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Wednesday 5 March 2014

Mercredi 5 mars 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

Mercredi 5 mars 2014

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

COMPLYING WITH INTERNATIONAL
TRADE OBLIGATIONS ACT, 2014
LOI DE 2014 DE CONFORMITÉ
AUX OBLIGATIONS COMMERCIALES
INTERNATIONALES

Mr. Chiarelli moved second reading of the following bill:

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

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I rise today to begin second reading debate of the Complying with International Trade Obligations Act, 2014. I'll be splitting my time with my parliamentary assistant, the MPP for Mississauga—Streetsville.

The bill, if passed, makes modifications to the Electricity Act, 1998, that would enable Ontario to comply with the World Trade Organization ruling on domestic content provisions in the feed-in tariff or FIT renewable energy program.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to provide the context for today's debate, namely the rationale and benefits of our renewable energy policies and the role of our domestic content legislation.

When our government was elected in 2003, Ontario's electricity system was in a mess. There was a deficit. The government of the day was importing \$1 billion a year in expensive imported electricity. The previous government had lost generation capacity. They lost the equivalent of Niagara Falls running dry. They lost transmission capacity, and prices were skyrocketing as a result of the Tories' failed privatization efforts. It was a dirty, polluting system.

The Harris government, which included the present Conservative leader in cabinet, increased dirty, coal-burning generation by 25%. That's 25% of total capacity.

When our government took over in 2003, it took over a system that was unreliable, that was dirty, with skyrocketing costs.

So our government implemented three priority policies in the electricity system: number one, it must be reliable; number two, it must be clean; and number three, it must be affordable—all of equal priority, Mr. Speaker.

Starting in 2003, our government began investing in our system, a system that had been allowed to degrade and didn't meet the energy needs of Ontario. Since 2003, this government has invested \$31 billion in the electricity system, including \$21 billion for new generation and \$11 billion of upgraded transmission infrastructure, including the recently completed 500-kilovolt Bruce to Milton line.

We have moved from a deficit to a surplus of electricity. In 2013, our surplus of electricity generated \$300 million of revenue to reduce system costs, and this year, we have totally eliminated dirty coal, the largest greenhouse emissions reduction project in North America. Mr. Speaker, that's the equivalent of taking seven million cars off of our roads in Ontario. The health impacts of getting off dirty coal are: \$4.4 billion in avoided health care and environmental costs; 668 fewer premature deaths per year; 928 fewer hospital admissions per year; 1,100 fewer emergency room visits per year; 300,000 fewer minor illnesses, such as headaches, coughing and other respiratory symptoms, per year; and almost total elimination of smog days in cities like Toronto and Ottawa.

If I could use a couple of personal examples, for 10 years or so, for a number of years, I was helping to coach my daughter's hockey team. They were nine, 10, 11, 12 years old as they were going through the system. Every single year, there were four, five or six children playing hockey with puffers, suffering from asthma. When I was mayor, I used to visit grade 5 classes, because grade 5 classes do a unit on government, and there was always a question-and-answer afterwards. When I was Minister of Infrastructure a couple of years ago, I again went into a grade 5 class. After my dissertation, I had a 10- or 11-year-old girl stand up and ask a question on air pollution. I didn't answer the question; I asked another question, having gone through the experience many times. I asked, "Out of a class of 18, how many in this class suffer from asthma and use puffers?" It was seven out of 18, Mr. Speaker, and the teacher put up his hand as well. That's what we're talking about by investing in clean energy.

A major contributor in eliminating dirty coal generation in Ontario is our Green Energy Act and our Renewable Energy Feed-In Tariff Program—all clean and emissions-free. Our Green Energy Act renewable energy

program not only successfully turned a dirty, polluting electricity system into a clean system but, in the process, we created a vibrant, world-leading renewable energy industry right here in Ontario. It created over 31,000 jobs, including manufacturing facilities in Guelph with Canadian Solar, in Toronto with Celestica, in Tillsonburg with Siemens and Samsung and now in London with Siemens and Samsung. It is expected that by the end of 2014, we will have added over 6,000 megawatts of clean, renewable energy to the grid in most parts of the province.

When the Green Energy Act was enacted, there was a lively debate about the domestic content provisions. Everyone was aware that there would likely be a WTO challenge and that the provision would possibly or likely be ruled to be in contravention of world trade laws and therefore would likely be temporary. That is in fact what happened. That is why today's legislation is required. But, in the meantime, Ontario's growing renewable energy sector has had the benefit of domestic content rules and therefore has created over 31,000 jobs. And I might add that the 255 FIT contracts still in completion, still yet to be completed, continue to carry the benefits of domestic content rules into the next two or three years. So we are getting, out of that provision, six to seven years of domestic content provisions, which have enabled us to build a strong renewable energy industry right here in Ontario.

Our ministry has been engaged with many renewable energy stakeholders, and we collectively believe together we can continue to foster a healthy and growing renewable and clean energy industry here in Ontario. Manufacturers like Samsung, Siemens and Canadian Solar have promising export initiatives. They're already starting to export. We meet with them regularly. We visit their sites. They're excited about this industry; they're investing in it, and they're creating jobs.

I said at the beginning that we had three equal priorities: reliable energy, clean energy and affordable energy. We made significant investments: \$31 billion to make our system reliable and clean. These investments have put predictable pressure on prices for about four or five years. So we have taken major steps to help our system to be affordable. We have taken steps to mitigate our energy-electricity costs. Our government modernized an electricity system that needed to be fixed to ensure Ontarians had reliable and clean power, and we've accomplished that. We are taking action to reduce overall electricity system costs and ensure electricity bills remain affordable for families and businesses.

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Moving forward our 2013 long-term energy plan, as I've just indicated, we have necessarily, almost on an emergency basis, had to invest \$31 billion to make the system reliable and clean. Moving forward, we have taken close to \$20 billion out of our projected cost base. We renegotiated the Samsung renewable energy contract and removed \$3.7 billion out of the next 20 years, deferring the construction of two nuclear reactors at Darlington generating station. That avoids \$15 billion of

investment. I must say that the opposition wants to continue investing in energy we don't need, and they will make costs skyrocket.

We introduced dispatching rules for wind generators, saving over \$200 million to ratepayers plus \$65 million in savings to the Ontario Power Authority. That means that wind, when they're generating—if they're generating electricity that's not needed, they don't get paid for it. That's a tremendous improvement over how wind started into the system.

The leaders of both opposition parties have confirmed that they would not lower electricity rates, nor would they freeze them. In fact, the PC Party, as I mentioned, would spend \$15 billion on new nuclear plants that we don't need, which would cause prices to skyrocket.

Currently, Ontario's residential and industrial electricity rates are and will remain competitive with similar jurisdictions in North America. Ontario's residential rates are forecast to rise by 2.8% annually over the next 20 years.

Mr. Speaker, the opposition will mention a very significant increase in prices that's in our long-term energy plan, which we disclosed as part of the 20-year program. They will refer to those years, but they will never refer to the other years which show an average increase of 2.8% for residential customers over that period of time. According to the National Energy Board, that's less than in most other large Canadian provinces. The National Energy Board keeps these records of 20-year projected costs: Alberta, 3.7%; BC, 3.0%; Manitoba, 3.2%; Quebec, 3.0%—incidentally, Quebec just raised their rates by 5.8% about two months ago—Saskatchewan, 3.3%; and, I repeat, Ontario, 2.8%.

Our industrial rates in northern Ontario are among the lowest in Canada and lower than 44 US state jurisdictions. Industrial rates in southern Ontario are lower than in Alberta, Michigan, New Jersey and California and in line with states like New York, Virginia and Tennessee.

We have a number of significant programs, not including conservation measures, by which people can significantly reduce their rates. We have significant programs to help reduce the cost of electricity for families and small businesses—programs the opposition, in fact, voted for. The Ontario Clean Energy Benefit helps families, small businesses and farms manage electricity prices by taking 10% off hydro bills.

Mr. Speaker, the next couple of items you will almost never hear, or rarely hear, the opposition members mention, even to their constituents, even though it's for the benefit of their constituents, because they voted against these provisions. That's the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit. It saves qualifying individuals up to \$963 per year off their energy bill, with a maximum of \$1,097 per year for qualifying seniors. I would like to see how many times the members of the opposition have reminded their constituents of those provisions, which they voted against.

We also have a number of programs to help reduce costs of electricity for industrial and commercial consum-

ers. As of 2013, the Industrial Electricity Incentive Program makes eligible companies qualify for electricity rates among the lowest in North America in exchange for creating new jobs and bringing new investment in the province. That saves up to 50%.

I'm going to look directly at the member from Renfrew-Pembroke, because I was at an event about three or four days ago, and there was a delegation there from the economic development arm of Renfrew-Pembroke. Mr. Speaker, they almost jumped over the table and gave me a hug. The reason why is that, several months ago, a sawmill paperboard maker applied under the IEI Program, and they were accepted into the program. They are going to reopen those facilities which have been closed for a couple of years. That's the benefit of the IEI Program.

The member from Barrie reminded me—I'm inviting you to the official announcement. I hope you will come, and I hope you will give us credit for starting those new businesses with our reduced industrial electricity prices.

The Industrial Conservation Initiative helps large consumers save on costs by incenting them to shift their energy consumption to off-peak hours. That will save up to 20%. Of course, as I mentioned, the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program reduces electricity prices for large northern industrial consumers by 25%.

Renewable energy is a very significant part of our electricity system. We now have 255 unfinished contracts. These are legal contracts that have been signed, awarding electricity proponents the right to create renewable energy in their designated sites.

The Leader of the Opposition has taken so much pride in introducing the Million Jobs Act. Embedded in that Million Jobs Act, Mr. Speaker—

Applause.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: What they're applauding is a provision in that act that would allow the Minister of Energy to cancel contracts which have already been awarded. That's 255 contracts that have a \$20-billion revenue stream associated with them. I just want to indicate the opinion that we have from third-party professionals. FIT contracts allow for termination only in cases where project developers do not meet their contractual obligations, and the OPA would be subject to legal action if it terminated FIT contracts for projects which have met their obligations. If they had the intention, by putting that in, to put a chill in the electricity sector in Ontario, they have been very, very successful, because there are now 255 companies who have invested significant funds in their contracts who are sitting there saying, "This is Russian roulette. Maybe I'm going to be the one that's going to get axed." You know what, Mr. Speaker? I'm sure that they have heard from the stakeholders as well.

I'll wrap up with those comments; I want to leave enough time for my colleague. Our domestic content measures for renewable energy have served our province well, and our renewable energy program, as laid out in the long-term energy plan, is extremely viable, with a strong future ahead of us, beneficial, creating jobs that they want to kill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: It's my pleasure to pick up where the Minister of Energy left off and to talk about the fact that one of the province's objectives in establishing the feed-in tariff program, which is the cornerstone of Ontario's Green Energy and Green Economy Act, passed in 2009, was to kick-start the development of a new clean energy manufacturing and service sector, something at which it has been very successful.

The Green Energy and Green Economy Act was created to expand Ontario's production of renewable energy, encourage energy conservation and promote the creation of clean energy green jobs. The goal of the act was to expand Ontario's renewable energy production and to create clean energy jobs in a number of ways: by creating a feed-in tariff program that establishes fixed rates for energy generated from renewable sources, such as solar photovoltaic, biogas, biomass, landfill gas, wind and solar power, and to establish minimum levels of Ontario labour and materials required to qualify for the program; by establishing a streamlined approvals process for small-scale renewable energy projects that meet regulatory requirements; by implementing a smart power grid to support the development of new renewable energy projects and to prepare Ontario for new technologies such as electric cars.

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Four years later, Ontario's energy sector is one of the economic engines that are driving our provincial economy, one of those engines that lifted us out of the global recession early and have made us the best-performing jurisdiction anywhere in North America.

Ontario's clean energy initiatives have attracted billions of dollars in new private sector investment, and they've contributed to the creation of more than 31,000 clean energy jobs across the province: knowledge-intensive, high-value jobs—more than 31,000 of them.

Today, Ontario boasts a strong renewable energy sector, with more than 30 manufacturing facilities currently producing materials for local wind and solar projects. Consider manufacturing facilities like Canadian Solar in Guelph. They're among the top five module producers globally. The company employs as many as 400 people, with a 220-megawatt module production capacity in Ontario. The whole world would like to have a plant like that. This assembly line is being used in solar photovoltaic projects around the world, including here in Ontario, with more than 30 megawatts installed.

Another example is Celestica, an international R&D and solar manufacturing firm that has its global headquarters right here in Toronto. Celestica has more than one million square feet of space and employs some 1,600 people in Ontario, 500 of whom perform cutting-edge research into renewable energy products to find, for example, innovative ways to produce more efficient solar panels and inverters. An inverter is a device that takes DC power and converts it to AC power, commonly used on the grid.

Speaker, it is the technical and management acumen of companies like these that brings the promise of renewable energy from the lab through financing to deployment and employment right here in Ontario. This has been good for Ontario.

Ontario's wind and solar manufacturing facilities are suppliers to global markets. Indeed, on my first trip to India, one of the things that the first minister of the state of Gujarat, Mr. Narendra Modi, told me point-blank—he said, “You people are recognized, in Ontario, as world leaders in solar and in wind production.” He said, “Get your companies over here. Just get them over here.”

Ontario will continue to expand the role of renewable energy in our supply mix as its cost comes down and the industry's capabilities go up. Don't forget, we've been in the renewable energy business a long time in Ontario, with hydroelectric power being the principal source of clean, green and renewable energy.

By 2025, some 20,000 megawatts of wind, solar, bioenergy and hydroelectric generating capacity will be online, representing about half of Ontario's installed generation capacity.

We have confidence in the resilience of the clean energy manufacturing sector in Ontario and that our clean energy investments will continue to be not merely a source of jobs for Ontario, not merely a source of careers for the young people in our colleges and universities, but a source of pride for all of our people, knowing that in North America, uniquely, we are now off dirty coal.

This province has more than 4,000 megawatts of wind and solar capacity currently under development, which will largely use locally manufactured equipment. Last year, Ontario committed to making 900 megawatts of new capacity available between 2013 and 2018 through the feed-in tariff and microFIT programs for projects up to 500 kilowatts. These projects are expected to create more than 6,000 jobs while producing enough electricity each and every year for more than 125,000 homes.

This new capacity will help Ontario maintain its position as a leading jurisdiction for renewables, maintain important clean energy jobs, and continue to introduce clean energy sources in the supply mix. Starting in 2014, this year, the feed-in tariff program would have an annual procurement target of 150 megawatts, with a 50-megawatt annual target for microFIT projects. This is one industry that, in the 21st century, has developed from a standing start in the province of Ontario, is a source of pride for our people, for our province and for our businesses, and it's one of the reasons that Ontario remains a winner in the North American business community.

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

Mr. John Yakubuski: I'm pleased to join the debate. I want to respond a little bit to the Minister of Energy's speech here earlier. He's very good at telling half the story. He talks about the money that Ontario is saving in the changes they've made to their long-term energy plan resulting from the fiasco that is the Green Energy Act. Speaker, their renewable energy plan will go down as

one of the most egregious economic disasters in Ontario's history. He talks about saving \$20 billion from where it would have been. That should give you some idea of how bad a deal they were prepared to make in the first place, with people like Samsung—large, multinational, very, very rich corporations. He talks about choosing wind over nuclear. He talks about reliability. How can you classify any kind of generation that runs at less than 30% capacity as being reliable, when our nuclear fleet is among the most reliable in the world? Some of the Darlington units have run at 99% in the last couple of years. That's how reliable our nuclear fleet is. So you're going to trade that in for something that is less than 30% reliable, because we don't control the wind?

The money that has been invested—I shouldn't say invested, but wasted—on the Green Energy Act—that is one of the reasons they have this IEI Program, to give some cherry-picked companies a break on electricity, because they've got such an excess, because they allow all this excess energy into the grid, because they've overpaid for it and they've contractually agreed to take it into the grid. So when Ontario doesn't need the energy, it was giving it away to the United States, or Quebec, or even paying them to take it. Well, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that maybe it's a better idea to give it to some of the companies that can actually use it here to create jobs, and stop giving it away. It's not hard to figure out. But I want the Minister of Energy to tell the whole story the next time—

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm really happy to be able to have the opportunity to stand up in this House and speak about hydro rates, and the cost that it has on what I know—small businesses in my riding, and how it's affecting them. The cost of global adjustments—I didn't hear anything in the minister's speech about global adjustments and what those costs are doing to our small businesses and our businesses in our ridings and to our economy. How many manufacturing jobs have we lost in this province because of the cost of hydro? I didn't hear any of that in the minister's speech. But he did talk about the fact that we on this side of the House didn't talk about lowering rates or freezing rates. Well, quite frankly, we New Democrats put forward a solution—a small solution it may be—to take HST off hydro for families, so that they could afford it just that little bit more.

But again, I'd love to hear more about the global adjustment. I would like to know his view on the global adjustment. I'll give you an example. For a small business in my riding, his electricity use is approximately \$1,000. By the time he has the global adjustment, all the delivery charges and everything else, his bill is over \$10,000. That's a huge increase. These are the kinds of things that we need to talk about. These are the kinds of things that are going to make a difference for people in all of our ridings across this province, and make sure that we have viable jobs in manufacturing to keep them here, because hydro rates are definitely a sure factor driving those jobs out of our province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm delighted to take a few minutes just to share a few thoughts with the members and the public that are watching. Having a viable, realistic and visionary plan for energy takes courage. A number of years ago, we set out with a long-term energy plan. The current minister has put together a long-term energy plan that levels with the people of Ontario and talks about the challenges of having a clean, reliable, modern energy system. It doesn't happen easily. It takes tough positions.

0930

If you want to have a clean energy system, if you want cleaner air—unlike the party opposite, who have done everything they can to put barriers in our way in getting to that place—then it does take investments. If you want a reliable system, you have to invest in infrastructure, unlike the party opposite when they were in power. They just put their heads in the sand and let our energy system go down the tubes. That's why we've had to make significant investments.

Our long-term energy plan ensures that we never go back to the Tory days, where we had to rely on dirty sources of energy, like coal, to provide power to our people and our businesses. We're not going to go back to the Tory days, where we completely ignore the need to invest in transmission.

This legislation before us here today that the minister has introduced is important. There are at least 31,000 jobs in the clean energy sector that would not exist today if this government had not had the courage and the wisdom to move forward and make the decisions needed to build a clean energy economy in this province.

The people on the other side talk about creating jobs. Their policies would kill jobs. Some 31,000 jobs today in this province in the clean energy sector would not exist if the Leader of the Opposition had his way, Mr. Speaker. It's something we can be proud of, something we are proud of, and I thank the minister for bringing this legislation forward.

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

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's always a pleasure to stand here, but some mornings you just have to shake your head as to what actually is being said here. I hope the viewers back home are paying close attention to what this minister is saying about renewable—supposedly renewable, supposedly affordable—energy.

Let's get the facts straight, Mr. Speaker. What this government has done is they've actually been an invasive species themselves when it comes to dictating to municipalities throughout the province for these industrial wind turbines to be placed and located here, pitting neighbour against neighbour. Let's face it: The minister knows himself, if he reads the studies and is up on the file, that wind is only 18% reliable, so it's not reliable. If you look at the Auditor General's report on how much the Green Energy

Act cost this province last year, it's over \$1 billion. That's not affordable.

So, they talk about dirty coal. They talk about the bad old days of Mike Harris and the Tory government. Well, why there's not as much pollution per se is because we have lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs in this province under this Liberal government in the last decade. They're proud to say, "We've lost 300,000 jobs, but we've created 31,000 jobs." That's what I refer to as Liberalnomics; it doesn't add up.

So I would say, in closing, that the Green Energy Act is not reliable, it's not affordable, and this Liberal government is not electable.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have to acknowledge the contributions of my colleagues from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and Hamilton Mountain, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, and the member for Northumberland–Quinte West.

Speaker, one cannot miss the irony of listening to the Conservative Party say that they would throw out 50% of Ontario's generation capacity plan to be from renewable energy and listen to the NDP say they would throw out 50% of Ontario's generation capacity coming from the refurbishment of our world-class Candu nuclear reactors. Both parties taken together would take all of our generation capacity and just toss it. I'm not sure how they plan to generate electricity for the province of Ontario. I can say to people watching, however, that only this government has a balanced, decentralized, diversified plan to take power generation and do with power generation exactly what has happened with computing power in our lifetime: It went from large, centralized mainframes to many diversified, decentralized servers and routers. That's the way the electricity grid is going everywhere in the world.

We don't need to throw out half of our generation capacity that's designed to be renewable. We don't need to throw away half of our generation capacity which is designed to be our baseload nuclear generating capacity. Both parties will tell you about the electricity they won't generate, but only this government is going to tell you about how they're going to bring to Ontario a world-class, reliable, economic, dynamic electricity generation and transmission system. That, Speaker, is the job that Ontarians sent us here to do.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's my pleasure to join the debate today on Bill 153 on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario Progressive Conservative caucus. This piece of legislation is actually very serious, with far-reaching implications if it is not done properly, which is probably my biggest criticism here today.

