendekker, Lindsay Harwood and Vivian Jarvis, who perform outstanding work on behalf of all the constituents in Perth–Wellington, and I know that Randy is fortunate to have them to support his work here.

Of course, this resolution speaks to the need to respond to a concern that has been brought forward by, I think, over 100 municipalities in the province of Ontario and AMO. Municipalities are now paying \$35 million more in insurance premiums than they were just four years ago as a result of some of these massive awards that we've talked about during the course of this debate. We know that AMO's 2011 municipal insurance survey demonstrated that total municipal liability insurance costs were approximately \$85.6 million, up 22.2% from 2007, and we know that the only way for municipalities to deal with increasing premiums is to raise property tax rates and/or cut services, which we don't want to see, obviously.

In 2011, we know that the Premier made a commitment to further discussions on reform, but really, no action has been taken to protect taxpayers and municipalities. The Attorney General has made a public commitment to set up a task force, but nothing has been done.

I quickly want to make reference to an article that appeared in the Wellington Advertiser, a very important newspaper in our area. It's an endorsement of this resolution. It says that the newspaper is very "happy to see a private member's bill by Perth–Wellington MPP Randy Pettapiece that aims to reform joint and several liability provisions in law. In essence, if numerous parties were sued, it is currently the one with deepest pockets that pays the bill—often despite a finding of minimal responsibility." It goes on and on.

I'd like to continue this debate, but I know that we have another speaker from our party who wants to participate, so I'm going to leave it at that. But I would encourage all members of this House to support this important resolution today to address an important concern of municipalities in the province of Ontario.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to rise today in support of this ballot item brought forward by my colleague from Perth–Wellington.

In Ontario the status quo is not an option. Municipalities need a more appropriate form of liability insurance. Many jurisdictions around the world have limited their exposure to the rule of joint and several liability. Some

jurisdictions have even moved to a proportionate liability model.

Under the current joint and several liability model of the Negligence Act of 1990, insurance premiums for municipalities have increased by \$35 million in the last four years. Medium-sized municipalities, similar to the town of East Gwillimbury in my riding, with a population of 24,000 people, have seen an average increase of 35% in liability insurance premiums. And who ends up bearing the cost? We know that it's the property taxpayers and the people of the community. We know that people in some communities spend more on insurance than they do for their library. In another county, for every \$2 spent on snowplowing, another \$1 is spent on insurance. These costs are outrageous when they are compared with the result of the increasing cost of insurance.

What we are here today to look at is the inability of this government to provide good governance. They have known for some time—through AMO and the other municipalities and the various organizations that have come forward and said, "Enough is enough."

All we have heard is that the Attorney General is putting together a group. I don't know whether that's the 37th or the 38th that the Premier is counting in her advisory groups, but it's time to do more than have that. We need action. We need to save the municipalities and our taxpayers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Perth–Wellington, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I want to thank the members from Trinity–Spadina, Vaughan, Hamilton Mountain, Stormont–Dundas–Glengarry, Leeds–Grenville, Wellington–Halton Hills and York–Simcoe.

I'd like to address my last comments to the Minister of Transportation. The reason there are billions of dollars of capital sitting in bank accounts is because people are afraid to invest in Ontario over the way you guys are running this province.

Anyway, I would also like to thank two members of the Insurance Bureau of Canada for attending today: Matt Hiraishi and Doug DeRabbie, who are sitting over here.

Mr. Speaker, this motion is simply a motion to get the government doing something. For three years, at least, I've been hearing about this issue, and my constituents, my municipalities in my riding have been asking me, "When is it going to happen?" The Attorney General and others have said they're working on it and working on it, yet nothing seems to come along.

We cannot stand these large lawsuits. It is hard on the taxpayers and municipalities who have to come up with the extra funds, and also the insurance companies have to have enough funds in their accounts to pay for these things. So what happens? Our insurance rates go up—again, a cost to the taxpayer.

I thank you all for your support on this resolution. I hope that we can see some real progress in the days to come and get this job done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

WORKPLACE SAFETY
AND INSURANCE
AMENDMENT ACT (POST-TRAUMATIC
STRESS DISORDER), 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LA SÉCURITÉ PROFESSIONNELLE
ET L'ASSURANCE CONTRE
LES ACCIDENTS DU TRAVAIL
(TROUBLE DE STRESS
POST-TRAUMATIQUE)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 73, standing in the name of Ms. DiNovo.

Ms. DiNovo has moved second reading of Bill 67, An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member would like—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: General government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to general government. Agreed? Agreed.

MILLION JOBS ACT, 2014
LOI DE 2014 SUR LA CRÉATION
D'UN MILLION D'EMPLOIS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Hudak has moved second reading of Bill 158, An Act to promote job creation in Ontario.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will deal with this item as a vote after the private members' business.

MUNICIPALITIES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Pettapiece has moved ballot item number 75, private members' notice of motion number 58.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1640 to 1645.

MILLION JOBS ACT, 2014
LOI DE 2014 SUR LA CRÉATION
D'UN MILLION D'EMPLOIS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Hudak has moved second reading of Bill 158, An Act to promote job creation in Ontario.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Jackson, Rod	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	Nicholls, Rick
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	O'Toole, John
Chudleigh, Ted	Leone, Rob	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Clark, Steve	MacLaren, Jack	Pettapiece, Randy
Dunlop, Garfield	MacLeod, Lisa	Scott, Laurie
Elliott, Christine	Martow, Gila	Smith, Todd
Fedeli, Victor	McDonnell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
Hardeman, Ernie	McKenna, Jane	Walker, Bill
Harris, Michael	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Holiday, Douglas C.	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Hudak, Tim	Milligan, Rob E.	Yurek, Jeff

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Forster, Cindy	Moridi, Reza
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gates, Wayne	Murray, Glen R.
Bisson, Gilles	Gélinas, France	Naqvi, Yasir
Campbell, Sarah	Gravelle, Michael	Natyshak, Taras
Cansfield, Donna H.	Hatfield, Percy	Oraziotti, David
Chiarelli, Bob	Hunter, Mitzie	Prue, Michael
Colle, Mike	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Coteau, Michael	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Crack, Grant	Kwinter, Monte	Sattler, Peggy
Damerla, Dipika	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Del Duca, Steven	MacCharles, Tracy	Singh, Jagmeet
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Dhillon, Vic	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Dickson, Joe	Matthews, Deborah	Taylor, Monique
DiNovo, Cheri	McNeely, Phil	Vanhof, John
Duguid, Brad	Meilleur, Madeleine	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Fife, Catherine	Miller, Paul	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milloy, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 36; the nays are 53.

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

Second reading negated.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

Interjections.

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

The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Agreed?

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

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until Monday, 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1650.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Steven Del Duca, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Rick Bartolucci
Laura Albanese, Rick Bartolucci
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
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