Speaker, I think what I'll do in my time is lay my speech out this way: what this legislation is and how it became; I'll talk about the problems in Ontario today with respect to our electricity system, our hydroelectric

system and the prices people are paying; and then I'd like to talk about some of the solutions that we in the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party believe we could bring forward when we are elected to govern this province.

As you're aware, Speaker, in 2009, when my colleague and seatmate was our energy critic before I, one of the largest, most omnibus pieces of legislation put forward in this assembly was the Green Energy Act. At the time, we took, I thought, a very principled stand, which has guided us in the last half of a decade in opposing this and understanding what the implications would be with respect to wind and solar power generation in Ontario, what that meant to our supply mix but, as importantly, what it would mean to the price of hydro and our electricity system here in the province of Ontario. At the time, Speaker, you will likely recall that we talked about the Green Energy and Green Economy Act costing Ontario residents who pay for their power about 50% more. That's now coming to fruition—not my numbers; it's their numbers.

The long-term energy plan put forward by the Liberals in the last year has said that they will increase our hydro bills by about 50%. People can't afford that anymore. We stood here and we said that. We know, for example, that we raised the issue of stripping locally based decision-making. We identified very early on that that would be a key and significant problem for municipalities across Ontario. Now we have over 70 municipalities in rural Ontario who have signed resolutions suggesting and stating that they are not willing hosts. They don't want wind and solar farms or turbine developments in their communities. They want a say. You can understand, at the time we're talking about, municipalities had the right to have their say on shopping centres in their community; they were able to have a say on whether a gas station was in their community. They were able to have a say on virtually any development in their community, with the sole exception of whether or not wind or solar power energy were going to be developed in their community. They were stripped away from that, and that has caused widespread anger and disdain in rural Ontario against this current government. We warned them; we said that would happen. We asked them to remove that clause in the existing act, but they chose not to do it. We said it would cost jobs.

Now, at the time—they'll talk about 31,000 jobs, which means probably 3,000 jobs—they promised in this assembly 50,000 jobs. You want to know what? I remember George Smitherman standing directly across from where I stand today, and in his place he demanded support for this because it would create this mythical 50,000 jobs. They have never materialized. In fact, our previous Auditor General here in the province of Ontario, Jim McCarter, did an assessment of the Green Energy Act, and do you know what he said? He said for every job created by the Green Energy Act, four more are lost because of the extent of the subsidies and what it has done to drive up the price of power in our province. That was a significant concern put forward by the Ontario Pro-

gressive Conservatives and my seatmate, John Yakabuski from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, and all of those predictions that we had at the time have come true.

0940

We have stood here in the assembly on two other issues, notably, placing a moratorium on wind turbine developments until proper health effects and environmental effects have been studied. This government put forward a plan without any financial or economic assessment, and they also put forward a plan without any health or environmental impact assessments. What we know today is, whether it is a community that is dealing with turtles that may be almost extinct or birds that are losing their migratory patterns because of these wind turbines—we also know, for example, that there is a group called Mothers Against Wind Turbines because they are concerned about their children living too close to the setbacks, and we talked about those issues as well. At the time, I remember going through the hearings in Ottawa, when committees actually used to travel here in this assembly, and I remember those from NavCan and other airports were concerned about this as well.

So there's a whole set of circumstances that needed to have been studied before we proceeded with this, and we're now just finding out that that hasn't been done. There are impacts, and that's why the Waterloo Institute for Sustainable Energy is studying this, as well as Health Canada. They are now studying this, because they are very concerned with the impacts. Again, we at the time had said those issues needed to be developed.

Those are, I believe, some very significant impacts and arguments that have been made against the Green Energy Act. They were very well thought out at the time. I credit my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and I also credit my colleague from Newmarket–Aurora, who took a special interest in it as well. At the time, we stated these very serious objections, we stated these very serious concerns and we talked about the implications.

Now today, I stand before you, and as I listen to the Minister of Energy, we find out that since 2010, a year after the Green Energy Act was first introduced, they have known that there would have been challenges through the World Trade Organization because of domestic content laws and the protection of contents within the Green Energy Act. They have known since 2010 that they were breaking international law. Now we are faced with a compliance deadline of March 24 and we are not sitting next week. There is a very real possibility that they have known for four years that they were breaking the law, yet are only now, at the eleventh-and-a-half hour, trying to fix the problem and fix it with this piece of legislation.

It's two things. I'm not quite sure we'll actually meet compliance, and secondly, I think I can make the case and lay it out for you why we should actually be rescinding the Green Energy Act rather than just putting forward Bill 153 and amending it simply by removing one clause in the Electricity Act, 1998.

Right now, the minister is saying that we should remove section 25.35 of the Electricity Act which permits the minister to direct the OPA to develop a feed-in tariff program. The bill repeals section 23.353 of the act, which requires the minister to issue and the OPA to follow directions that set out the goals relating to domestic content to be achieved during the period to be covered by the program. The government has known that they have violated the results of the Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations for four years.

I'm going to read this section. Folks like to talk, and I notice that the Liberal government chose instead to attack our political party and tell half of the story. Let me tell you a little bit about international trade law. When we begin to mess with international trade law, there are severe repercussions elsewhere in our economy for that, because that allows those complainant countries to retaliate against us and our goods and products. So this is important. I've had several briefings with international trade lawyers because of the severity of this situation.

The issue here is "Review by the Council for Trade in Goods." First, I'll go to "Consultation and Dispute Settlement":

"The provisions of articles XXII and XXIII of GATT 1994, as elaborated and applied by the dispute settlement understanding, shall apply to consultations and the settlement of disputes under this agreement.

"Review by the Council for Trade in Goods

"Not later than five years after the date of entry into force of the WTO agreement, the Council for Trade in Goods shall review the operation of this agreement and, as appropriate, propose to the ministerial conference amendments to its text. In the course of this review, the Council for Trade in Goods shall consider whether the agreement should be complemented with provisions on investment policy and competition policy.

"Illustrative list:

"(1) TRIMs that are consistent with the obligation of national treatment provided for in paragraph 4 of the article III of GATT 1994 include those which are mandatory or enforceable under domestic law or under administrative rulings, or compliance with which is necessary to obtain an advantage and which require:

"(a) the purchase or use by an enterprise of products of domestic origin or from a domestic source, whether specified in terms of particular products, in terms of volume or value of products, or in terms of a proportion of volume or value of its local production; or

"(b) that an enterprise's purchases or use of imported products be limited to an amount related to the volume or value of local products that it exports."

This is right out of the result of the Uruguay round of multilateral trade negotiations. It effectively says you cannot do what the Liberal government did in 2009 in the Green Energy Act. It was the template for how they broke international law, and not long after they put forward the Green Energy Act, Japan and the European Union, two of our largest trading partners, decided to take Canada not Ontario—because this is the first time in

Canadian history a provincial government's policy has broken international law. They appealed against Canada and had to go through arbitration. This is lengthy. It is a serious matter, and they were either too incompetent to understand, or knowingly broke the law. Neither is a flattering picture of a government of Canada's largest province.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They admitted today they knowingly went against it.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My colleagues remind me, once again, that this government admitted today that they knowingly broke the law. They're not happy or satisfied with having one OPP investigation into them on the gas plants and another OPP investigation into them on the Ornge scandal. They now have become international law breakers, and they knowingly broke the law. That's why we have this bill here before us.

So let's go back a little bit, because it was in May 2012 that the WTO ruled that Canada broke international law and broke the trade agreement. They knew they were going to break it. The WTO, in May 2010, adjudicated and ruled that they broke the law—those complaints, as I've stated, came from the European Union and Japan—that our high subsidies for wind and solar projects with domestic content, those protectionist policies broke the law. That's why we have this bill. This is their attempt at compliance on an issue that they have known about since 2010. I cannot state that enough: They knowingly broke the law.

It removes a section from the Electricity Act dealing with domestic content of the FIT program. However, given this legislative timeline and the date that we have for compliance, the Liberals know we have a very slim chance of meeting the compliance deadline by March 24, because they have dragged their feet. I believe it is in order to embarrass the federal government. But at what cost? I ask you, at what cost, Speaker?

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: As the members opposite like to chirp, here are the real costs: If we end up in a trade war, there could be retaliatory measures by Japan and by the European Union. What could they retaliate against? Well, they could retaliate against our automotive industry here in the province of Ontario, which is struggling. What else could they retaliate against? Perhaps our Ontario beef; they could decide to make a retaliatory effort against that.

I look at my colleague from Oxford, who is our agriculture critic; I see my colleague from Perth–Wellington, and I see my colleague from Northumberland–Quinte West. They understand our rural agricultural community. Not only are they dealing with these massive subsidies and the invasion of these wind turbines into their community, they are concerned that if this bill does not pass in time by this government and they do not meet compliance, we will see retaliatory measures on their constituents who are beef farmers. We could also see retaliatory measures against Niagara wine.

This is a reality, and it is the first time in Canadian history that a provincial law has put the Canadian

government into an international situation such as this—an international situation, by the way, which could lead to a massive trade war in retaliation against products that we make right here in Ontario.

What are the other challenges with this bill? Well, I can tell you what they are, Speaker.

0950

First of all, in the briefing I had with the minister's office, the minister's office says to us, "This won't be retroactive. It's any wind turbine development moving forward." The trade lawyers that I consulted with—and I did have several briefings—told me, "Well, that's impossible. We've never, ever heard that, that it's not retroactive."

So let's just be very clear: Any wind turbine that's erected in the province of Ontario today, if it needs to be repaired and the domestic content laws are changed, they can buy that replacement part anywhere in the world, meaning they're probably going to buy it cheaper outside of Ontario than they would here.

It also means people like Samsung and others, who are supposedly building and manufacturing here, are actually going to go somewhere where it's cheaper to make these goods. It means the jobs that these people have suggested they've acquired or created are actually going to leave anyhow. It also means we don't know necessarily if we are going to meet compliance, because they are not rolling these back.

The third thing which I find is most interesting is that the minister here today has suggested that they have made a \$22-billion investment into 1.1% of our energy supply. They could end up ripping up their own contracts. I mean, it's all very convenient for them to pontificate in this assembly that everything bad in the world is Tim Hudak's and Lisa MacLeod's and John Yakabuski's fault, but we all know, when you get beyond the talking points, when you consult with the trade lawyers across this country, the real concern here is threefold. They don't meet compliance: We're in an international trade war. They meet compliance—there are no more domestic provisions—the jobs that they pretend they've created leave. The third issue is, how do we know we are not up for a NAFTA chapter 11 suit following through with this?

These are all very real concerns, and I am very concerned, as an elected member of this assembly and as the energy critic for the official opposition, that that hasn't been thought out by these folks.

Now, I had the opportunity to speak at length, not only with officials from the minister's office; I had an opportunity to speak with trade lawyers here in Toronto from major firms. I also had the opportunity to speak with the Department of Foreign Affairs federally, the department of international trade, and, of course, the Minister of Justice's office, who supplies the lawyers for all of these. Again, they were hoping that this government would actually in good faith comply with the WTO ruling. But it is very clear to me that if they do not comply in an unprecedented way, there's going to have to be federal

intervention in order for us to comply. I think that's a very clear issue that the minister has rejected, it is one that he has ignored and it is one perhaps he just chose not to explore. But, again, it speaks to the competency and the motivation of a government that is so rigid in its ideology that it would rather plunge Canada into an international trade war than actually work in a sophisticated manner in order to alleviate the challenges.

I want to go back. Let's talk a little bit more about the Green Energy Act. I checked the IESO today, the independent electricity supply organization. They tell me that our nuclear capacity today is at 51.3%. Hydro is 24.1% of our capacity. Gas is 22.2%. Hold your hats, folks. Hold your hats, because for \$22 billion, this Liberal government can get you 1.1% capacity of wind and solar in the province of Ontario. They are telling us that they're going to stand here for \$22 billion so that we have 1.1% of our capacity on our grid today.

They have wasted our money. They could put us into a trade war. They have cost us jobs. They are forcing seniors out of their homes because they can't afford their heat and hydro. That is the Green Energy Act. That is why we're here today. That is the big problem we have.

So we have a government that has completely eroded the confidence of the people in this province in its ability to manage the electricity system, and all they can do is stand here with platitudes, rhetoric and anger about a decade ago. I have news for them, Speaker: For the last decade, they've been in power. For the last decade, they've doubled the deficit. For the last decade, they've doubled the debt. For the last decade, our taxes have gone up. For the last decade, we have seen our hydro increase to the point that many in Ontario who are on a fixed income—and our seniors are seeing that their old age security cheque is less than their hydro bill.

Their solution to all that ails the electricity system in Ontario is the removal of one section in the Electricity Act of 1998. It's a pretty sad state of affairs when a government, elected by the people for the people, can so quickly abandon those people.

Bill 153 has little chance of meeting the compliance deadline because this Liberal government would rather pick a fight with Stephen Harper than do their job. This Liberal government chose a Green Energy Act that cost Ontario dearly because of a rigid ideology. This Liberal government would stand here and blame everything on Tim Hudak and the Ontario Progressive Conservatives rather than take responsibility for themselves, because they know they have led us astray.

I want to talk about dirty coal for a second, because I think I've heard a lot of rhetoric from the member opposite. I remember running on platforms where we would end coal, but not only did we run on a platform to end coal, we ran on a record. We were the first party in Ontario to start decommissioning coal-fired plants. That's an inconvenient truth by a government that doesn't want to tell the whole story. But I know Elizabeth Witmer. He is no Elizabeth Witmer. I can tell you something: When she sat here in this assembly, she was the first to move us

in that direction. They don't want to tell the whole story because it doesn't fit the narrative that they want to talk about.

But if they want to talk about children's health, I'll talk about a child's health. I'll talk about Madi Vanstone, who every day we've brought up in the assembly here. I can't help but think that the Ontario that I live in, the Ontario that I'm raising my daughter in, is spending \$22 billion for 1% of energy to make Liberal friends rich when little girls in this province who need life-saving drugs can't get them. And why can't she get them? Because this Premier said it costs too much. She said that it costs too much; we couldn't afford it. We could afford to make Mike Crawley a rich man, we can afford to make NextEra a rich company and we can ensure that Samsung basically has a seat at the cabinet table here, but apparently our government cannot and will not choose to support a child who needs help. That's the reality that we're in in Ontario today. People can't understand it. It was well documented, I thought, by Christina Blizzard. I thought she laid out the case on that quite clearly, and I thought that she pointed out what most people in Ontario are saying.

You look at the cost of power now—and I had the opportunity to speak to the supply motion, I guess it was a week ago. I talked about the opportunity I had to visit many of my colleagues' ridings and talk to many people who are in their communities, and we talked about the high cost of energy and how that is hurting the people of this province and hurting manufacturers, and we talked about what our plan would be.

We've written a number of white papers. Some of them were just, effectively, ideas that we put forward that we'll run on; others were ideas for discussion that we've talked about. But, very clearly, people are looking for a rational solution to the mismanagement by the government.

We've put forward a number of, I think, very thoughtful ideas and very sensible ideas to review not only the existing Green Energy Act—I think we've been very clear that we would repeal it—but we also talked about looking at some of the entities that we have in Ontario, like the OPG and Hydro One, monetizing them to bring more accountability. We know that there are some very serious and straightforward concerns there. We know, for example, that we're exporting about \$1 billion worth of power.

I get a kick out of it. I see that the leader of the third party is saying that she's going to end this \$1 billion worth of subsidies. Where the heck does she think the subsidies are coming from? We're overproducing power because we've got this wind and solar program that she has supported. She wants to get rid of the export, but what are we going to do with the power? Is she going to build storage we can't afford? Is she going to subsidize that? She is so incoherent it's not funny. In fact, she actually puts silliness in front of stupidity, because if I would consider these guys to be the latter, they would certainly be the former, and I can tell you, Speaker, that

is just not going to go over very well with the people of the province. I think they have seen and they have heard enough.

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I'd like to read into the record a couple things. I'm not sure when you're going to cut me off. I do know we're close to 10 o'clock, so if I'm going to have about 10 more minutes, that's great. But I wanted to talk about the Ottawa Council of Business Improvement Areas, and perhaps the minister would like to respond at some point to this organization that wrote him a letter on December 9—a very real organization that impacts his constituents as well as mine. I'm going to read into the record just some excerpts of their concerns that they put forward in the letter, but they also took the time to meet with Tim Hudak and myself in Ottawa. This is what they say:

"It should be stated that the OCOBIA is a volunteer organization representing 18 business improvement areas across urban, suburban and rural Ottawa that account for nearly \$4.5 billion commercial, office, shopping centres and industrial property assessment. The businesses which our BIAs represent are not exclusively retailers but also include professional and personal services such as health clinics and Legions."

They talk about small business in Ontario, and then they say this:

"I'm sure you would agree that it is unfair to those 97% of taxpaying operators that they should ever need to make the decision whether to close their doors permanently, lay off employees or pay their Ontario hydro bill. We are asking you, please do not work against Ontario small businesses.... Our government should be supporting our businesses, not aiding in their demise.... We urge you to please work on the side of Ottawa retailers, on the side of job creators and on the side of Ottawa employees and reconsider your government's crippling hydro increases."

AMPCO, the Association of Major Power Consumers of Ontario, I'm going to quote them:

"AMPCO's latest benchmarking analysis compares Ontario's industrial rates with those in other provinces in Canada as well as selected US markets. Our analysis shows that Ontario has the highest industrial rates in North America. Ontario not only has the highest delivered rates of all these jurisdictions; the disparity in rates also is growing."

The Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association says that in Ontario, we are at some points 129% higher than some US jurisdictions.

Going back to AMPCO:

"Industrial customers in Ontario face the highest delivered cost of power among the provinces compared.... The cost of power ... for large and small industrial customers remains significantly higher than comparable rates in US markets.

"AMPCO estimated the cost of power for a typical industrial customer in US markets: New York, New England (including 6 states), the Midwest (including 15 states), markets served by the PJM System Operator ... and the Electric Reliability Council of Texas....

“The highest delivered cost of power in the US markets selected ... was \$20 lower per MWh than the comparable rate for an industrial customer in Ontario.”

So the highest is still \$20 a megawatt lower than it is in our province. This is troubling. It validates all of those concerns that we have had in the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party with respect to high energy rates and the global adjustment and what the cost of power is doing to our manufacturers and our power consumers, but it also speaks to why the Green Energy Act needs to be abolished. And when I get back to Bill 153, I think, well, that’s fine and good if you sort of want to maybe, whatever, some way down the road, think about compliance. Well, I guess that’s your choice. But if you want to show the world that you’re serious about getting hydro rates under control, that you’re serious about meeting your international trade obligations, that you’re serious about bringing back the jobs, then you will get rid of the Green Energy Act in its entirety.

This is a province that cannot continue to afford this reckless spending. I go back to that \$22 billion—\$22 billion for 1.1% of power. I couldn’t think of a bigger waste of money. That’s 20 cancelled gas plants. You know what the minister said? I should send—can I have a page, please? The Minister of Energy told us that the cancelled gas plants were just a cup of coffee. I’ll send this over. He could win a free cup of coffee a year from Tim Hortons, because that’s what the province of Ontario wants to tell him. They’re tired of these silly games by this Liberal government. They’re tired of the mismanagement.

You think about this: He has just acknowledged in this House that to create 1.1% of power is \$22 billion. They had to acknowledge, albeit it was the Auditor General who forced them, that it was \$1.1 billion for them to save five seats. With that amount of waste and that amount of mismanagement, we could not only eradicate our deficit, but we could make significant investments into our communities in health care and education, and we would still have power that we wouldn’t have to export. A novel idea, Speaker, but that is the reality; it is the truth, and it is something that we have said consistently—and the only party to do so since 2009.

That’s why we stand here day in and day out. We stand for the people in Strathroy and Stratford. We talk to the people in Cobourg, the people in Oxford and the people in Barry’s Bay. We talk about the people who are opposing these high subsidies and who are opposing these invasions on their land. We talk to them. We ask them to stay in Ontario and make sure that they continue to support us so that we can change this.

I see my colleague from Leeds–Grenville is here. I had a great meeting, I think it was before Christmas, with some manufacturers in his riding. They handed me a sheet, not unlike this one, that showed 10 Fortune 500 companies that left Brockville in the last decade—major employers in Brockville. They left, and why? They said: the high cost of hydro. They then showed me another sheet that came from the neighbouring community across

the St. Lawrence, which is an American state in upstate New York. They were telling Ontario businesses to relocate because they could guarantee cheaper power.

My colleague comes here every day, and he stands and defends the people of Leeds and Grenville. He defends those businesses—small, medium and, in this case, very large. He knows the number one issue for them staying and creating and maintaining the jobs in Ontario today is the high cost of energy, and he has fought for them. I couldn’t tell you how much of an impact that had, other than I can bring it to the floor of this assembly. That is the real challenge with their bill, with what’s happening.

My colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry is not, at the moment, in the chamber, but I want to talk about going into his riding. We met with a local mayor of Long Sault. They had a round table. The mayor’s mother was there, and she was beside herself—a senior. She was the one who first told me, “I’m getting an OAS cheque, and it is not covering my hydro bill. It is higher.” When you sit there, their number one issue—and they equate the high cost of hydro at Hydro One and they equate this Green Energy Act as the cause of that skyrocketing bill.

1010

These aren’t people who have major policy analysts employed for them. They’re senior citizens. They’re sitting there, opening up their bill from Hydro One that’s higher than it has ever been—in some cases, 600 bucks, 900 bucks, 1,200 bucks. They don’t need a high-priced analyst from the University of Toronto to sit there and review the bill and tell them where the increase is coming from. They can tell, when they see the wind turbine development or the solar panel farm crop up, that somebody is paying them exorbitant fees in order for them to build these monstrosities. Those seniors are subsidizing it. The Ontario government is not subsidizing it. The Ontario government is only as good as the people who pay in to the government, and it’s only as wealthy as the amount of people who are able to pay in to the government. When those folks who have no extra money can continue to subsidize, that’s who they’re hurting.

I’ve talked a little bit about health care, and I’ve talked a little bit about seniors, and I’ve talked about the impact on small business. It’s only going to get worse if we do not comply with World Trade Organization laws. If we do not comply, the high hydro rates, the job losses, the health and scientific and environmental effects, the arrogance which our small rural communities are being challenged with—it’s all going to get worse, because they will have put us in a trade war. There will be real concerns for those communities who build cars, who farm beef, who grow wine.

Let me be abundantly clear, Speaker: This is a government who is too concerned with its own ideology, and too concerned with its buddies that they could make a little bit more rich, that they had no concern whatsoever about the people paying the bill; that they have no concern whatsoever of the broader implications in an international trade war that they have now thrust us into. They

don't care, Speaker. They didn't do their job at the beginning. They're not doing their job now, they didn't do their job then, and everybody in Ontario is paying for it.

You know what? They cling to the hope that saint Kathleen is going to actually win a by-election or, possibly, somehow miraculously eke out an election win so they can come back here and subsidize more things and then send jobs elsewhere.

I would say right now that my friend Steve Clark is probably saying that the business person of the year in Massena is Kathleen Wynne. In Massena, New York, she is probably business person of the year. I can tell you, having sat down with the people in Brockville, that is the truth.

I can tell you right now that my friend Bob Bailey, from Sarnia, could probably tell you that she's also, in Detroit, the business person of the year, because he's seeing businesses in his community leaving and going across the border.

I can tell you that our new friend Wayne Gates, from Niagara, probably is going to tell us that she's business person of the year over in Buffalo too, just like Bob Rae was, back in the 1990s, sending the jobs south.

People in Ontario, job creators in Ontario, manufacturers in Ontario, can't afford this expensive green energy experiment. In fact, it has failed in so many ways, it's amazing that they're still clinging to it on life support. I mean, think about it.

I'm going to close on this, but it's going to take me until you shut me down, Speaker, to finish. I'm going to close on this.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'm going to close on this—for the third time. We said that the Green Energy Act would increase hydro rates by 50%, in 2009, and it has. We said that stripping away locally based decision-making from municipalities would cause major disruptions in rural Ontario, and it has. Seventy-two communities have signed Not a Willing Host.

We said there would be health and environmental impacts that need to be studied. They didn't do it. Now the federal government has to do it, and a university in Ontario has to do it. We said it. We said it. That's what's happening.

We said that this job-killing policy would cost us jobs. The Auditor General has said that for every job these guys pretend to create, we lose four more. During their tenure, we lost 330,000 manufacturing jobs and—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order, the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —unanimous consent to let her continue debating.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'm sorry; I can't accept your point of order.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to welcome today to the Legislature Ducks Unlimited Canada, who are here on a lobby day. Many of them are over here in the audience in the members' gallery. They are celebrating their 75th anniversary and they have a reception here today both at 12:30 in room 230 and tonight from 4:30 until 7 o'clock in the legislative dining room. I hope everyone can come out and visit and listen to the issues and the concerns that are faced by this great conservation organization we have here in Ontario and Canada. Welcome to Queen's Park, everyone.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's my pleasure to introduce a good friend of mine from my old CBC days, a constituent of Mr. Holyday's in Etobicoke–Lakeshore. Leroy Siemon is here this morning to see what goes on in question period.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, on behalf of the member for Peterborough, I'm pleased to introduce not merely our existing page captain, Nik Skilton, but his mother, Mary Anna Zakula, who will be in the public gallery this morning. I welcome them to the Legislature.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I just want to welcome to Queen's Park a very good friend of mine, Mr. Paul Norris from the Ontario Waterpower Association.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Merci, monsieur—Nickel Belt?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's what I said.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Okay, merci.

Ça me fait extrêmement plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue à tous les étudiants qui sont ici pour le Parlement jeunesse francophone. Du Conseil scolaire catholique du Nouvel-Ontario, Collège Notre-Dame, on a Benjamin Doudard et Chad Savard, et de l'École secondaire catholique Champlain, on a Sylvie Rachelle Bigras. C'est leur première visite à Queen's Park. J'espère que vous allez leur souhaiter la bienvenue, et on invite tout le monde à la réception ce soir pour le Parlement jeunesse francophone.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Good morning, Speaker. On behalf of the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment, I'd like to welcome Nadia Fordham here from Etobicoke. I'm not sure if she's in the gallery yet, but welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure this morning to welcome to Queen's Park Garry and Janice Jordan, constituents of mine from Sarnia–Lambton, from the village of Wyoming. Welcome.

M. Gilles Bisson: Pour ne pas être en conflit avec la députée de Nickel Belt, j'aimerais dire bonjour aux élèves qui sont ici de Hearst, de Kap et de Timmins pour le parlement des jeunes. Puis on regarde avec anticipation de les rencontrer un peu plus tard.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome to Queen's Park Chris Drummond, who is a teacher at a great Ottawa Centre high school called Nepean High School. He's part of the Ducks Unlimited delegation today.

Mr. Todd Smith: On behalf of our member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, I'd like to welcome the family of page captain Samer El-Galmady: mother Hadir Ashry and father Ahmed El-Galmady, both in the Legislature this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to welcome my guests who are sitting in the east gallery. They are from my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt and they are students and their teacher from Sir John A. Macdonald, students Nagma Mathur and Michelle Tom, and their teacher, Matthew Sheehan. They are here also participating in the Ducks Unlimited "show and tell" this afternoon. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Michael Prue: I would like to introduce on behalf of Anne Lafaury, our page, her mother, Fionnuala Donaghy, and her grandmother Maureen Donaghy. They will be in the members' gallery this morning.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I'd like to welcome anyone here this morning who has had the good fortune to receive the crucifix on their forehead with holy ashes to commence the holy season of Lent today.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I'm very pleased to welcome to the Legislature today the very hard-working members of the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat liaison committee, and the various organizations and representatives which are about to make their way into the House now from the National Association of Federal Retirees, the Older Women's Network organization, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, the united seniors council of Ontario, the Councils on Aging Network of Ontario, Ontario Society of Senior Citizens' Organizations, Quarter Century Club, la Fédération des aînés et des retraités francophones de l'Ontario and the Multicultural Council for Ontario Seniors. I'd like to welcome all of them here today, and I hope they have a wonderful time.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Please join me in welcoming today the parents of Sarah Forbes, a page here in our Legislative Assembly. With us today is Robin Forbes, her mother; Chris Forbes, her father; and her young brother Liam is here as well. Thank you guys for being here today.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'd like to welcome students from Perth Avenue public school to the Legislature today.

UKRAINIAN FLAG

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings on a point of order.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Given the rising tensions in eastern Europe—and I know that all three parties in this Legislature have spoken in support of the people of Ukraine and the tensions that are rising there, the world focusing on the invasion of Ukraine—I would ask that this Legislature seek unanimous consent to fly the Ukrainian flag on the courtesy pole for one week.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings has requested permission for unanimous consent to fly the Ukrainian—before I get to

that, I want to entertain, on the same point of order, the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. We're certainly, on this side of the House, supportive of this. Members may know that we've reached out and are in the process of actually drafting a letter to you, which I understand is another way to do that, which would express the interest of all parties to go forward—just so members are aware of that. But obviously, the member is bringing that forward, and we're very supportive.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): House leader of the third party and member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to say we wholeheartedly support that, in order to give some solidarity to those people who are struggling to have the democracy that we have in this country. Whatever way we do it that makes the most sense is what we would support as New Democrats.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask for your indulgence to provide you with feedback and seek your direction. Since it's a country flag and the process that we already used is doable, it only requires a letter from the House leaders to proceed. Unanimous consent is not necessary; it's not required.

However, I do need more specific information inside of that unanimous consent if I'm getting a sense that the House is willing to move in that direction immediately, or we could defer the unanimous consent to allow the House leaders to complete the letter and send it through.

I'm going to be at the will of the House to allow me to do that. I would ask the member to decide how he wants to proceed. If he does, then we will. If he doesn't, we'll allow the House leaders to complete that task, and it doesn't require unanimous consent. So if the member would like to comment, I'll defer back to him.

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Mr. Todd Smith: I would ask that the question be put and that we seek unanimous consent to fly the flag of Ukraine for one week on the courtesy flagpole.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Can you be more specific? Can you give me the date? The date in which the one week—

Mr. Todd Smith: Okay. Beginning today until the Legislature resumes sitting.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't want to get picky, but you have to understand that we need that kind of clarity. So if it's to resume, it means we resume tomorrow.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Seven days starting today. I'm trying to be helpful but make sure that we understand and we do this right. So the unanimous consent stands, and the member from Prince Edward–Hastings is seeking unanimous consent, starting today for seven days, that we fly the Ukrainian flag on the courtesy pole. Do we agree? Agreed. Thank you.

This is somewhat of a slight throwback to the comment that I had made in one of my rulings in that I was

basically making sure that, if we co-operate in this manner, which is what happened today—that is, if we converse with our House leaders to ensure that we might know, or we don't know, what's going on at that level, it would be very appropriate for us to all co-operate with that process. I will sit down for a moment.

The simplest of things can be turned into something more complex. I've been briefed that there are a few occasions where the courtesy flag has already been committed to be used during that time frame. Will we adopt the same process that we did for the games, meaning that the flag will come down, the courtesy flag will go up for the people that have booked it, then come down and the Ukrainian flag goes back up? Are we in agreement? Agreed. Thank you all.

ORAL QUESTIONS

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the education minister. Minister, the government is spending \$8.5 billion per year more on education than it did in 2003, while we have 250,000 fewer students, and our students are falling behind in math. To be clear, we're spending way more on education, serving fewer students and math achievement is worse today. My question to the minister is a simple one. How can you justify spending more money while our students are doing worse?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Oh, my goodness, where do I start? Okay. So let's just deal, first of all, with what we got for more money. What we've gotten for more money is the roll-in of the full-day kindergarten program, which we understand you want to get rid of, but that's what you got. What you got was a whole bunch of new programs called specialist high skills majors, which help teach kids practical skills in areas that they might want to pursue as careers. What you got was a high school graduation rate that rose—do you know what it was when they were in charge of education? One third of the kids in this province did not graduate from high school. Now—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Rob Leone: What we got was our students doing worse today than they did in 2003. It's not only parents and students who are concerned but business leaders as well. Let me read you a quote. "It's time to stop congratulating ourselves on the quality of our primary, secondary and post-secondary education systems and face up to the fact that our performance in international rankings is getting worse, not better." Who said that, Mr. Speaker? It was the former Liberal Deputy Prime Minister, John Manley. Unfortunately, that's exactly what your government has been doing for the last decade, as our students continue to look less and less competitive on the world stage.

Minister, isn't a decade long enough? How many years have to go by before you take students' performance seriously and fix the problems in our education system?

Hon. Liz Sandals: He actually needs little bit more information here. If he would look at the EQAO performance—something that you brought in, I might add—at the end of their mandate, about half of the kids in the province were reaching the provincial standard, which is quite a high standard. It's an A or a B for those of us who still think in old letter grades. Now, 71% of the students are meeting the provincial standard. I really wish that the people across the aisle would stop trashing our public education system and actually look at what's really going on.

In fact, I was interested to note today that when he was talking about school performance on PISA, he did say that the score had fallen 16 points. He didn't tell you that that was on a scale that was 16 out of about 700.

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

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, I can't believe what I'm hearing from the education system. A 16-point drop in our scores is actually a good thing? What's going on here?

Today, the Ontario PC caucus unveiled our math achievement action plan, which provides proven solutions to the problems that students have been facing over the last 10 years. When it comes to mathematics, our students are not performing at the level they should be. Numeracy and literacy skills are crucial to both individual job success and our province's economic growth. The fact that our students are slipping when it comes to basic math skills is beyond troubling.

Our plan focuses on the fundamentals and gives students the support and education they need as they move through high school to post-secondary education and into the job market. Teaching the times tables, rewarding the best teachers and prioritizing students over union bosses is the only way to get our students and schools back on track.

Minister, will you support our math achievement action plan?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Actually, I kind of thought he was supporting my plan, because I've been saying for the last couple of months that we need balanced instruction, and part of that—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean-Carleton, come to order.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Part of that, Speaker, is that kids learn times tables. We agree: Kids should learn times tables. But we also think that kids should understand the basic concepts so that they can understand more sophisticated concepts and so that they can achieve what the

chambers of commerce all across the province are asking for: that we have graduates who have critical thinking skills and who can apply those math concepts to do actual problem-solving. That's what employers tell us they want.

We also believe you should support teachers. He wants to do it with performance pay if they get better math scores. I want to invest in teacher training—

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

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, you're the leader of the Pan Am baby-sitting team. The minister reports bi-weekly to you, chair of the treasury board. So are you the one coaching him to fudge the numbers?

We've seen security move from \$113 million to \$206 million to \$239 million. Transportation has moved from \$55 million, according to documents last July, to between \$75 million and \$90 million. I can't wait for the next milestone update on that one, really.

In the real world, the plan is supposed to fit the budget. You don't update the budget to fit the plan—the Liberal way.

Minister, you're just as guilty. At which point is it public misfeasance?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I move to the Minister of Finance, I just want to warn the member that he's on the edge when he makes that kind of allegation. I would ask him to temper his question and his comments under those circumstances. I appreciate his cooperation.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, let me take this opportunity to congratulate the minister responsible for the Pan and Parapan American Games. That individual is a man of great integrity. He's a man of great sensitivity, and he's a new Canadian, like many others who come to this country looking for opportunity and equality.

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He has done everything he can to be inclusive and to invite many to participate in these games and in the economy of Ontario. I'm very proud of the work that the minister of the Pan/Parapan American Games and Minister of Tourism does to represent our province and our country. It's shameful what the member opposite has been trying to do to characterize this man as anything but an honourable individual. He's doing a good job for the Pan Am Games. He's being very open and transparent, and he's doing everything necessary to protect the interests of our province.

Interjections.

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

Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Only in this Liberal world that we live in down here would you actually congratulate the

minister responsible for the Pan Am Games for this debacle.

Yesterday, TO2015 released their quarterly report. Apparently, three venues still have outstanding contracts. We also learned this week that a major milestone in security has been achieved—a security contract was almost reached. That almost contract is costing us taxpayers another \$33 million somehow. Honestly, you're 17 months away with contracts still pending. How can you possibly carry on like you're still on budget?

By the way, TO2015 has already reported one project over budget, and apparently half of the total spending hasn't even happened yet. Pan Am is a black hole, plain and simple.

Minister, once and for all, who is responsible for the Pan Am mismanagement anyway?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Pan Am/Parapan American Games—all the venues that we've been providing in the southern corridor of Ontario around many communities are to benefit not just during the games but during the legacy of these games and in the future. We now have communities that are going to benefit from an aquatic centre that is second to none in North America. We're going to have an all-season velodrome in the town of Milton that's going to provide access to many in that community and around the world to come and train. We're going to be able to provide venues for our athletes all over Canada to be able to train and perform and succeed in Ontario and in Canada.

They are on time. They are under budget. In fact, all those capital improvements have occurred as necessary. And of course, there are certain things that we're going to do going forward, including security and transportation, to protect the interests of the public.

I'm very proud of what Ontario is going to do to represent Canada in the future of these games next year, and so should they.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: Maybe the Minister of Finance should actually read the financial update that came out yesterday.

Speaker, here's another one: The government invested \$709 million tax dollars in the athletes' village to benefit from the return on investment. But we know that if something looks too good to be true, it probably is, especially coming from this government. We will only ever see a fraction of it again: between \$65 million and \$70 million of that \$709 million.

To put it plainly, Ontario could have funded 2,085 new doctors this year or paid for medicine for almost 2,000 kids like Madi Vanstone. So who is benefiting from the remainder of our invested money? Yes, another generous Liberal donation to the private sector.

Honestly, if Chan isn't job-searching today, then you should be, Minister. Which one of you is going to step down over this?

Interjections.

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

Sit down, please. Be seated, please. Thank you.

Minister of Finance?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Pan Am village is going to provide social housing. It's going to provide a YMCA. It's going to provide a residence for students at George Brown College. It's going to provide a cultural centre. It's going to provide so much vibrancy in that community and on our waterfront. It accelerated the development of that area for the future benefit of all Torontonians, Ontarians and Canadians because of the attraction it's going to bring. That is a legacy that is going to be left behind in those respects.

I am so proud of the work being done by Toronto 2015. I recognize that there are always things that can be done better, and we're doing just that. That's why we have put in a new chair. We have a new president, and we have a team out there that's doing what is necessary to provide great games in 2015. The member opposite knows this. We've invited him to briefings. He has chosen not to read them.

Interjections.

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

I'm also going to take a moment just to remind members that I do—I'm trying to be forceful about this. Please use either the title or the riding when you refer to any member in this House during question period or any other time. I don't want to keep reminding people. It's tiring.

New question.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Does the Acting Premier think families in Ontario should be paying a billion-dollar subsidy for power that lights up the Manhattan skyline?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm afraid, once again, the leader of the third party just has her facts wrong—completely wrong. When it comes to energy exports, we do not subsidize exports to other jurisdictions. The leader of the third party has mixed up something pretty important. She hasn't taken the net benefit of our exports. In fact, since 2006, the independent electricity system operator has made over \$2 billion in net revenue from those energy exports.

So once again, we have a party with no plan, no ideas and no facts, unfortunately.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the people of Ontario certainly know what they're paying for when they pay for the Liberal boondoggle in the electricity system these days.

Does the Acting Premier think that families and businesses in Ontario are being well served when private power speculators are profiting from electricity that On-

tario ratepayers are subsidizing? That's a fact. Does she support that?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The private sector has been investing tens of billions of dollars in Ontario energy, in various ways. I'd like to ask the leader of the third party: Where will she find that type of investment in the future in government? Where will the money come from?

Most importantly, she refers to hydro rates. I don't know where the NDP gets their figures from, but Hydro-Québec conducts a study of electricity prices in major North American cities every year. It's available on their website for anybody to look at. Here are some of the numbers from the 2013 comparison for residential customers: Ottawa, 12.39 cents per kilowatt hour; Toronto, 12.48 cents per kilowatt hour; Edmonton, 13.9 cents; Calgary, 14.81 cents; Halifax, 15.45 cents; Detroit, to look across the border, 15.54—

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

Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Other provinces are actually making money on exporting electricity and passing the savings on to consumers in their jurisdictions. But here in Ontario, it's costing us over \$1 billion for private power speculators to dump our power into the US, and people are paying the highest bills in the country. We simply cannot afford that any longer.

Does the Acting Premier agree that the status quo isn't working and it's time to take hydro sales out of the hands of private power speculators and start saving money for Ontario's ratepayers?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We provided a briefing on the export of electricity to the critic for the third party. He obviously has not briefed his leader, because last year alone, exports reduced costs for Ontarians by \$300 million in 2013. It's been billions over the last decade.

Again, I want to repeat the numbers. The numbers—she just said again, we have the most expensive electricity rates in Canada. You know what, Mr. Speaker? The numbers belie that statement. I just read the numbers city by city and I didn't finish them. The accusation that we're selling cheap electricity across the border—in Detroit, they pay 15.54 cents; Boston, 16.5 cents; New York, 21.75 cents. Our rates are extremely competitive.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Acting Premier, and I think it's pretty clear that Liberals play with figures quite a bit. The only figures that are important to Ontarians are the figures they see when they open their hydro bill, which they can't afford anymore.

People paying the highest electricity bills in the country, in fact, are looking for some relief. All they see is a bloated alphabet soup of agencies and executives who are collecting even more bloated pay packages. Other provinces are able to provide lower rates and even turn a profit on their exports at a fraction of the cost, which is an important factor.

Does the Acting Premier think that her current status quo is actually working for Ontarians?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We're very focused on the issue that the leader of the third party raised, and that is that people are feeling stretched. When they do open those hydro bills, there's cause for concern. That's why we've taken the steps we have. The clean energy benefit has saved Ontarians an average of \$174 per year, and since we introduced it it has saved Ontario ratepayers \$2.4 billion. On top of that, decisions that have been made will mean customers will pay \$520 less over the next few years than compared to previous estimates. That's amending the domestic content rules; it's updating the Samsung contract; it's not proceeding with new nuclear. A range of decisions have been made that have the impact of reducing those hydro bills.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals have been promising to cap public sector CEO pay for years now, but when they had an option to vote for a public sector CEO pay cap, they voted against it. For over 10 years, the Liberals have insisted that they won't tolerate sky-high hydro salaries, and for over 10 years, the sky has been the limit. What explanation can the Acting Premier offer to the families of businesses who are stuck paying the bills for these sky-high salaries?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We look closely at what opposition parties present in terms of policy ideas and, sadly, there's not much to learn from the NDP policy on this. Their approach will do very little to reduce—in fact, it will do nothing to reduce rates for people. They seem to oppose nuclear. We're not sure where they are on green energy. I think the only thing that the NDP actually are in favour of when it comes to producing power is gerbil power. I think their idea must be a bunch of little rodents on little wheels producing power, because they seem to be opposed to every kind of electricity generation. I think it's time we heard from the NDP what their plan is. What is their plan for power production in the province of Ontario?

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What New Democrats are opposed to is Liberal waste and disrespect of the people who pay the bills in this province. That's what we're opposed to.

Today, I did actually lay out some pretty simple steps that we could take to make sure that life is more affordable for people who are paying the bills. Perhaps the minister wasn't paying attention. It's time to start cleaning up the mess in our hydro system instead of hiking the pay and million-dollar bonuses of those top CEOs. It's time to make the bills a little more affordable for the people in Ontario instead of forcing families to pay for cheaper power in New York.

Now, is the Acting Premier ready to take some action on this file, or is she going to keep defending a status quo that isn't working for people and that continues to waste

their money and allows CEO salaries and bonuses to climb sky high?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The Deputy Premier alluded to the fact that the third party has no policy on energy. Well, they took a first baby step yesterday when the leader of the third party sent a letter to the Premier making some suggestions for the electricity system. One of the suggestions was to issue, once a year, a \$100 cheque to all the electricity customers in the province. That \$100 cheque will cost half a billion dollars. So I have a question for the leader of the third party: Will she get that on the rate base from the Ontario Energy Board and let the other consumers of electricity pay for it? Or will she get it on the fiscal side and find half a billion dollars? Where will you find half a billion dollars? By raising taxes? What will you cut?

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, you and the Premier say you're going to push hard to cover the cost of Kalydeco for 12-year-old Madi Vanstone and others with cystic fibrosis. It has been seven months since I first raised this issue with you, and what have you done? Nothing.

Who do you think you're fooling with this charade? You're the only one who can make this decision, not Alberta, not the Pan-Canadian Pricing Alliance, but you. You're the health minister. Health care and the well-being of little Madi are your responsibility. Stop playing games. Stop stringing Madi and her friends along. Make a decision. Are you going to cover Kalydeco?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As a former health minister, you know as well as anyone that these are difficult decisions that come to health ministers. We have taken the politics out of determining what drugs we cover and what drugs we don't—based on evidence. I can tell you that Kalydeco is a very promising drug that offers real hope and better outcomes for patients, which is why we are working at a pan-Canadian level to be able to purchase this drug.

I think it's really important that the member opposite understands that we have had great success working on a pan-Canadian basis to get better prices for drugs. It's time for Vertex, the US-based manufacturer of this drug, a publicly traded company, to step up and participate in these negotiations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: That answer simply isn't good enough. Yes, I am a former health minister. In the past, we would cover the drug for extraordinary circumstances. Once we had a number of patients on the drug, we would work with other provinces to go back and say, "We're your number one worldwide customer. Give us a better price." And we would often get a better price.

You created this Pan-Canadian Pricing Alliance so that you and other health ministers across the country, I guess, can hide behind it. At the end of the day, no matter

what any other province says and no matter what this committee says, you and you alone will make the decision on whether you will fund Kalydeco.

It's a smokescreen you put up. Madi is not buying it. Other children who need help are not buying it. No one on this side of the House is buying it, and none of your people should be buying it either.

At the end of the day, it's your decision. Will you do the right thing and help Madi and her friends?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's important that the member opposite recognize that the Pan-Canadian Pricing Alliance, so far, has saved Canadians \$50 million as they have worked to negotiate the best possible price for 29 drugs. What that means is that we can fund more drugs for more people.

I do want to remind the former Minister of Health—I have a quote from Hansard from 1996 here. The then Minister of Health said, “As you know, the Minister of Health doesn't directly approve the alternative. The medical committee that's called the Drug Quality and Therapeutics Committee, which is the same committee that's been around for many years ... makes the final determination.”

This member opposite is playing politics. I find that offensive. We are doing what we can for Madi and for all people who need access to these rare drugs.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Ontarians look at their hydro bills every day, and they see them going up. They see that they're paying the highest bills in Canada, and yet we're going to get another 42% increase as a result of this government's policies. Does the energy minister agree that it's time to hit the pause button on new private contracts until Ontario's Auditor General reviews the private power contracts in Ontario?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We have a hybrid system in Ontario. The OPG and Hydro One make major investments in Ontario. The private sector also invests in Ontario. The private sector is a big part of the billions of dollars of investments in the sector.

I asked the leader of the third party, and I'll ask this particular member: Where will you find the replacement investment dollars? Do you know how much you will have to replace in Ontario in energy investment if the private sector is not investing? Please answer the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Coming from the government that cost the Ontario ratepayers over \$1 billion for cancelled contracts in this province, this is a bit much. What's clear here is that the government has messed up this entire file. What we're saying is that you've got to hit the pause button on the continuation of putting out these contracts. So I ask you again: Will the Premier and her government agree to have the Auditor General look at all of Ontario's private power contracts to ask whether we can get a better deal?

Interjections.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask that the supplementary dialogue that's going on between the two caucuses stop while the question is being put.

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I've said on a number of occasions we have three priorities, equal priorities: to have a reliable system—we did not have a reliable system when this government took over; secondly, to have a clean system, and we did not have a clean system when this government took over; and thirdly, to have affordable electricity rates in the province of Ontario.

Our \$31 billion of investment put pressure on our hydro rates, and we've created price mitigation measures to help the residents of this province, including the Ontario energy and property tax credit, which that party voted against.

I would like to know if you're informing your constituents of the programs that are available to mitigate their price in terms of tax credits, particularly in the north—and I speak to this member, Mr. Speaker—because they are getting a lot of credits, and it's making a big difference in price mitigation to your constituents.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Like many days, this morning I got on the GO train to come to work. I can tell you it was standing room only on the GO train, a testimony to the popularity of GO Transit in my riding. It's also a testimony to the way suburbs like Mississauga are being transformed because of the investments made by the Liberal government in public transit.

Would the minister please tell this Legislature the string of investments we have made in and around Mississauga when it comes to GO Transit?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We have now taken our trains from 10 train units to 12 train units. We have added more trains now on the Milton line, which is a very popular line. We are now adding and expanding parking facilities and better integrating and coordinating with the regional and local transit authorities. The totality of investments at this point in GO will, within the next year, be over \$10 billion. It's the largest expansion of GO.

We are also working with the region of Peel and the city of Mississauga in communities for what we're calling huburbia, which is to actually bring more jobs and create employment sectors. That's a collaboration, and I want to give a shout-out not just to the member but also to Mayor McCallion and our friends in Mississauga who are leading the reurbanization and expanding the employment base and jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I want to thank the minister for that very comprehensive answer.

Now, the fact of the matter is that as popular as the GO train is for bringing people from Mississauga into Toronto, the reality is that people in Mississauga today

are increasingly working not just in Toronto but across the GTHA, and I have my constituents going to Hamilton, going to Orangeville, going to Vaughan. I'd like to ask the minister what investments he is making in transit across southwestern Ontario, because I know this is important for my constituents.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I had the great pleasure of joining my friend the member for Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale, which not only has a long name but now has long trains going into Hamilton. We were there for the unveiling and the construction start of the new Hamilton GO station, which is an architectural jewel, and we were looking at it right beside what we now call the unistation, the old Grand Trunk station, and that is amazing.

We are going to have four more trains going into Hamilton, and we're now moving ahead with the acquisition of track between Aldershot and Hamilton to get Hamilton fully integrated into the Lakeshore line.

It doesn't stop there. I want to give a special shout-out to my friend from Kitchener Centre and Regional Chair Seiling and Mayor Zehr of Kitchener, because they approved yesterday the final approvals for the Kitchener-Waterloo LRT, which will connect to our new GO service. This is a big day in Kitchener, and I want to thank my friend Minister Milloy for his leadership on this.

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question is to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Yesterday, I introduced the Saving Apprentices' Jobs Act. The bill will save over 85,000 apprentices' jobs because of a deadline of April 8 that requires apprentices to join the College of Trades, and you may note that right now only approximately 10,000 of 95,000 apprentices have actually joined the college. That leaves only four weeks for the remainder to join or to lose their jobs, according to the regulation.

As well, the bill also allows 4,300 journeyperson candidates who have not written their CFQ to continue working without an expiry date. This bill will be debated on April 3. And I'm asking you, Minister, if you can't intervene between now and April 3, if you will support this bill and even at second and third reading—

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

The Minister of Training, College and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member raises an important challenge for the College of Trades that I know that Mr. Tsubouchi and Mr. Johnson are working very hard on. In fact, I met with them on this very issue about a week or so ago. They have given a year of grace period for apprentices to join the college. They're looking at this potential deadline in April as a challenge for them as well, as they work towards getting more and more apprentices to join. I guess the challenge I have is: Why would the member come forward with a piece of legislation? All he has to do is pick up the phone and contact David Tsubouchi, somebody whom I think he knows

very well, somebody whom this side of the House has a lot of respect for. Instead, the member decides that, instead of picking up the phone and talking to Mr. Tsubouchi about some suggestions he may have, he decides to try to hatchet Mr. Tsubouchi by putting forward provocative legislation in this Legislature. That's not a good way to deal with this issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Thank you for that. I guess that was an answer.

Minister, on this side of the House, we believe in creating one million jobs, not driving away jobs with bureaucracies like the College of Trades. I'm not sure why you don't take this more seriously. I shouldn't be having to call David Tsubouchi. That's your job, to figure that out.

I have a letter dated February 21 to apprenticeship sponsors from your five directors—from your staff, Minister. It clearly states, "If your apprentices fail to renew their membership by April 8, 2014, their college membership will expire, and their registered training agreement will be cancelled. This means you will no longer be able to train them as apprentices and they will not be able to work in the compulsory aspect of their trade."

Minister, there are at least 85,000 apprentices counting on you, and they have not joined the Ontario College of Trades. Are you going to allow this to happen, or will you join with me and the PC caucus and support this bill—

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

Minister?

Hon. Brad Duguid: This is another in a long line of attempts from the member opposite to try to usurp the power of the College of Trades and bring it back to Queen's Park, where these decisions could be made in smoky backrooms in the Albany Club. We're not going there. We have faith in Mr. David Tsubouchi, a former cabinet minister in this Legislature, in the very cabinet that his leader served in. We have faith in Mr. Ron Johnson, a former PC MPP from this Legislature. We know that the College of Trades is facing challenges from time to time, and this is one of them. I have faith in those two gentlemen. Unlike the member opposite, who, time and time again, tries to do a hatchet job on the hard work that those gentlemen are doing, I have faith in them that they will resolve this challenge, as they have every other challenge that that member has brought forward to this Legislature. Time to put the fear-mongering away and support—

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

New question. Nice and easy.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Acting Premier. During the TO2015 quarterly report media conference, the TO2015 CEO said that hugely erroneous es-

timates for the games were in the security bid book. However, as he was not a part of the process, he did not know what the elements were in determining the cost to be \$113 million. Are we to believe that the new CEO was not briefed by the new chair of the board, who was hand-picked by the former Premier to lead the Toronto 2015 bid?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'm very confident in the new CEO of Toronto 2015 and the work that he's doing. He has actually been very familiar with the budget of 2015. He has been actively involved with the ministry of community and security, looking at ways that we're going to protect the interest of the public. They are doing what is necessary to do just that. I'm very appreciative of the work being done by our ministry, in association with 2015 and their team as well.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: We've seen how completely out of touch the current security costs are with what was in the bid book. Many more questions are now raised about the other costs in total. With 60 months to go, we haven't signed a security contract. The private security contracts have not been signed. If we haven't signed them now, how much higher will the cost be when you actually get to it?

The Vancouver-based security firm that's in the running worked on the G20 and was one of the companies that didn't even have an Ontario licence. It has paid its fine, but do you think it's appropriate, Mr. Speaker, that a company that has blatantly disrespected the laws of this province and of this country is in the running?

Will the Acting Premier commit right now to directing TO2015 to do a complete comparison between the actual costs and the bid book to determine how far off we really are?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Minister of Correctional Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank the member for his question. Mr. Speaker, \$113 million was based on our best assessment of security needs four years ago. Since 2009, much has changed. Games plans have progressed; so have security plans also. Our current estimated cost is \$239 million.

This whole process is headed by the Ontario Provincial Police. There are experts there. They have taken advice from other communities across the world where they have hosted such an event.

Right now the security threat is very low. If the security threat is raised, we will react accordingly. We are not going to gamble with the security of our athletes, our coaches and our visitors in Ontario.

MUNICIPALITIES

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. I had the honour and privilege of attending last week's Rural Ontario Muni-

pal Association and Good Roads combined conference, along with our Premier and many ministers in this House. I can tell you that, as a former mayor, I'm well aware of and respect the important role that our municipal leaders and our municipalities play in delivering the invaluable services across this province.

Speaker, our government's partnership with municipalities is strong, but municipalities are still concerned about what they can expect as to what supports will be provided by the government to strengthen their communities. As we continue to work together in improving the lives of all Ontarians, Speaker, through you, I'd like to ask the minister if she could update this House as to how we are providing ongoing support to our municipal partners.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to thank the member for the question. As a former municipal councillor myself, I know how important our municipal governments are. That's why I was proud that many members of our government and the opposition, indeed, came out and attended the ROMA/OGRA conference here in Toronto. I was able to meet with 25 municipalities from across Ontario to discuss their pressing needs. Though we listened to their concerns regarding land use planning, property assessment and the provincial land tax, we heard their support for the almost \$3.2 billion our government has provided in municipal uploads since 2013 alone.

I heard their concerns following the PC leader's address. They are concerned that this important investment in Ontario may not continue should they become elected. Elected officials worry that a Tory government will bring back the forced amalgamations and the \$3 billion in downloading that occurred the last time the opposition was in power. Unlike the party opposite, our government believes that a collaborative approach creates a stronger, more productive and respectful relationship with municipalities, and that's what—

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

Mr. Grant Crack: I'd like to thank the minister for the answer. It's good to know that our government will continue to work with our municipalities on issues that are of concern to them.

However, Speaker, while at the conference, the minister gave a keynote address, and she mentioned the provincial policy statement. I know that land use planning isn't the most exciting, most attention-grabbing topic, but the provincial policy statement guides direction on how land use planning provides future housing and economic and agricultural development while protecting our environmental heritage, such as the greenbelt.

Rural and northern municipalities worry the changes to the provincial policy statement will not recognize the unique challenges that these municipalities face. I'm asking, through you, Speaker: Can the minister explain to the House what she has done to ensure that this important guide to development takes these municipal concerns into account?

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I would argue that good land use planning is exciting, because it ensures the long-term

economic prosperity of Ontarians. Certainly in northern Ontario that's true, as well as in southern Ontario.

We've listened very carefully to the concerns of northern and rural Ontarians. My ministry undertook extensive consultation with municipalities across the province, as well as community groups and aboriginal communities. We gave careful consideration to suggestions from northern and rural stakeholder work groups to ensure that the provincial policy statement takes into consideration the distinct and specific needs of these communities.

Our government's new provincial policy statement is exciting. It includes rural policies that will help them unlock new economic opportunities, and these opportunities will allow a greater range of economic uses for farms for tourism and home-based businesses, which will help Ontario attract new businesses and grow already existing ones.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Last week at the ROMA/OGRA conference, Minister, you faced criticism from municipalities for your government's total disregard for rural Ontario, as demonstrated by your failed green energy scheme. And you know what, Speaker? The NDP can't get a free pass on this either, because they talk out of both sides of their mouth, but the fact is, they are supporting —

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Some time ago, that has been deemed to be unparliamentary. I'll ask you to withdraw.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I withdraw.

Minister, back to you. While you like to focus on how you will do things differently on a go-forward basis just to confuse people, right now, today, we have a major issue that can no longer be ignored, and that is your continual approval of applications that have been in the queue, as well as the extension of deadlines for projects facing ERT appeals. You're choosing to ignore missed deadlines that could serve as off-ramps.

Minister, when we don't need the energy and people can't afford the electricity, why isn't your government choosing to take opportunities—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, there are approximately 255 contracts which have been awarded for renewable projects which are still not completed. The issue has been raised consistently in this House by the opposition.

In the first instance, the leader of the third party said that he would cancel those contracts. Then he said he would not cancel those contracts. Then, at the International Plowing Match, he intimated that he would cancel those contracts. Now he's really put it in writing. He now has the Million Jobs Act, and in the Million Jobs Act they are assigning to the Minister of Energy the right to cancel these contracts, contracts that represent \$20 bil-

lion in energy. They are going to expose the province to \$20 billion in liability by that thing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Minister, you're spinning more than a turbine. This government proclaims that it is honest and transparent, but the fact is that communities and concerned citizens are no longer able to find out if a proposed wind project has gone past its commercial operating date, therefore violating the terms of its FIT contract. To be specific, this information is no longer on the OPA site. It has been removed on purpose.

Minister, when will your government finally be honest and transparent and tell the people of Ontario exactly what is going on with your fiasco?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member spins more than a wind turbine.

We have indicated that we're changing the procurement of large renewable moving forward. We're going to have the Ontario Power Authority do a request for proposals. There will absolutely need to be an agreement with the municipality to move forward with new projects.

The reality is, since the first award of contracts—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Huron-Bruce asked the question. You will listen.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —under the FIT program for wind, large wind and large solar, there has been an actual moratorium on wind, because we have not issued more wind projects. We have wind projects that are already under contract. We're going to respect those contracts. New contracts for wind will require a new process that will engage the—

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

ELGIN-MIDDLESEX DETENTION CENTRE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. As the minister knows, today, three employees at the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre were charged in relation to the death of an inmate in October 2013. For years, the ministry has known about the problems at EMDC, including severe overcrowding, understaffing and design flaws that prevent direct supervision. Why is this government failing the inmates, their families and the correctional officers at EMDC by not addressing the understaffing, overcrowding and design flaws at the facility?

1130

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to thank the member for her question. Mr. Speaker, I am aware of the charge. As she knows, it would be inappropriate for me to comment given the ongoing criminal proceeding as well as the ministry's own internal investigation. I do want to offer, though, my condolences to the family and friends of the deceased.

I know that the ministry takes its mandate very seriously to ensure the well-being and health of all those in

our custody. This government believes that everyone in our custody should be treated with respect and held in humane and safe conditions.

Despite best efforts, violence is a reality for correctional facilities everywhere. On a daily basis, correctional staff deal with and manage the risk of inmate violence.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Minister, as far as I'm aware, there have been frequent lockdowns at EMDC but no changes that will stop a situation like the murder of Adam Kargus from happening again. Minister, for two years now, we've been calling on this government to address the issues at EMDC. A class-action lawsuit has been filed highlighting the concerns. What exactly is the minister planning to do so that overcrowding at EMDC does not lead to another death?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, as I said, the health and safety of our staff and inmates are a top priority. As you know, I have introduced a 12-point plan to address concerns at EMDC. I have met with the union on two occasions. We have done quite a lot of progress. We have installed over 300 security cameras. We have a new control model. We have hired 11 additional staff as correctional officer positions, and we have hired three surgeons and one additional mental health nurse. We now have 24-hour nursing that has been established, resulting in seven additional nurses. We now have an advisory board of volunteer community members. Mr. Speaker, I will continue to work with the management and the union to improve health and safety in EMDC.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Ma question est pour le ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées, l'honorable Signor Mario Sergio.

Speaker, I believe that my own constituents in the great riding of Etobicoke North are pleased by a number of the very significant investments our government has made, many of which, as you'll appreciate, are historic.

It's important to my residents that our government continues to invest in people, infrastructure and that it support a dynamic and innovative business climate. I'm pleased, therefore, that the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat has created Ontario's first grant dedicated solely to seniors.

Can the minister please inform this chamber: How does the Ontario government continue to work with seniors to establish these valuable programs?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Je voudrais remercier le député d'Etobicoke-Nord pour une très bonne question sur nos personnes âgées.

Speaker, I would like to really thank the member because I know he's got the seniors in Etobicoke North in his heart, and the seniors are the reason why we're here today.

I was delighted, indeed, to announce this very important grant program. The Seniors Community Grant Program is just one of the many examples and initiatives that

our government has introduced to help our seniors to remain engaged, to stay within their community and to stay active and live as long as possible.

Speaker, to establish one of these programs requires a lot of hard work and co-operation from various stakeholders, seniors' organizations, individual groups and the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat. I have to say, Speaker, that on Monday I have met with the Ontario seniors' liaison committee, that are working very hard in advising the province on how to continue to serve our seniors better.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Thank you, Minister, for your dedication.

Remarks in Italian.

I know, Speaker, that constituents in my riding of Etobicoke North appreciate the fact that the Ontario Seniors' Secretariat provides a forum for our seniors to voice and discuss important issues that affect them every day.

During the many events that I attend in my own riding, I often get the chance to stop and speak with seniors. A common topic that we discuss is how important it is to support seniors in maintaining an independent lifestyle. As a physician, I can tell you that if we are able to empower our seniors to live at home, independently active and mobile, that's of great benefit.

Speaker, can the minister please inform this House about some of the other initiatives that have been created in collaboration with various seniors' groups in Ontario?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Again I want to thank the member from Etobicoke North. Molte grazie.

I have to really tell you, it's very comforting and it's very appreciated that we are speaking on behalf of our seniors. We can learn a lot more from our seniors indeed. That is why, in January, along with various seniors' groups, I was very happy to celebrate the one-year anniversary of Ontario's Action Plan for Seniors. We constantly search for new ways and innovative solutions. That is why I want all Ontarians to know how we continue to work closely with our seniors to further enhance and build on our achievements, achievements such as age-friendly communities, the Finding Your Way wandering prevention program, the elderly persons' centre, the elder abuse legislation, strong protection for retirement home residents, fire protection, and much more.

Yes, indeed, Speaker: We are the reason why we are working so hard for our seniors. They are our reason.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, recently a Waterloo firefighter who was diagnosed with a presumptive cancer almost lost his full-time benefits just because he volunteered in another community.

In response to this news, two double-hatters just this week handed in their resignation at the Wellesley Fire Department. If action isn't taken soon, many more resignations will likely follow at fire halls across the region. In fact, the local fire association is now advising its mem-

bers not to volunteer in Wilmot, Wellesley and Woolwich.

Minister, this is a major public safety issue. What steps will you take to keep our rural communities safe across this province of Ontario?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for the question. We have had the opportunity to speak on this particular issue. Obviously, I cannot comment on the specifics of this issue, but I have undertaken, Speaker, to the member opposite to look into broadly what rules are applied from the WSIB when it comes to the treatment of firefighters who may be full-time, part-time or volunteer.

We know that firefighters are vital to keeping our communities safe. When there's a fire, as we all are rushing out, they're the ones who rush in. Every day, they risk their lives to protect our lives, and that is why our government has made it easier for full-time, part-time and volunteer firefighters and the fire investigators, those who suffer fire-related illnesses, to qualify for workplace insurance benefits. As you know, currently eight types of cancer and heart-related injuries suffered by firefighters are presumed to be work-related unless proven otherwise.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: The last thing a firefighter suffering from cancer should have to deal with is uncertainty regarding workplace compensation, but that's exactly what's happening now because of a serious gap in the provincial legislation. There are no guidelines in the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act for double-hatters.

To make up for this deficiency, the WSIB has stated that a double-hatter's last employer should be responsible for compensation. The trouble with this rule is that the double-hatters could lose their full-time benefits just because they last fought a fire as a volunteer in a different community.

Minister, will you address this legal gap to ensure that full-time firefighters suffering from cancer get the benefits they deserve?

Interjections.

1140

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

Minister?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I think all members in the House will agree that when we're talking about protecting the lives of our firefighters, we will not for a single second assume or presume or argue that that's a partisan issue. It's not. That's why I have undertaken, to the member opposite, that I look forward to working with him in identifying what the problem is and, if there is one, then working on creating the solutions around it. That's my word, and I'm very pleased to see that.

But, Speaker, we're also very proud in this House. I thank all of the members who have spoken on making sure that firefighters, when it comes to extending presumptive conditions—I'm very proud of the private member's bill that the member from Vaughan has tabled in adding an additional six more cancers to that pre-

sumptive list, and we're working very closely with firefighters to find ways to make that happen as well.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. For months, physicians, hospital staff, patients and community activists have been urging this government to prioritize patient care above all else in discussions to merge hospital sites in Scarborough and Durham.

Unfortunately, the government has chosen to ignore these requests. This week, physicians are saying the following: "A successful long-term merger becomes that much more difficult if patient services are not protected in the short term."

Can the minister explain how patient care is going to be protected while this merger is being considered?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have had several meetings with members from the Scarborough area on this very issue. I am pleased to know that there is progress being made on developing plans to look at this merger.

I can tell you there's been a lot of work done to make sure people—the community and medical staff and others—understand the implications of a merger. I'm very pleased to know that increasingly there is community support for this kind of change, and I assure the member opposite that this is all about improving care for patients. This is all about providing better care closer to home for the people of Scarborough.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Already, the planning for this merger makes reference to cuts to patient services. Physicians are telling you that quality of care is threatened: This merger represents "a betrayal of our commitments to our patients and the communities we serve, and puts at risk the programs that deliver patient care."

I ask the minister, again: Will she commit to preserving patient care at the highest priority while this merger is being considered?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I can absolutely assure the member opposite that this is all about improving patient care, full stop, period.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is for the Attorney General. I am pleased to hear that just last week the settlements were approved by Justice Conway for the Rideau Regional Centre and the Southwestern Regional Centre class actions. The settlements will provide access to compensation for harm that may have been suffered by former residents of Southwestern Regional Centre and Rideau Regional Centre between 1963 and 2009.

Mr. Speaker, I'm also pleased to hear that the government has taken steps to commemorate former residents of these two centres and their experiences.

Can the Attorney General please provide this House with more details about the settlements and the com-

memorative aspects for the former residents of Southwestern Regional Centre and Rideau Regional Centre?

Hon. John Gerretsen: When the Huronia settlement was made about three or four months ago, both the Minister of Community and Social Services and I instructed our respective staffs in the Ministry of the Attorney General and Comsoc to work out the other two settlements as quickly as possible, and they've done that, Speaker. Although we can't change the past and the way in which some of these people were being treated at these various institutions, we will continue to do everything as a government to make sure that people, regardless of their abilities or disabilities, are respected with compassion, dignity and respect.

I'm very pleased to say that these cases have been settled now. A retired Supreme Court of Canada justice will be making the final determinations with respect to some of the more unusual cases that have developed in these situations.

The documents that were produced during the lawsuit will be preserved in the Archives of Ontario. Former residents, as I mentioned before, who wish to obtain their personal case files can do so by contacting the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

Speaker, what happened there shouldn't have happened. We hope that the people who were involved can now find some dignity and respect back in their lives from these settlements.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I would like to correct what I've said. My colleague told me that I said that we have hired three surgeons in EMDC. It's three sergeants. I apologize for my accent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is a point of order, and all members know they're allowed to correct their own record.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands adjourned until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1146 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I would like to introduce Smokey Thomas, who is the president of the union. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome. Any other introductions of guests?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to welcome Smokey Thomas, the president of OPSEU, who is here along with a few others; I don't know their names. At least, it looks like Smokey.

Interjection: That's Smokey.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My eyes are failing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If I stretch long enough, they'll send a note.

Last call for introductions.

It is now time for members' statements.

Miss Monique Taylor: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: I've had my invisible cloak on all day today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My friend, I would never miss you.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're welcome. The member from Hamilton Mountain with introductions.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to welcome Mr. Smokey Thomas, Doug Evetts, Patti Markland, Erin Rice and Lyndsey Chapman, who are here for the tabling of the interim report for the developmental services select committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As I pointed out, somebody got the note.

It is now time for a last call for introductions—three times.

All right, it's now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MUNICIPALITIES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Last week, I had the pleasure of hosting 13 out of 14 municipalities from my riding of Huron–Bruce right here for a breakfast at Queen's Park. The municipalities were represented by their mayors, CAOs, administrative clerk-treasurers and councillors, who all participated in a lively discussion about the many issues that are currently facing municipalities throughout the riding. It was particularly lively, considering how early in the morning it was.

First of all, I would like to thank everyone from Huron–Bruce who took the time to attend the breakfast. I know that you took time out of a very busy week at the ROMA/OGRA conference to attend, and I sincerely appreciate that.

I would also like to thank my colleagues the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, the member from Nipissing and the member from Leeds–Grenville, here to my right, for, first of all, the early get-up in the morning and for your frank and direct discussion. I know that the folks from my riding really appreciate the opportunity to have open dialogue with people who are making a difference.

We touched on many issues that are being faced by municipalities in my riding, including the pros and cons of the OPP funding formula and the many questions that surround it; managing the recent decreases in OMPF funding; and the implications of the Great Lakes Protection Act, among others.

Although not everyone agreed on how best to tackle each issue, the honest and respectful discussion was certainly beneficial for everyone involved. It was a fantastic experience, and it truly emphasized the importance of dialogue between all levels of government.

ACCIDENT BENEFITS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The Ontario government quietly changed a law in December 2013—just this past December—surrounding car insurance, and specifically concerning no-fault attendant benefits—this was effective February 1, 2014—without any public consultation.

What this means is that it restricts the amount of attendant benefits that can be claimed by family members who are caring for someone who has been injured in an automobile accident.

To make some further clarifications, this attendant care benefit is only available to the most vulnerable people in our society: those who are catastrophically injured. To change a benefit that would restrict coverage or restrict the ability for attendant care for some of the most vulnerable people in our society is something absolutely mean-spirited.

What's worse is that though this law is not scheduled to be retroactive, many insurers are asking that this change be scheduled to be retroactive so that it should apply prior to February 1.

This would mean that people who have already left their jobs, who are already caring for their loved ones, would no longer have the protection or the compensation that they would have been entitled to.

This is absolutely unacceptable. This could result in further claims and disputes. It's quite ironic, because the government has just introduced a bill which seeks to speed up the dispute resolution system but has actually created another complex problem in the system.

I call on the government to stop going after the most vulnerable people in our society and cancel this mean regulatory change.

PARLEMENT JEUNESSE
FRANCOPHONE

M. Grant Crack: Monsieur le Président, collègues et amis, il me fait un grand plaisir et un très grand honneur de souhaiter la bienvenue à tous les participants et toutes les participantes au huitième Parlement jeunesse à l'Assemblée législative. Ils sont ici à Queen's Park cette semaine pour approfondir leurs connaissances du gouvernement et pour participer à une simulation parlementaire tenue uniquement en français.

J'aimerais également saluer tout spécialement les étudiants et les étudiantes de ma circonscription de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Ils sont Étienne Camirand, Antoine Robitaille, Marie-Ève Chartrand, Zachary Levert, Zoé Lavergne, Marielle Racette, Jean-Philippe Héroux, Andréanne Marcotte, Marie-Pierre Héroux et Francesco Caruso.

J'inviterais tous mes collègues à se joindre à nous cet après-midi à 17 h à l'escalier principal pour une prise de photo avec tout le groupe, et ensuite pour une célébration dans la pièce 247. Au plaisir de vous voir là.

Merci et bonjour aux étudiants et étudiantes.

BOB LANGSTAFF

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Today, it's my honour to rise to pay tribute to a true public servant and community leader: former warden of Lambton county Bob Langstaff. Bob died at his home in Dresden on February 22. He was 72.

Of course, many knew that Bob was Lambton county's warden in 1987 and also carried the PC banner for the former Lambton riding in the 1990 Ontario general election.

Bob was a long-time member of the Dawn township council, serving as councillor and reeve from 1977 until 1991. It was while serving as reeve that Bob played a key role in the creation and deployment of the Dawn township volunteer fire department. In fact, Bob was a member of the volunteer force until only recently, when he officially retired.

Bob was a key member of the committee when Petrolia hosted the International Plowing Match and Farm Machinery Show in September 1991. We also know that proceeds from that event were placed into a trust fund for educational scholarships—these scholarships are still being awarded today—and that Bob was a trustee on the scholarship committee until he passed.

Fittingly, Bob was recognized for his long-time public service and was awarded a Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal last year.

Sadly, Bob died in Dresden, as I said, this past weekend. He was married to his wife, Jennifer, and had two children and two grandchildren. His memorial service was held this past weekend, and I know that MPP Bob Bailey was pleased to attend and speak at that occasion. I think it's appropriate that we recognize his life and service here this afternoon.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I rise to address the matter of the vulnerability of Ontario's families to extreme weather events. As you are well aware, this past December, we saw an ice storm hit Ontario that knocked out power for large numbers of people for a week, two weeks and somewhat more.

This was a situation where seniors and the disabled were stranded on the 10th, 15th, 20th floors and above of high-rise buildings, and, frankly, a situation that this government has been warned about by expert panels that it itself has appointed: warned about by the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario specifically about ice storms; and warned by environmental organizations about the impact of extreme weather on our electricity system.

When an announcement was made the other day about assistance for those who had been hit by the ice storm, there was no announcement of any assessment of the electricity system to make sure that we aren't vulnerable in the same way in the future.

1510

Speaker, extreme weather is becoming more and more a part of our everyday lives. Ontario has had three 100-year storm events since the beginning of the 21st century. We are going to see a lot more. It is time for this government to do the assessment of the vulnerabilities of the energy system, both gas and electric, so that people aren't stranded, freezing in the cold, for another storm in another month.

**STRONG GIRLS STRONG WOMEN
SYMPOSIUM**

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Today I would like to speak about a program that has been spearheaded by an inspirational community leader from my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood.

In November of 2012, Ann Buller, the president of Centennial College, started the Strong Girls Strong Women program. Today, over 200 girls from the Scarborough area spent the day at Centennial College Progress campus, participating in education and career training.

The purpose of this program was to empower young girls to become strong women. The program's first symposium was held in March of 2013. I had the honour of attending their second symposium, held earlier this afternoon at the Progress campus. The symposiums attempt to expose young girls to unique career opportunities and introduce them to strong female role models in order to inspire them to choose education and career paths they may never consider before: an artist, a designer, a mechanic, a paramedic, a chemist or a chef. Programs like Strong Girls Strong Women and champions for the betterment of the condition of girls and women, like Ann Buller, are still needed today.

We have entered International Women's Week, and this Saturday we will celebrate International Women's Day. This year's theme is "Inspiring Change," which is exactly what so many of our community leaders like Ann are doing.

Even here in Ontario, despite the inroads that our government has made in the area of women's rights and the equality of women and men, there is still so much further to go. Programs like Strong Girls Strong Women are helping inspire the next generation of women to reach their full potential. As a young girl said today, they are smart and strong.

M. SULLIVAN AND SON LTD.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Last Friday I had the opportunity to participate in a wonderful event in Arnprior: the launching of a book by Brian Hanington entitled *A Hundred Years on a Handshake*. It is the lively history of M. Sullivan and Son Ltd.

Maurice Sullivan, a reputable carpenter, decided that the future would be much brighter if he became a building contractor. The first contract for this staunch Roman Catholic was to build St. Thomas Anglican Church in Woodlawn in 1914. How ironic is that?

Since then, his heirs and over 30,000 employees have made this company one of the most respected in Canada. The Sullivan reputation for quality is legend. Their fingerprints dot the land across Renfrew county and indeed much of eastern Canada.

What is even more legendary, however, is their business philosophy. When you work for the Sullivans, you join the family. One such employee, Gibby Tourangeau, began working with the Sullivans when he was 18. He's still there today, part-time, some 72 years later. My uncle John worked for the Sullivans from 1948 till his retirement in 1998 at the age of 83.

The Sullivan I knew best is Tommy. "Iconic" is hardly a sufficient way to describe this man, not just as a businessman but also as a mayor of the town. Sadly, Tommy left us two years ago in January, but I know that he would be pleased with this project. His impact on the community will never be forgotten.

Quality, toughness and fairness: These are the three values to which the Sullivans hold true. I urge everyone to get the book. I, like you, am looking forward to the next 100 years.

OAKVILLE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I rise today to celebrate the 65th anniversary of a very special institution in Oakville. In 1949, the business community of the town of Oakville came together and formed the Oakville Chamber of Commerce for the betterment of the town and the local economy. The chamber, as we all know, is non-partisan. It's a not-for-profit business association that advocates for its member businesses, of which, in Oakville, there are over 1,100 members employing over 33,000 Ontarians.

Through their mentorship opportunities, networking events and educational programs, Oakville entrepreneurs now have the support they need to get their businesses flourishing. Recently, the chamber hosted Oakville resident Dr. Ian Dawe, physician-in-chief of the Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences and associate professor of psychiatry at the University of Toronto, for a seminar of mental wellness in the workplace. Oakville has become accustomed to seeing its great chamber of commerce helping in the community where it can. Shedding light on mental illness is just another fine example. Led by president John Sawyer and an incredible staff, it will soon host the awards for business excellence in Oakville.

To the Oakville Chamber of Commerce, I want to say I wish you a very happy 65th. I wish you and your members many more years of success in the community and abroad. Thanks for all you do on a daily basis for the business community.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise on behalf of the growing number of people in Leeds–Grenville whose lives have been shattered by Lyme disease.

Like many MPPs, I have stood in this place to introduce petitions on behalf of the people I represent, pleading to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to do better for patients with Lyme disease—patients like Karen Brown.

Karen was bitten by a tick just before Thanksgiving last year at her home in Mallorytown. Her life hasn't been the same since. As she wrote to me, "This is no longer me living my retirement dreams but living a very restricted lifestyle without knowing any relief from the pain."

Meanwhile, the response from Ontario's health care system is one that too many Lyme disease patients have experienced. Karen had two tests for Lyme come back negative because OHIP won't cover the appropriate test to diagnose her disease. Instead of treatment to make her better, she is sent for more tests while her health deteriorates as Lyme tightens its grip.

Our health care system is wasting money and, worse, the precious time Karen and other Lyme patients have to get started on treatment.

Speaker, I've heard the minister repeat her mantra, "the right care, at the right time, at the right place," too many times to count. My message to the minister today is that her words ring hollow for Lyme patients like Karen Brown.

It's time the Ministry of Health moves beyond empty words and takes real action to ensure that those suffering from Lyme disease are diagnosed and treated before more lives are destroyed.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

SELECT COMMITTEE ON DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I beg leave to present the interim report of the Select Committee on Developmental Services.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mrs. Albanese presents the committee's report.

Report presented.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I welcome the opportunity to say a few words. This has been a humbling experience thus far. Travelling across Ontario, the select committee has given us members the opportunity to meet so many people with intellectual disabilities or dual diagnoses—so many families, organizations, people who work in the sector and others who are passionate about people with disabilities.

I would like to commend each member of the committee for working together in a non-partisan way to address the urgent need for a comprehensive strategy to address the needs of the most vulnerable in our society. We look forward to continuing to work together to find

meaningful solutions to improve their lives, providing the supports that they need and deserve.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

YMCA OF HAMILTON/BURLINGTON/BRANTFORD ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2014

Mr. Delaney moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr28, An Act respecting YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

MOTIONS

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. John Milloy: I move that the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly be authorized to meet on Tuesday, March 11, and Wednesday, March 12, between 9 a.m. and noon and 1 to 5 p.m. for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Milloy moves that the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly be authorized to meet on Tuesday, March 11, and Wednesday, March 12, between 9 a.m. and noon and 1 to 5 p.m. for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act. Do we agree? I heard a no.

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1521 to 1551.

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

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

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	Milloy, John
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gates, Wayne	Moridi, Reza
Balkissoon, Bas	Gélinas, France	Murray, Glen R.
Bisson, Gilles	Gravelle, Michael	Naqvi, Yasir
Campbell, Sarah	Hatfield, Percy	Oraziotti, David
Cansfield, Donna H.	Hoskins, Eric	Piruzza, Teresa
Chan, Michael	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	Schein, Jonah
Del Duca, Steven	MacCharles, Tracy	Sergio, Mario

Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Forster, Cindy

Mantha, Michael
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
Mauro, Bill
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine

Singh, Jagmeet
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John
Wong, Soo
Wynne, Kathleen O.

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

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Clark, Steve
Elliott, Christine
Fedeli, Victor
Hardeman, Ernie
Harris, Michael
Holyday, Douglas C.
Hudak, Tim

Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
Leone, Rob
MacLaren, Jack
MacLeod, Lisa
McDonnell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McNaughton, Monte
Miller, Norm

Milligan, Rob E.
Munro, Julia
Nicholls, Rick
Pettapiece, Randy
Scott, Laurie
Smith, Todd
Thompson, Lisa M.
Walker, Bill
Yakabuski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 57; the nays are 27.

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

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

LYME DISEASE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: “Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn’s, Alzheimer’s, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe;

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of its professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process for establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians.”

I agree with this petition and affix my name, and I’ll give it to page Owen.

TAXATION

Ms. Laurie Scott: “Stop the Gas Tax Increase.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government is considering a 10-cents-per-litre increase on the provincial gas tax to fund mass transit; and

“Whereas the government’s alternative is to raise the gas tax five cents per litre and increase the harmonized sales tax by 0.5%; and

“Whereas many people in rural Ontario need to drive to get to and from work or school or to get groceries and other essentials and do not have the option of taking mass transit; and

“Whereas a 10-cents-per-litre increase of the gas tax places an unaffordable financial burden on many families; and

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

“Whereas the government should cut waste to fund mass transit before taxing Ontarians;

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

“That the government of Ontario reduce waste and fund mass transit through methods that do not place an unnecessary financial burden on the people of Ontario, especially those who must drive to and from work or school.”

I agree, and I sign my signature and hand it to page Sarah.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing

correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

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

“In agreement whereof, we affix our signatures.”

I agree with this petition and send to you via page Alessia.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

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

“Whereas the Residential Tenancies Act protects tenants in dwellings and long-term-care homes from sudden and unfair increases to their rent; and

“Whereas ancillary costs such as the provision of meals and other services in a long-term-care facility are not subject to the jurisdiction of said act; and

“Whereas there have been episodes of repeated, large and unjustified increases to the stated costs of meal provision in long-term-care facilities in Cornwall and area; and

“Whereas residents do not have a say in the procurement and administration of meals and other services provided by the facility, nor can they opt out of such services when notified of an increase in charges, being thus committed to a ‘take it or leave it’ choice;

1600

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

“(1) To instruct the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to enact regulations ensuring fairness, protection and choice for residents of long-term-care facilities that provide any other necessary service such as, but not limited to, meals and personal assistance at extra cost to their residents;

“(2) To instruct the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to undertake a comprehensive review of the administration of long-term-care facilities with respect to the provision of services other than lodging that involve an extra charge to residents.”

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

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Jonah Schein: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the youth unemployment rate in Ontario is one of the highest in Canada;

“Whereas tens of thousands of young Ontarians are stuck working internships for no pay or compensation, with few protections in their workplace;

“Whereas many workers and employers do not know their rights or responsibilities under the Employment Standards Act;

“Whereas many young workers are reluctant to speak out about their working conditions out of fear of being blacklisted by employers;

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

“That the province of Ontario adopt Bill 170, the Greater Protection for Interns and Vulnerable Workers Act to give unpaid interns greater protection under the law, introduce greater oversight of the internship system, collect data on the prevalence of unpaid internships, establish an anonymous third party complaint system, and require an intern Bill of Rights poster to be placed in every workplace.”

Speaker, I agree with this petition. I will sign my name to it and give it to page Jo Jo.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That’s the right one, Speaker; you got it. Thank you very much. I’m pleased that you chose me over some of those others.

I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the government of Ontario’s newly created Ontario College of Trades is planning to hit hard-working tradespeople with membership fees that, if the college has its way, will add up to \$84 million a year; and

“Whereas the Ontario College of Trades has no clear benefit and no accountability as tradespeople already pay for licences and countless other fees to government; and

“Whereas Ontario has struggled for years to attract people to skilled trades and the planned tax grab will kill jobs and drive people out of trades;

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

“To stop the job-killing trades tax and shut down the Ontario College of Trades immediately.”

Speaker, I support this petition, affix my signature and send it down with Jaclyn.

AIR QUALITY

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: I knew you were going to choose me, Madam Speaker.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

“Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

“Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

“Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

“Whereas the environment minister has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable and prone to error; and

“Whereas the new Drive Clean test no longer assesses tailpipe emissions, but instead scans the on-board diagnostics systems of vehicles, which already perform a series of continuous and periodic emissions checks; and

“Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

“Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false ‘fails,’ which have resulted in the overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress;

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

“That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program.”

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

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have a petition here from some very concerned citizens in my riding. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition and will affix my name to it.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

Mr. John Vanthof: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I full-heartedly agree, sign this and give it to page Ibrahim.

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas, beginning on January 1, 2013, the WSIB was expanded to include groups of employers and principals who had previously been exempt from WSIB and had private insurance; and

“Whereas this new financial burden does nothing to improve worker safety and only drives up the cost of doing business in Ontario;

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

“To repeal the statutory obligations created by Bill 119.”

I fully support this, will sign it and give it to page Jaclyn.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

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

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

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

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

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

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

I totally agree with this petition, and I’ll affix my signature and send it to the table with Meera.

MARKDALE HOSPITAL

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Grey Bruce Health Services’ Markdale hospital is the only health care facility between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor;

“Whereas the community of Markdale rallied to raise \$13 million on the promise they would get a new state-of-the-art hospital in Markdale;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announce as soon as possible its intended construction date for the new Markdale hospital and ensure that the care needs of the patients and families of our community are met in a timely manner.”

I support this fully, will sign it and give it to page Kiranpreet to take to the Clerks’ desk.

LYME DISEASE

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

“Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn’s, Alzheimer’s, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe; and

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario health insurance plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process for establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to direct the Ontario public health system and OHIP to include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme disease in Ontario and to have everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and success-

ful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians.”

1610

I agree with this, will sign it, and send it to the table with page Jaclyn.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The time for petitions has expired. Orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR JOBS AND PROSPERITY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L’INFRASTRUCTURE AU SERVICE DE L’EMPLOI ET DE LA PROSPÉRITÉ

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 25, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: It’s absolutely my pleasure to stand today and speak to Bill 141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2013. The objective of this, as people at home listening and people in the Legislature will know, is to establish mechanisms to encourage principled, evidence-based and strategic long-term infrastructure planning that supports job creation and training opportunities, economic growth and protection of the environment, and to incorporate design excellence into infrastructure planning.

Critics’ comments suggest that we will support the principles advanced in the proposed legislation, such as the need for long-term planning for infrastructure; that infrastructure investments should be prioritized based on a specific list of criteria; that we should know the current state of all government-owned infrastructure assets; and that the government should publish, at minimum, a 10-year plan setting out the anticipated infrastructure needs with a strategy to meet those needs. However, this legislation fails to mandate any specific measures that would enable the practical implementation of the proposed principles.

Speaker—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Point of order?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I don’t mean to be combative, but when we had the floor, it was questions and comments when we left the debate, as I recall. I didn’t get to finish, but I’ll let the Clerk figure it out.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I did say, “Further debate,” and Mr. Fedeli isn’t here.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Well, I did ask for further debate.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: But he got up before we even had a chance—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It was the member for Niagara's maiden speech. I should have said that. So if there's a bit of confusion, understand the situation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We have another point of order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Madam Speaker, can we have unanimous consent for the member to proceed?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Now, I would want to explain to you that someone else has the floor. What I can do is ask the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound if he wishes to cede the time at this point and be in the next rotation.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Would we start over with the 20 minutes?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We'd start over, absolutely.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'd be pleased to cede so that the honourable member can do his maiden speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would now recognize the member from Niagara, who has the floor.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you, Madam Speaker and fellow MPPs. And to the people of Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Fort Erie and surrounding communities, thank you for trusting me to bring the Niagara voice to Toronto. I want to thank the people of Niagara who went out in the cold and cast a ballot in the recent by-election. I thank the voters who put their faith in me.

I want to thank the NDP stalwarts who kept the NDP riding association functioning over the last couple of decades. This election win could not have happened without them.

I want to thank the many volunteers who donated their time and went out in the cold and knocked on doors in the middle of one of the coldest winters on record.

To the generous donors and to everyone who displayed their support for me by taking a lawn sign, I would not be here without you.

I want to thank my family for their patience, as I wasn't able to spend a lot of time with them during the election. I want to give a huge thank you to my wife, Rita, a principal; to my three children, Tara-Lynn, Chantel and Jacqueline; and to my grandchildren, Prescila, Tanner, Tatum, Charlotte and Parker.

Niagara is my home. It's where I was raised. It's where I raised my kids and it's where I raise my grandchildren, and it's where they live. The reason why I ran as an MPP for the riding of Niagara Falls was my concern for their future. I was concerned about where the province was going and where the Niagara region was going as people face the highest unemployment rate in the province. What was most disturbing was the high unemployment rate among young people.

I have dedicated my public life to helping improve the futures of families in Niagara by defending and creating jobs throughout Niagara. As president of Unifor Local 199, I have worked with the largest corporations in the world to secure and create jobs. Business leaders know they can work with me. We bargained in a number of sectors including automotive, with General Motors, and health care, aerospace, parts manufacturers, small business and banking.

I was the United Way campaign chair for two years, where we successfully raised \$6 million for local programs in Niagara. And not to give away my age, but I have had this conversation with some of my fellow MPPs: I also play goalie in our local old-timers' hockey league.

Too many young people have to leave Niagara to look for work elsewhere. Families in our ridings don't want to see their 25-year-old kids living in their basements. They want them to get a job, start on their own and raise their own families in their own communities in Niagara. That has to change by making sure we create local jobs in Niagara Falls, Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake and surrounding communities so young people can build their future in Niagara. It's our obligation collectively to make sure our children and our grandchildren have a future in our communities right here in Ontario. As MPP, I will make sure this government delivers for the people of Fort Erie, Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake and surrounding areas.

This government needs to follow through on its promise to build a new Niagara Falls hospital and ensure it gets built by local workers, contractors, engineers and architects.

This government needs to deliver a long-term plan to keep the Fort Erie Race Track open. That includes bringing back the slots to ensure a long-term future for the 1,000 families who depend on the track for their livelihood.

And the Premier owes it to the people of Niagara-on-the-Lake that she met with to make sure the local school, Parliament Oak Public School, not only remains open but takes its place as a model for schools right across Ontario.

I am grateful to the people of Niagara Falls, Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake and surrounding communities who elected me as their MPP to work with Andrea Horwath and the NDP caucus to put Niagara's priorities at the top of the agenda here at Queen's Park. As MPP, I will fight to make life more affordable for Niagara families by making sure this government lowers hydro rates and reduces auto insurance.

The riding of Niagara Falls has incredible potential, but residents have seen potential squandered by this Liberal government.

When I was in Fort Erie, I went door to door and I talked to many, many people who lost their jobs at the racetrack. I saw that not only the stores were closing down, but entire malls were closed. People in Fort Erie saw 1,000 jobs threatened when the slots were ripped out

of the Fort Erie Race Track—its main source of revenue. Instead of shoring up tourism and creating more jobs in Fort Erie, the provincial tourist office that was used to welcome visitors from the United States was shut down.

It was Andrea Horwath and the NDP that stood shoulder to shoulder with the Fort Erie community to make sure the Fort Erie Race Track stayed open.

1620

Together with Fort Erie families, the mayor, the city council and Jim Thibert, the head of the Fort Erie Race Track, we pressured this government to keep this promise to fund festival racing at the track this year. It took a by-election to get this government to agree to keep the track open for one more year.

People were relieved that their track didn't close down, but the fight is not over. As MPP, I'll make sure this government commits to a long-term plan for the track that includes bringing back the slots, so families don't have to live with constant insecurity about their future.

People in Fort Erie were also very concerned about their health care. People know me, and they know my record when it comes to health care. I've always fought to keep access open to the best-quality health care for people, when they need it, where they need it, no matter where they live in our communities.

When the Liberals closed down the ER in Fort Erie, I stood with the yellow shirts and 5,000 people who stood up to save their local hospital.

When the Liberals cut maternity service in Niagara Falls, I stood with expectant moms. It's one that I've never understood: People go to Niagara Falls, one of the seven wonders of the world, as a tourist destination; they go there for their honeymoons; they go there to make babies; and now in Niagara Falls, we can't even deliver them. It makes absolutely no sense.

When the C. diff outbreak was raging through our hospital, I stood with the patients' families—and their loved ones who had passed away.

It has been an uphill battle to get the government to listen to the needs of the people of Niagara. In Niagara-on-the-Lake, I met with families who were trying to keep Parliament Oak Public School open. The Premier visited Niagara-on-the-Lake, and she spoke to the school community. She met with the parents for almost an hour. She said school boards have a responsibility to listen to the communities. Well, the community, the parents, the Lord Mayor, city council, the chamber of commerce and the government's own accommodation review committee all say the school should stay open. Now it's time for the Premier to listen to local voices. The Premier will not stop hearing from me, as MPP, until she takes action to keep Parliament Oak Public School open for the community she met with in Niagara-on-the-Lake.

In Niagara Falls, this government promised to build a new Niagara Falls hospital. I support the new Niagara Falls hospital 100%. As a Niagara Falls councillor, I voted to make sure that the \$20 million of casino money the city received went towards building the hospital. I

also voted in favour of the location. As an MPP, I'll make sure this government delivers on its promise to the Niagara families, to make sure they get their hospital for their local health care needs, when they need it, where they need it.

Local leaders are concerned that the Wynne Liberal government is ignoring their call for full-day GO train service to Niagara Falls and to provide much-needed stimulus for the local economy. Regional leaders across Niagara are urging this government to extend daily GO train service to Niagara, because they recognize how vital it is to our local economy.

They talk of building more campuses in Niagara Falls. Full-day GO train service is a way to get students to any new university or college campus built in the city, revitalizing our downtown, and we all understand how important it is to have vibrant downtowns.

Daily GO train service will also bring tourists, who would travel from Toronto and other communities to get to Niagara Falls. As MPP, I will make sure this government takes action by committing to a timeline to bring daily GO train service to Niagara Falls.

In Niagara Falls, local leaders are also concerned that this government is jeopardizing jobs and revenue at the Niagara Falls casino, because these casinos seem to be an afterthought of the Wynne Liberal government as they continue to push for new casinos across Ontario. As MPP, I'll make sure this government doesn't exclude the Niagara Falls casinos in any plans.

Jobs: When I was campaigning, I knocked on thousands of doors. People told me across the riding that their main concern was jobs, jobs to maintain their families, jobs for their children and their grandchildren, so that at 25 they don't have to live in their basements and they can start an independent family, an independent life and raise their own families in our communities.

As an MPP and NDP advocate for jobs, I'll make sure more jobs are created for those who need work in Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Fort Erie and the surrounding communities. There are many opportunities to shore up our local economy and create much-needed jobs so people can stay in Niagara and raise their family.

I can give you an example of that. SpencerARL, the first manufacturer that came into Niagara in 20 years, started with 11 employees. They met with our mayor, they met with our city councillor and they met with the union. They started with 11 people, and after a year and a half, they're up to 280 employees. In meeting with those employers, they told me they could even do more, they could hire more employees, because the corporate tax cut wasn't working for them but the NDP tax credit would. It would help them hire more people, invest in training and invest in new machinery.

In Fort Erie, today, this government can easily create 1,000 permanent jobs by bringing back the slots to the Fort Erie Race Track. This government needs to show the 1,000 families that depend on the track for their jobs a long-term plan and commitment to keep the racetrack open. Fort Erie families shouldn't have to keep living

with constant insecurity about what's going to happen next year. Bring back the slots to keep the Fort Erie Race Track open permanently. There will also be hundreds more jobs at the new speedway. This would send a clear message across the province that Fort Erie is open for business.

The new Niagara Falls hospital is also an opportunity to create new local jobs. This government needs to include provisions in the construction of the hospital to hire local workers, local contractors, local engineers and local architects. This government should also ensure that at every possible opportunity, the construction of the new hospital buys local products to stimulate the local economy. With the highest unemployment rate, this is a way to put people back to work in Niagara, including our young people. That's the way to respect public dollars and maximize the benefits for families in Niagara who need jobs.

New Democrats want to give a tax credit for every new job created. For small businesses and larger companies, this would give them the incentive to hire more people and expand their businesses.

Tourism: Over the course of the campaign, NDP leader Andrea Horwath and myself met with tourist operators, including hotel owners, small businesses and restaurant owners, to talk about how we can get people back to work and expand their businesses. They were in favour of the NDP tax credit to create more jobs and said this would help them build their businesses.

We also met with training companies who said that corporate tax cuts were not benefiting them. They were very supportive of the NDP planned tax credit to hire more people, more machinery and more training.

Wineries in Niagara-on-the-Lake: During the campaign, we met with a number of local wineries, and they told us clearly that corporate tax breaks were not working for them. After meeting with NDP leader Andrea Horwath and myself, they were excited about the NDP 's job tax credit that would help them hire more people and expand their businesses.

I've already pointed out that people in Niagara are facing very a very high unemployment rate, and while they face job insecurity, families and small businesses in Niagara have to deal with skyrocketing hydro bills that are a direct product of this government's broken hydro promises.

Hydro: What people in Niagara and across the province know is that they can no longer afford to pay current hydro rates let alone more rate increases. People in Niagara, like the rest of the province, are paying the highest hydro rates in the country. We met with family-run businesses, big and small manufacturers, and wineries. They told us that the hydro rates are jeopardizing their businesses.

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The NDP leader, Andrea Horwath, and myself met with owners of the local Quiznos in Niagara Falls. They used to have employees, and what happened is, their hydro bill went from \$900 a month to \$1,250. What

happened? They had to let the help go, and they now have to work 12 hours a day to run their local business. They need help. The privatizing of hydro is leading to a 40% increase in hydro rates for families at home as well as small businesses, and more than a 30% increase for industries is projected over the next five years. Just today, I got a call from a homeowner in Niagara Falls who told me that his hydro bill last year was \$300. This year it's over \$500.

This government needs to start making hydro affordable for families and businesses. New Democrats have been telling this government to cut the billion-dollar subsidy to private power companies to sell discount electricity across the border, and to pass the savings on to families. It's the right thing to do and it's the fair thing to do. As we sell it to the Americans, what they are doing is subsidizing it in the States to manufacturers who then take away our jobs in Ontario. It makes absolutely no sense that that's happening.

We need to cut the enormous government waste: the billion-dollar gas plants, billion-dollar waste on eHealth, outrageous CEO salaries and bonuses at Ornge air ambulance and Ontario Power Generation. Public CEOs are making millions of dollars each year. I repeat what NDP leader Andrea Horwath said about this: If you want to be a millionaire, you don't belong in public service.

We need to respect public dollars. We need the NDP's Financial Accountability Office open to stop government spending scandals before they start. We need to cut government waste so we can move forward in building the infrastructure we need and get moving in creating local jobs.

As an MPP for Niagara Falls, Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake and surrounding communities, you can count on me to get the job done: the new Niagara Falls hospital, with local workers; keep the Fort Erie racetrack open permanently and bring back the slots; keep Parliament Oak Public School open; and daily GO train service to Niagara Falls. Collectively, we need to create a better future for our children and our grandchildren.

I have a minute left. I want to tell a quick story about my campaign. I was lucky. When I ran my campaign, I had lots of workers, lots of help, but what I had most of was young people. I had young people that would work 10 and 12 and 14 hours because they believed in the message about creating jobs in the province of Ontario. These were highly skilled young people. They were motivated. They were committed. What we have to do over the course of this Parliament and beyond is to make sure those young people have a future, a future that is up to us to make sure happens for our kids and our grandkids. They are out there. They're talented. They need our help. Let's give it to them.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. John Fraser: Before I start, I'd like to thank the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for ceding the floor. I thought that was very gracious of him, as he always is. And I'd like to congratulate the member from

Niagara Falls on his maiden speech. It was a great speech. Welcome to the Legislature. I look forward to working with you. There is a matter of debate up here in the back row as to whether the member from Windsor–Tecumseh has a better moustache than the member from Niagara Falls. I don't think that's ever going to come to a vote.

Interjection: Unanimous consent?

Mr. John Fraser: We could have a UC. My money is on the member from Niagara Falls.

I want to assure the member from Niagara Falls that we're all here for the same reasons. We all believe in the same things. We are all concerned about the things that matter most for families: Is my son or daughter going to get the help they need in school? Are they going to be able to get a job? Are they going to be able to buy a house? Are they going to be able to raise a family? Those are things that are important to all of us, no matter where we sit, and I want to assure him that all those things are important to me. I look forward to working with him towards finding out what the best way is to do that, because we all have different opinions, but we do come together and do things at times that really do benefit families.

I would like to say, in regards to the bill, in terms of looking at the prospects for jobs for young people, there are provisions in the bill that will use apprentices in provincial infrastructure projects. That will have to be done through regulation. That is, I think, one of the very positive aspects of the bill. I don't have enough time to go into the rest of the bill. I'd like to thank you again, and welcome.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John Yakubski: I, too, would like to congratulate the newly elected member from Niagara Falls on his maiden speech. I remember almost 11 years ago when I had that opportunity to do a maiden speech, and it's a daunting moment, but I know the member from Niagara Falls has already been thrown into the breach here quite early. In his first day in the House, he had a couple of questions. He has come here with a great deal of passion, and that's a wonderful thing to bring to this House, because each and every member should remember who sent them here and why we're here. I think that Mr. Gates does that.

I have to express that I was down in that riding, working hard to see that he wasn't elected, but that is done. That was February 12, and now that Wayne has joined us, I welcome him here and wish him the very best, as we do all members of this House. It's an honour when you are elected to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, as it is any Parliament, and each of us comes here with a great deal of enthusiasm and hope that we are going to make the positive changes that we dreamed about all through our life, if we ever had this opportunity. Sometimes the system does get in the way, but as long as we keep our ideals closely held and make our efforts as strong as possible, we will be doing our job.

While I have a couple of moments here, Speaker, I want to welcome to the House a couple of friends of mine from back in Renfrew county. I have here my friend Gerald Bloom from Combermere and Palmer Rapids, and also my friend David Shulist, who is the mayor of Madawaska Valley. They've joined us here for some part of the proceedings today. Welcome to Queen's Park, fellows.

In closing, again, I will remind my friend Mr. Gates that it is an amazing responsibility that you have accepted by becoming a member of provincial Parliament. We support one another in this endeavour. We may not always agree on the issues, but we always agree that we're all brothers and sisters in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a great pleasure to stand here and welcome my new buddy from the region of Niagara. I learned a bit during his maiden speech. I always knew that he had a great passion and pride for the Niagara region. I knew of his civic involvement with the United Way, for example. But I didn't know that he played goalie in the old-timers' hockey league. I always thought he was a bit of a left-winger.

Mr. Bill Walker: Quite a bit of a left-winger.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Yes.

But I do know that he's a jobs champion in Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Niagara Falls and all the points in between and in between. He's been fighting to save jobs in that region for some time, especially at the Fort Erie raceway. I know he's been known to place a few bets there, as I know the former president of the CAW, his good friend Ken Lewenza, has been known to place a few bets on the horses. I know that because I've done that myself.

It is such a great honour to be up here with the new member from Niagara, as he stands up and protects, as we've seen in his questions last week already—protecting education, protecting health care and standing up.

I thought he had a great sense of humour, Speaker, in his maiden speech when he talked about tourism in Niagara Falls, the honeymoon capital: But because of cuts in health care, you can make babies in Niagara Falls but you can no longer deliver them. I thought that was a great touch.

As a former city councillor myself, I know what Mr. Gates brings to the table and brings to this Legislature. He knows how to deal with the issues of his constituents in his riding and his region. We've already known he has a very strong voice to stand up and speak for the Niagara region. As a friend, and somebody who helped twist his arm a bit to convince him to run for this Legislature, I take great pride in joining the discussion this afternoon and welcoming him to this chamber.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: First of all, I too would like to welcome our honourable colleague, the newly elected MPP for Niagara Falls. I was thinking that there's Bill

Gates and then there's Wayne Gates, and they both have something to contribute to moving Ontario forward. As I say, we graciously welcome you. We congratulate you on your maiden speech.

I would, though, Mr. Gates, with your permission, just like to cite what I think were some of the rather ungracious remarks made by the Leader of the Opposition, by the Conservative Party, on your election. First of all, to retract for a moment, Mr. Yakabuski very kindly welcomed you, having confessed that he worked against you, but nevertheless, once the election was decided—the people have spoken, democracy rules and we welcome you graciously. But I have to say that the remarks by the honourable Leader of the Opposition, calling it essentially a victory of the union elites, that we were a David and Goliath kind of battle and “Give me a level playing field,” “Niagara Falls: That's a Conservative seat, no holds barred, and if they didn't have all these folks shipped in from all over Ontario”—now, there may be a climb-down from the Conservative position on that, too. Another subtext of the union-busting, anti-labour, pro-business sort of —

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would just remind the speaker that when you are doing the comments and questions, they're in the context of what you have heard from the person who is speaking.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I thank you for that eloquent reminder, Madam Speaker, and reminding, as he spoke about his victory and the various folks who worked for him, including people from different parts of Ontario, the youth—I would simply say that those individuals who participated in their democratic right should have been recognized and applauded and not denigrated by the Leader of the Opposition characterizing them as union elites, and David and Goliath.

Thank you, Speaker, for helping me to tie those two issues together.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Niagara Falls has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Wayne Gates: First of all, I'd like to thank my fellow MPPs from Ottawa South, Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Windsor–Tecumseh and Etobicoke North. I will address your comment on what was said about me in the election. Quite frankly, I'm none of those things that were said about me. What I will tell you is that I'm a father and I'm a grandfather—a very proud father and a very proud grandfather. I had the privilege, at a very young age, to come out of a school and get a good union job, quite frankly. I was able to raise my three daughters. I was able to put one through figure skating, and those that follow sports know that's quite the chore. I had my other one in rowing and softball. I coached their softball team. My youngest daughter, Jacqueline—I've been able to put her through dance. I was able to have a house. We were able to go on family vacations together. So I'm none of what they say. I'm a very proud father. I'm a very proud grandfather. Like everybody with kids, you love them to death, and they love me.

What they said about me was unfortunate. It happens in politics, but I'm also big enough to know that politics is a tough game sometimes. Sometimes you respond to it, and sometimes you just go forward and talk about what was important, and what was important in the Niagara Falls riding, quite frankly, was jobs. It was about having hope for our young people. It was about getting health care, publicly funded health care, and making sure that was taken care of. It was about keeping schools open. So all the things that were out there, I just kept going forward. Everybody in this House, all I want you to know is that I was lucky that I was able to raise my children the way I could, and I'm none of the things they said about me.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Walker: I, too, would like to welcome—and I was pleased to cede my position to allow the member from Niagara Falls to do his inaugural speech. I wish him luck, and I guess time will tell if he's a great left-winger or not.

I am proud and privileged to be the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and to stand today and speak to this bill. My riding is home to 117,000 residents, who utilize 148 bridges and culverts and 650 kilometres of roads in Bruce county alone, and 189 bridges and culverts and 877 kilometres of roads in Grey county. It is home to a renowned marine program at Georgian College in Owen Sound, and I'm going to speak a little bit more about that later on in my remarks; a federally designated airport in Wiarton, and again, a huge infrastructure need there, so I'm going to address that; less-than-adequate broadband, and I'm going to address that; and I would be remiss if I didn't talk about industrial wind turbines that have mocked the rural landscape and made it look like a “mangy porcupine.” That's a quote by respected Sun Media commentator Jim Merriam.

Essentially, there's no public transportation in my riding, unfortunately. This House passed a motion before we rose for winter break to address that. I'm still waiting for that, but I'm hopeful that is coming forward.

The people in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound want and need stronger investments in transportation infrastructure, telecommunications, broadband, the general infrastructure of our roads and bridge infrastructure, and Internet services to enjoy the same economic and social level playing field as their urban counterparts.

The question of whether or not Bill 141 can ensure that rural Ontario gets its fair share of infrastructure investments remains an enigma under this Liberal government that has squandered billions of dollars on scandals and boondoggles like the gas plant cancellations. So I'm hopeful; I remain positive and hopeful, but I sure hope they come through and do the things that are needed to allow rural Ontario to thrive.

Every time I rise to speak about infrastructure inequalities in Ontario, I feel compelled to remind the Liberal government of that controversial policy paper they quietly adopted back in 2004. The report, Investing in

People, contains a troubling section entitled “Small, Rural, and Remote Communities: The Anatomy of Risk.” This section reads like rural Ontario’s obituary. It directs the government to pull the plug on rural industries, businesses and infrastructure, leaving its residents, many of whom are rapidly aging, to fend for themselves.

In case the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation missed any of my prior debates in this House challenging this report, I will share with him a copy by way of a page. If I could have one of the pages, please, deliver this to Minister Murray. Thank you, Thomas.

Minister, this report again maps out in no uncertain terms the path of the wrecking ball over rural communities, and we’ve felt the weight of your government’s wrecking ball, from the hundreds of jobs you have sabotaged after pulling the plug on the Slots at Racetracks Program—in our backyard, the Hanover Raceway; shutting down provincial jails—the Owen Sound jail we’ve lost; education opportunities you’ve destroyed after closing down education centres, including the Bluewater Technology Access Centre in my riding; and the retirement savings you ruined and the homes you devalued after littering our community with unwanted industrialized wind factories, not to mention that you’ve taken democracy away from our local communities and those local elected officials.

The reality is stark. The reality is that this anti-rural Ontario report and the policies you plucked from it have essentially turned rural communities into your political carnage, Liberal government. The reality is that your ministry website contains reports on Toronto subways and transit, urban growth and investments, and they’re by the same authors of *The Anatomy of Risk* report that I just had hand-delivered to you.

As I said, the reality is stark indeed if you’re from rural Ontario. This idea that your Bill 141 is capable of reversing any of this decade-old carnage is highly suspect and doubtful. After all, if you were really sincere about getting this right and setting credible long-term targets for infrastructure for all of Ontario, you would begin by first sharing with rural Ontario its fair cut of the gas tax. If you’ll recall, this is a bill, PMB Bill 3, which was tabled and passed in this House by my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, John Yakabuski. I believe it was the seventh time he had to bring it before the NDP—who prop up the Liberals—and the Liberals actually voted in favour. It’s only time now that that actual money gets transferred to those in rural Ontario so that they can play on a level playing field.

The backlog of rural infrastructure, hospitals, airports, education institutions, Internet infrastructure and public transportation—you only need to look at the infrastructure backlog in my great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, and I’m going to start with the Markdale hospital project.

Bill 141’s key principle about the need for government planning and investments to take a long-term view in fact scares me and my constituents. The government has been looking at—looking, talking, discussing, talking, looking,

discussing—this hospital project for over 10 years, despite making a promise to the proud people of that area that if they raised their share—which they did; they rose to the occasion and raised \$12 million. They’re still waiting on that.

I would suggest to you that there has been way too much talk and conversation and a lot less action than what we require, so I’m hoping that now—I’m going to ask them directly, as they contemplate where they’re going to put these infrastructure dollars. There’s never been a better time than now to build this hospital. I question if this bill can succeed in ensuring the long-term projects such as the Markdale hospital. The jobs that it would create, the sustainability for a whole region—it’s paramount. We really, really hope that the Liberal government will stand behind their word on this occasion and step up to the plate for those people who have been standing, waiting idly by, and losing out on great services.

Rural hospital projects, unfortunately, are just one part of the problem. The Warton Keppel International Airport is in need of investment. The people on the Bruce Peninsula depend on the Warton airport as well for bringing in all kinds of traffic from all over the world. It’s also an Ornge depot for medical evacuations. Just this January, Ornge used the airport four times for those medical evacuations. Recent inspections have found that the main runway, which is about 30 years old, needs to be replaced. If the work isn’t done, the airport certification will be pulled. That’s a huge economic blow to our whole area. I’m told that if you lose that certification, it’s virtually impossible to get it back. It would have huge ramifications on future projects, on future job growth, on the future sustainability of not only the Bruce Peninsula but the whole area of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

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There are very few federal airports in a rural riding. It’s imperative that we keep that. It’s about a \$3-million need and investment. Mr. Speaker, I would suggest to you that that’s a catalyst for other investments. I think once we redo that landing strip, it will bring more and more opportunities back to our area. Again, I implore the minister to give that due consideration.

Your colleague and the previous economic development minister should be aware of this issue, as I’ve written to him about it. I’ve written to you about it. The airport, again, is a valuable commodity to the regional economy and the tourism industry, as it helps attract investment and jobs and it can accommodate service to and from the United States and has four times as much direct employment as other airports. We now even have people wanting to come from international destinations to this great airport because of the parks that we have on the northern part of the Bruce Peninsula. We have people coming from all over the world to utilize our great backyard diving opportunities and various other tourism opportunities.

One that is very near and dear to my heart and that I think plays a significant role—and I hope the minister

will, in fact, give extreme due diligence and consideration to this one—is the future of the Marine Emergency Duties Training Program. It's being divested by the federal government. Currently, it is located in Port Colborne. It's actually now moving to the marine campus in Owen Sound. We are a marine centre of excellence. We're the only one in the province; we're the only one in mid-Canada. It makes sense: We're located by the Great Lakes. It makes sense to have a marine training facility and program there. But it's absolutely critical—this whole program remains in limbo if this government does not give explicit support as quickly as possible. The clock is ticking and we need to ensure that this remains here. The minister again knows what I'm talking about in this. I've written him a handful of times, asking for his government's support in ensuring that central Canada's only marine firefighter program is continued in Owen Sound.

I've invited him to tour the Owen Sound campus of Georgian College to see first-hand the renowned Great Lakes International Marine Training and Research Centre that we have, in the hope he would support the MED training program. A number of years ago, the government put a number of dollars, significant dollars, as did private industry, to put in the only simulator in central Canada. My fear, again, is that if this whole program doesn't get moved there and made sustainable, we'll lose that, and then what will happen is all the people who need training from the marine industry will end up going to the east coast and the west coast. The industry will collapse, and at the end of the day it will be a down-cycle of fewer jobs in the great province of Ontario.

I can't imagine you could leverage money better, Mr. Minister, than by putting some dollars into this facility, this needed infrastructure project, which would allow more jobs to be created, would allow the sustainability of the college in Owen Sound, a centre of excellence for marine. We would draw people from around the world to this renowned training program. It would allow students to stay. It would be a great opportunity for students looking for a career. I believe their placement percentage right now is about 98% for the students who go through the marine training. It's having a renaissance. We've got a great marine industry in Ontario. Mr. Jack Leitch was up a little while ago. They named a wing after him. We've got private sector that came to the fore and put money into that training facility because they know that there will be great economic opportunities and sustainability of jobs if we keep this thriving industry going.

Mr. Speaker, it's absolutely critical not only to Owen Sound's future sustainability but to that of Ontario, the marine shipping industry, and it's at risk. If we don't get some money through this infrastructure program, I'm very sadly thinking that we could lose that whole industry to the west or the east coast.

Another significant area of interest in our riding is the dredging of the Owen Sound harbour. It's always been a pride of the Great Lakes. It plays a critical role. We have a number of large companies that use it to bring in sand,

to bring in all the crops from the farming and agricultural industry to ship them abroad. We're in need of dredging. I know my federal colleague Larry Miller is working very hard on this. We've got private industries that are looking at this dredging of the harbour and want to ensure that this goes forward. Right now, we're caught in a bit of a technical loophole where it needs to be dredged to allow other interests to take it over. Again, there's a divestiture program in place.

We need this government to step up to help the whole region. We have a company, P&H, that is located in Hanover as well as in Owen Sound. They currently operate the silos. They are prepared to step up, but we need the government to come to the table and allow some activity to move forward, some approvals to move forward, and, most importantly, some infrastructure funding to allow this very critical port along the whole Great Lakes system—and it can't go without saying just how critical this is to the economic survival and sustainability of our great community of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound: the jobs it creates, the future opportunities. Again, for those students, what better linkage if we could have that marine engineering and emergency training program at Georgian College? We've got the harbour right there. We can do the training, and we have a natural built-in environment for those people coming to look and work in the marine industry. That centre of excellence I told you about would sustain Georgian College's future—and a key tenet. They operate other campuses, of course, we know, across the province. They do fantastic work as Georgian College. They're leaders in the college community in the training and development of our youth, providing opportunities for our youth.

But, Mr. Speaker, I can't say enough how critical it is that these two programs—the marine emergency training program—receive the funding to be able to build the capacity that they need to provide the first-class, world-class training facility, to ensure that that simulator remains in Owen Sound and for the industry. This harbour is absolutely a critical one if we're going to move up.

The other one I want to talk at length about a little bit here is, finally, the broadband services in my riding. In fact, on Friday morning, I'm going to be meeting with all the local mayors, the county representatives, the CAOs and a number of others to talk about broadband service.

It's interesting—I've lived my whole life—I was born and raised in the great village of Hepworth, Ontario, Canada. I've done a lot of my work in Wiarton. You might have heard of a groundhog up there, Wiarton Willie. Without the shadow of a doubt, he's the absolute key prognosticator for our country.

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Well, let's not pump me out of here too quickly. This is Wiarton Billy, not Wiarton Willie.

What I was trying to say is, we have people all the time—I've lived there my whole life. People move up as cottagers. They come and travel through the area. They visit and they fall in love with it, and they say, "Why would I not want to be able to work here and live here?"

A fellow I just met a little while ago, Brad Fletcher, moved back from the west coast. He used to be from our area but moved away and had his career. He's in the technological business. He's coming back and he's saying, "You know what? There are limitations here." Luckily, I guess, for him, he's kind of at the senior end of his career, but what he's really noticing is, we do not have the equal broadband service that most people in the urban areas take for granted.

We have the most beautiful, beautiful area in the world to work. We've got all the natural attractions you would want. We've got clean air. We don't, fortunately, yet have many of these ugly wind turbines dotting our landscape, although they're trying to force those through. Thank you to all those people who are opposing them and standing up and fighting the good fight. Hopefully, we will get this government to understand that they are a blight on our landscape. They're not efficient, and we need to stop them and put a moratorium on them.

But we do need broadband service. We need to be able to create a level playing field in rural Ontario. Contrary to the report *The Anatomy of Risk* that I shared with you just a few minutes ago, we're not prepared in rural Ontario—certainly not in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound—to give up the great fabric of our community, the spirit, the loyalty, the camaraderie and the people who band together for their children and their grandchildren to be able to have that lifestyle that they've enjoyed in a small, rural, cohesive setting.

But what we truly need is funding for our broadband service. We need to be able to bring in fibre optic and ensure that everyone in my great riding has the same equal access to that broadband service. We can compete in any industry, in any area of interest, as long as we have the same level playing field. I would hope that the Liberal government of today and the NDP, depending on where they're going to side with this next budget, will stand up for the people of rural Ontario and things like these infrastructure projects to ensure that rural Ontario is not a have-not, to ensure that we have the same equal and fair access.

It's our responsibility for our young people, those pages sitting in front of you today and those watching at home. Next session, I'm going to have a page from my riding, and I'm certainly here for the most part working for his generation to ensure that Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound will always be a thriving metropolis, that we can have people back to our homes and not have to leave if they so choose. Of course, many young people like to move. They like to spread their roots and go out and experience the world, and that's their opportunity. But what we want to do is ensure that if they don't want to leave, they don't have to.

I have two young boys. My son Ben is 16, and my son Zachary is 19. They're both in a situation right now—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: They are fine young men. Thank you. Most of the credit for that is to their mother.

I want them to have the privilege and opportunity that I have. I am so passionate about my home area, and I'll

never leave. They'll have to drag me out. But in today's economic realities, we need the ability for technology to play its part. We need us to be able to rise to the occasion and show the world what Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound has to offer. We truly do have the capacity, the skills, the talent, the ingenuity, the innovation and the passion, but what we need is the technological infrastructure to allow us to compete with downtown Toronto, with downtown London, with downtown Guelph, with downtown Kitchener–Waterloo. We need to be on a level playing field with Ottawa.

With the enhancement of that broadband service to an area like Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, there is no limiting what we can do. There's no limit to the opportunity, and I think what we'll find is a whole new graduate degree level of people who want to come back home and those who don't want to leave home. We'll have people who actually have never even heard of our area, but once they discover us—again, through our great friend Warton Willie—the area that we have and the ability for them to come to one of the most beautiful places on earth—obviously, I'm a little biased, but it certainly is one of those places that, once people come to it or they see it on the Internet, they make it a destination. They want to see the clean blue waters. They want to travel to the Bruce Peninsula. They want to come and enjoy the beach at Sauble. They come to Warton and visit Warton Willie. They want to come to Markdale, to Chapman's factory, and we need those types of businesses.

1700

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Great ice cream.

Mr. Bill Walker: Absolutely; the best ice cream in Canada, I might suggest. I think even Rick Mercer said that.

We need to level the playing field. I see that the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities is here, and I know I've written some letters to him in regard to this marine emergency program, so I'm hoping he's taking great listening today and he's going to add a letter of support to his fellow minister Mr. Murray and ensure that there is some funding for the marine engineering emergency program at Georgian College. I know I've talked to you on numerous occasions and I know I can count on your support, Minister. I truly do appreciate that. I would hope that, more than talk, though, there's a cheque to be following in the mail—because we really can't let this industry leave the great province of Ontario—and I know you want to make sure that happens.

I want to make sure, Mr. Minister, that at the end of the day, with those apprentices for that College of Trades, there are at least people left in the province that you can go off and chase with all these fees, so we need to ensure that that remains here.

I'm just going to partly summarize. Again, the other one is transportation. I passed a private member's resolution—my first in this House. It received unanimous support of all three parties. That was before we rose for Christmas break. I'm still waiting on the government to actually bring that forward. I asked for an all-party com-

mittee. It shouldn't be partisan. People in transportation, of all stripes, need to be able to get to work, get to volunteer opportunities, get to the hospital when needed, and get out and visit relatives who are in need, particularly with keeping care at home.

Mr. Speaker, I'm really, really sincere. I've got people from all over the province writing me letters saying, "Mr. Walker: great job in bringing that to the forefront; great job in ensuring that the government understands the needs of rural and northern Ontario, but where's the action? What's going to happen?" I turn it over again to the government of the day, the Liberals: Where is that? It was unanimously approved, so I really hope they will do that.

I've talked again, more specifically, about one. We're aware, and I've made the minister aware, of requests from the city of Owen Sound. We lost our Greyhound bus service. There are a lot of old, outdated regulations and legislation in place that would allow private companies to come in and do a lot more, a lot more flexibility and actually make viable, sustainable runs to allow, again, something that should be fair and equitable for all residents of Ontario: a good transportation program. I hope the government will take that into consideration and know there aren't just GTA transportation needs; there are huge needs in rural and northern Ontario.

Ontario's infrastructure deficit remains sizable. There's no doubt they've squandered billions and billions of dollars on things like gas plants, eHealth and the Ornge helicopter fiasco. Mr. Speaker, if we'd had that money, a lot of these infrastructure concerns I have—and I haven't been into the bridges and culverts that we have just in Bruce and Grey, although I did bring that up at the first of my greetings. We need to stop wasting the valuable dollars that we bring in from the hard-working taxpayers of our great province.

I want to, just one more time, implore the minister to give serious consideration to our broadband needs, to our marine emergency program needs, to the dredging of our dock in Owen Sound, and to the Wiarton airport runway that we need to update. We have a lot of needs in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, but we also have huge opportunity. I want to have hope for those who live there now. I want to declare hope for those who are going to come in the future, so that we always have the sustainable, vibrant, creative, caring community that Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is. Without a shadow of a doubt, Mr. Speaker, I hope the minister has heard every word and will give due diligence.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It's a pleasure to rise and speak in response to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. One of the things that he touched on that I made note of, and I think is quite important, is that infrastructure investment is really a question of creating equal and fair access; that the idea of providing funding for and the development of good infrastructure would allow for different communities, particularly rural communities, to have more access to important resources.

I want to touch a bit on the concept of broadband Internet as a resource and as an access issue. In our society now I think it's well established that—no one has any doubt about it—access to the Internet is no longer strictly a leisure activity or an entertainment activity. It is a fundamental resource that allows us to access government services and it allows us to access important information and knowledge. It can be a tool for teaching, and also it can be a tool to help drive the economy. There are many information-based economies in this world, and one of the key ingredients to develop an information-based or technology-based economy is to be able to have high-speed Internet that's reliable and that's fast to transfer data back and forth. There are many developers for applications and computer programmers who rely on access to the Internet and can live in any jurisdiction and can live in any community to do that. In rural communities, particularly, where there is affordable housing or the price and the cost of living are somewhat less than some urban centres, it can be a potential great opportunity for young entrepreneurs who want to start up a business, start up a company, and they simply need affordable living, as well as access to the Internet. Great idea, and I support that notion.

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

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I'm pleased to follow my colleagues from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and Bramalea–Gore–Malton sans Springdale. In any case, the bill is quite comprehensive, Bill 141. In moving from bricks, mortar, even up to broadband, there are a number of components of it.

I'd just like the House, as well as people listening, to be aware that the government of Ontario has committed on the order of about \$85 billion since 2003 to upgrade and revamp and recreate public infrastructure in this province. The 2013 Ontario budget has included \$35 billion in projected spending for the next three years, including in calendar year 2013-14—or maybe it's fiscal year; you have to ask the accountants—\$13.5 billion.

There are a number of different components in this, in terms of the principles, I think perhaps best characterized as the professionalization of infrastructure planning, whether it's the long-range view, the long-term planning, the on-the-ground assessments kind of incorporation of the demographics and, of course, the built environment, as well as the local natural environment. I can give you an example specifically from the great riding of Etobicoke North. We were not too long ago recently announcing a \$200-million expansion to Etobicoke General Hospital, part of the William Osler system.

I was very pleased to be part of that announcement, not only for, of course, the ribbon-cutting ceremony, but beyond that, what it will mean for members of the community. It's a four-storey expansion—I think it's like an acre and a half—cardiac wing, emergency room facilities, laboratory testing, ultimately a result of the demographic search or demographic scan of the community. What this Bill 141 attempts to do is to generalize that for the province of Ontario.

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

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I've been in this chamber now going on three years, and I've come to know the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound quite well, and I have to say that he serves his constituents remarkably. He does a fantastic job. He's always in the House here talking to bills and bringing up the concerns that his constituents have, so I have to give him kudos for that. He's doing a bang-up job, and I think the people back home in Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound need to recognize that.

That being said, he did raise some very good points, as he always does; he's a very well-thought-out individual who thinks about what he says before he says it. One of the things that caught my attention was broadband. In rural Ontario, this is a huge issue, particularly in my riding of Northumberland-Quinte West, where of course it's the lovely rolling hills of Northumberland. I would encourage all members in the NDP caucus, as well as the Liberal caucus—the member from Peterborough loves coming to Northumberland-Quinte West, and I encourage him to come back even more frequently. But with the lovely rolling hills of Northumberland, what that does is it makes it much harder for broadband Internet services to be provided, given the geographical terrain.

I think that these are initiatives that we need to push forward. I know our federal counterparts have done a fantastic job in investing large sums of money in rural Ontario and across Canada as a whole for broadband services. I think this is another area that I'll definitely be speaking to in a few moments when I speak to Bill 141.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for your time.

1710

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

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): You already had one.

The member for Peterborough and Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. You know, I always enjoy listening to my good friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I had the opportunity on a couple of occasions to be in Owen Sound, a wonderful community. Of course, it's the home of one of the most colourful members ever to serve in this Ontario Legislature, one Eddie Sargent. When I see the member over there, I'm kind of reminded a little bit—I got to meet Mr. Sargent I guess in the late 1980s, and of course his daughter, Patti Belle Noble, I think, worked in the constituency office there, up in Owen Sound. It was great. One thing you could always depend upon the representatives from that riding to be is certainly a great representative of that riding, and to bring the issues of the day.

Mr. Speaker, I must be somewhat apologetic. I didn't get the opportunity to hear all the speech today. I just came in on the tail end of it, but I'm quite sure that the content of the tail end was reflective of all the speech from start to finish.

This is a very important bill. We'd like to see collaboration on all sides of the House, for the opposition, the third party and the government to come together in a common purpose. When I'm talking to my good friends at the East City Coffee Shop in Peterborough, on Hunter Street—great menu, very economical. I was there a couple of weeks ago. We had a chat, and they're saying, "Jeff, when you get back to Queen's Park, you tell everybody that you want everybody to work together," because in a minority government all 107 members are part of government. We can make this place work very, very well, a collaboration to get these kind of bills through.

I do recommend to you, Mr. Speaker, that the next time you happen to drop by Peterborough, go to the East City Coffee Shop on Hunter Street East: a wonderful menu, great hospitality, and you'll learn a lot about the community by going there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): But you didn't offer to buy me a coffee. I hope to avail myself of the member's hospitality. Thank you very much.

I return to the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, and he has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you to the speakers from Etobicoke North, my colleague from Northumberland-Quinte West—and I'll just return the favour that you too do a great job on behalf of your residents in ensuring that their needs are brought to this chamber. To the Minister of Rural Affairs, thank you. Yes, we certainly have a bit of a history: Mr. Sargent; Bill Murdoch, my immediate predecessor. Hopefully I can stand up to the same tests that they did. Maybe, Minister, you could honour their service to the community by showing your support at the cabinet table for those projects that I'm about to rehash.

The marine emergency department, Minister: I've offered a number of things for you and I've sent you some notes on that. I sincerely hope you'll give that consideration. If that marine training facility leaves Ontario, we've done an injustice to the young people and to the future of our province, because that truly is something that is a niche area. How can the Great Lakes not have a marine engineering training program on the Great Lakes? Owen Sound is well-positioned. Georgian College is already the leader. Minister, I hope you'll give that consideration.

The dredging of the Owen Sound harbour is one that I brought up. Again, it's absolutely critical. What better way? You've got the marine training program. If you fund that—when you fund that—you have that ability, and then you have the students right there utilizing the harbour and in fact getting jobs right there.

The Markdale hospital: You've made promises for 10 years. Please, please, please, for the people of Markdale and area who have been so patient, come through with that one and allow that hospital to be built and give them hope.

The Wiarton Keppel airport, now owned by the town of South Bruce Peninsula and Georgian Bluffs: We need that runway to be redone. It's a federal port. It's a federal airstrip, and if we don't have that, we're going to lose it.

It will never be there. It has huge economic opportunities for jobs and the thriving sustainability of the Bruce Peninsula.

And as we've talked about, broadband: It's truly a catalyst for a rural area, Minister and Mr. Speaker. What it does is, we create the environment. If that broadband is brought in and we create a level playing field, then business comes along and does their part. They ensure there are opportunities. They create jobs. They create hope. They create prosperity for the sustainability of the great area of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Thank you for the opportunity today, Mr. Speaker, and, Minister, I hope you give due consideration.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I'm pleased to recognize the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'm pleased to be recognized as well.

Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased to speak today on government Bill 141, Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2013. I'll begin my remarks with just a brief overview of some of the supportable initiatives of this bill. In general, the purpose component or the purpose element of the act, of the proposed bill, is something that's quite encouraging. The purpose talks about establishing mechanisms to encourage a number of things, one of them being an evidence-based and long-term infrastructure planning initiative. Whatever the topic may be in this government or in any government, I think that we need to really focus in on this: Many of our decisions that we make are emotional, or many of the decisions—let me make it more clear—that the government makes, whether it's federal or provincial, are emotional decisions. If you look back on your life and you look back at the decisions you made and think about how many decisions you made that were emotional and the outcome of those decisions, and compare those with decisions you made where you thought it through and had a rational, logical reason for what you did, I'm sure you'll find that your emotion-based decision-making was inferior to your logic- and rationale-based decision-making.

Similarly, I think we need to make sure that with any investment in this province, with any decision-making in this province, and particularly with something as important and resource-heavy as infrastructure planning, we need to make those decisions based on evidence and make sure that our vision is long-term.

In the purpose section, it also talks about tying in infrastructure planning with job creation and training opportunities. Many folks have talked about the fact that infrastructure development is one of the best ways—a very solid and dependable way—of creating job opportunities. It's kind of a synergistic effect, because once you have the infrastructure planning and development, you build the infrastructure, you create jobs, and then the fact that that infrastructure exists also creates opportunity for more jobs. So it has a doubling effect.

I'm also particularly encouraged by the fact that the purpose in this bill includes a section talking about the

importance not only of economic growth and job creation elements, but also that there should be a component for infrastructure planning that speaks to the protection of the environment. It's essential that we keep all these factors in mind when we're developing infrastructure. We need to make sure that our environment is taken care of, because there are many, many costs. There are health costs that flow from the negative impact from infrastructure planning and development. If we don't take into consideration the environmental impacts, it could have significant impacts on our natural resources, particularly water, which is one of our most vital and plentiful resources in Ontario, but it is one of the most vulnerable and precarious resources, given the fact that it is so susceptible to pollution, pollutants and environmental damage. So I'm encouraged by the purpose component, which starts off the act, and those elements guide the bill in a positive direction.

Essentially, the bill calls for the government to follow a number of principles when creating an infrastructure plan, and I think we've seen what happens when you don't have a solid vision for infrastructure planning. We've seen the pitfalls and some of the deleterious effects of that. We've seen that. We've seen what happens in a province where we don't have a long-term vision for how we can build infrastructure, and we've seen how much that costs us as a society. And so it's vital, it's essential, it's quite important to make sure we have a long-term plan.

Not only does the bill talk about the fact that we need to have a long-term plan, it also talks about the requirement of timing for when these plans need to be developed, and it also talks about the contents of what a plan needs to include.

1720

The fact that the bill talks about setting the initial timeline of three years to lay out a plan, and then subsequently no later than five years after the previous plan is tabled, creates the necessity to have plans presented in a timely manner. The contents go through some key issues that are things that we can support, notably inventory of the infrastructure, evaluation of the infrastructure, the age of the assets and the condition of the infrastructure assets.

However, there is a large elephant in the room that is not addressed by this bill. It's something I think we need to spend some time to talk about, to really reflect on and to really have a serious discussion about the direction our province is headed—not only this province. If you look at it nationally, it's a decision and an issue that, Canada-wide, we really need to reflect on and think about. That's the reliance, and it seems to be growing reliance, on the P3 model. We just need to take a careful, considered look at it.

First, let's talk about it: It's public-private partnerships. They were touted as a solution, a panacea—

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Good word.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh:—thank you—to fix the problems of a failing government, of struggling economics

and of a limited pool of resources. This would be a solution for these problems.

However, I draw your attention to the beginning of my speech: that we need to make sure our decisions are evidence-based and not emotion-based. Sometimes we look at something, and it sounds like it's good. It sounds like a great idea. It may look like a good idea. It may sell well because it sounds good. But when you get to the facts, when you look at the evidence, if it doesn't pan out, then we can't continue down that path. If the evidence isn't there, we shouldn't make a decision.

We shouldn't continue down a path where we know historically it hasn't worked because, generally speaking, if something hasn't worked time and time again, history has a habit of repeating itself. That's evidence that should inform our decisions. If we know that a particular technique is just not working, we shouldn't continue to do it.

With respect to P3s, there's ample evidence that it doesn't work. I was able to pull up a paper that went into some detail about P3s and looked at them in a measured way and looked at the notion of why it began. Why did people think, "Let's come up with this idea of a public and private partnership"? Why was that something that the government back in the 1990s in the United Kingdom thought was a great idea?

Well, the idea behind it was that it would allow private industry to shoulder the costs, shoulder the risks, shoulder the burden, of developing infrastructure. While that sounds like it might be a good idea, the evidence is to the contrary. I have a quote to read here from the author of the report called *The Problem with Public-Private Partnerships*; the author is Toby Sanger. "P3s had been used by politicians as a form of off-book accounting to make it appear as if public spending and deficits were lower than they actually were—but then public auditors forced governments to include these obligations on their books." That showed that, in fact, the costs that derived from P3s are, in almost every circumstance, much higher than they would have been if it was simply a public investment. Really, it's a tactic that takes the cost of a project off of the public's books, off of the government's books, and provides the appearance that there's less debt in the government. But really, in the long run, the rate-payers, the taxpayers, the citizens of the province end up paying a lot more.

I'll give you a couple of examples; there are significant examples of this. I'll start with one great example, which cuts close to home for me. In Brampton this was a flagship for the idea of public-private partnerships. The Auditor General recently revealed that the flagship P3 Brampton Civic Hospital cost \$200 million more than if it had been built and financed publicly directly by the province. That's \$200 million of an increased cost through using a P3. That does not benefit the public; that does not benefit the province. That's \$200 million that could have been used more effectively.

There are other examples across the country. Another example is the west coast highway, if you look at BC:

BC's Sea-to-Sky Highway is anticipated to cost an additional \$220 million more than if it had been strictly publicly financed and operated.

One other example, in terms of universities: They tried a P3 project in Quebec for a university. The P3 project at Université de Québec à Montréal failed, and it doubled the cost to the public from \$200 million to a whopping \$400 million.

Again, these are just a couple of the multitude of examples of where P3s have failed the public, and in fact have cost us a lot more. It's simply a strategy of making it look like the province doesn't have the debt, that the government doesn't have the debt, but really, in the long run we're paying a lot more.

If that's the evidence, if the evidence shows—and I challenge everyone to look at the evidence and if you can refute this, refute it. I'm open to that discussion; it's important to engage in that discussion. We need to look at examples. We need to look at the evidence. If the evidence is that consistently, more often than not, P3s cost us more, if they cost taxpayers more, then we shouldn't be using them. It's a model that doesn't work. We in the NDP have had serious concerns with P3s as a model, and it's something that this bill doesn't look at.

A simple amendment would be to assess the cost of the model of funding and balance any cost of any model proposed with a publicly funded model and look at what has a long-term benefit or cost to the province. I think if we added that into the long-term funding or the long-term infrastructure planning, if that was a component we added in, we'd be a lot better off. We'd actually be able to have a true measure of what's the most effective way of funding our infrastructure. I encourage you to look at that. Let's just make it evidence-based. We started off—the principle of this bill was that it should be an evidence-based decision-making process. Let's make sure that the evidence-based decision-making process includes a true assessment of the cost of the P3, or whatever model it is, and a publicly funded model to make sure we have a true cost comparison. If it turns out that another model works and it's, long-term, more affordable and not going to cost us more, that's a different thing.

There's one pitfall, though. There's one escape mechanism that, in my respectful submission, kind of presents a distorted picture of what P3s offer. In the analysis, in the measurement of the costs or the benefits when you look at the P3 model, there is an assessment for risk costs, the added value to risk. They give that risk a value, and if you add that risk value in to any sort of calculation, it inflates or it deflates the numbers to the point that it makes the P3 look like it's a better option. I encourage an evidence-based assessment of this "risk" analysis that's used often, and I say that in quotations because—the quotation here that I want to turn your attention to, again from Mr. Sanger, is that, "In every single project approved so far as a P3 in Ontario, the costs would have been lower through traditional procurement if they had not inflated by these calculations of the value of 'risk.'" So the risk is given a value that throws off the calculations. The reason why I say it's a distorted view is

because the calculation of risk is something that's done without any real objective measurement. It's arbitrary. Often the numbers are pulled out of the air, and so that's something that we really need to look at.

I want to give you a great story of the concept of long-term planning. We talk about long-term planning; what does that look like? What is long-term planning? How can we, as politicians, create a vision that's beyond ourselves? There's a great quote that I think of all the time when I think of what I can do in this Parliament, and it's the idea—it's a Jack Layton quote; it's a great quote. He says, "Dream a dream that's longer than your lifetime"—a dream, a vision, that's more than just your short time here on earth. If we extrapolate that to us as politicians, dream a dream that's longer than our four-year term.

1730

There's a great example of this that has been done here in our beautiful city of Toronto, and it's the Prince Edward Viaduct. Who knows about the Prince Edward Viaduct? Raise your arm. I'm going to give you a great lesson about it, then.

The Prince Edward Viaduct, also known as the Don Valley viaduct, is essentially—

Hon. Jeff Leal: I know about the Barry's Bay viaduct.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Well, that's not the one we're talking about today; we're talking about the Prince Edward Viaduct here.

Anyway, the Prince Edward Viaduct: Back in 1910, the city council of Toronto had an opportunity to build, basically, a bridge across the Don Valley. The Don Valley, as you all know, is a beautiful ravine: very lush, very green. The question was, they needed to link the east and the west side of the city, so they needed to build a bridge. A fancy word for a bridge: "viaduct."

This was a bit of a controversial issue. In 1910, there was a referendum put so that the people of the city could talk about this, could decide this. It lost. In 1912, the referendum lost by 59 votes. In 1913, it won by 9,236 votes. This initiative, this idea, was the vision of the commissioner of public works, R.C. Harris, so he should get some credit for that.

Essentially, think about it this way: Back in 1913, when this was approved, when they voted on it, the vision was, "We're going to build a bridge, we're going to build a viaduct, and it's going to cost us an additional cost to allow for the bridge to have a potential subway expansion." To allow for that subway expansion would cost the city an additional amount of money. Back in that time, it was significant, in the millions. To allow for that additional expansion, it would cost them a certain amount. But they thought ahead. If there was ever a time that we needed to actually build a subway, the cost would be astronomically higher to build a brand new piece of infrastructure, another bridge, another structure to allow for the subway. In 1913, they knew this idea of a subway expansion wasn't going to happen in the next five years, wasn't going to happen in the next 10 years; this subway expansion wasn't going to happen in the next 20 years. It actually happened 53 years later. So they thought not a

decade but five decades into the future. They thought, "If we build this now, it's going to cost us not too much—an additional cost, but not too much more. But we know that sometime in the future, the city is going to need to have the ability to and will want to build a subway that will link the two sides of the city. So let's think five decades ahead and give a gift," one that the politicians at that time not only were not going to see in their election term, but that they weren't going to see in their lifetime. They gave a gift to the city of Toronto that was five decades into the future.

So in 1966, when the Toronto Transit Commission opened up the Bloor-Danforth subway, it was actually only possible because of the forward thinking of the folks from 1913, the fact that they thought, "When we build this viaduct, let's allow for an expansion, let's allow for the accommodation of a subway that we're not going to be able to build in our election term, that we're not even going to be able to build in our lifetime, but that our grandchildren's grandchildren, perhaps, or our grandchildren, perhaps, will be able to make use of." They actually built the subway, and it's a beautiful subway that connects the east and west parts of the city.

That's an example of some long-term infrastructure planning. That is something we can all look to as inspiration for forward thinking, for people who thought beyond their political lifetime. They thought beyond their actual life on this earth. That's a vision for what we can do if we really think ahead, a vision for better infrastructure planning for this province. I wanted to make sure that if we talked about long-term planning for infrastructure, I could share this example with you. This example could be used as something that we could emulate, hopefully, in our decision-making.

With that, I will summarize my three major points: Let's make sure that our decisions are based on evidence, not on emotion. If we want to have long-term-vision planning, let's look at the example of the Prince Edward Viaduct as inspiration for that. Finally, let's have a serious discussion and reflection on the merits, and I think the costs, of the P3 system.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's interesting because we actually had the press conference to launch this bill right at the base of the Prince Edward Viaduct. We used that as the example when I was asked, what should this bill accomplish? It should build more of this. It was a design because it also includes all kinds of things: long-term planning—exactly what the member opposite said. That's what this bill is. It actually takes plans and makes them into long-term budgets.

The other thing that's interesting about the Prince Edward Viaduct is, it was a collaboration between Edmund Burke, one of Canada's most famous architects; and Thomas Taylor, who was an engineer. That doesn't happen anymore because after R. C. Harris left, architects were no longer involved in design. So we're going to bring architects back, with engineers, into designing major projects to build those visionary, long-term things.

There was certainly humour in mentioning Jack Layton because I was chair of the Big City Mayors' Caucus. After we did the five-cent-a-litre gas tax transfer to municipalities, he worked with Steve Harper to bring that down, so we lost our national transportation strategy, our national child care strategy and our national infrastructure strategy. I really wish sometimes that people in your federal party actually dreamed a little beyond that because that wasn't the practice at the time. We ended up with a situation right now where the federal government's spend annually in Ontario is \$800 million for the gas tax flow-through to cities which I and a few others negotiated about a decade ago. We've always counted that as municipal money.

The federal government's funding next year for infrastructure is \$73 million. That's the entire amount of money coming into Ontario, net: \$73 million. What will Ontario spend? We will spend \$14 billion. The provincial government, for 30 years, and this is not a political shot—under Liberals, Conservatives and New Democrats—only spent 0.25%, less than \$3 billion. We're now at \$14 billion. This is the first government since the 1970s to do that. The federal government won't even spend \$1 billion annually in Ontario.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm going to try to talk fast so I can get a few words in today.

It's always a pleasure to rise and speak to my colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. I find my colleague to be very balanced and fair, and at times he actually thinks like a fiscal Conservative. Now, he drifted off a little bit on those P3s. I'd like to offer an example of Bruce Power versus wind turbines. There's a P3 that is actually doing very well for our province, providing a significant portion of our reliable, clean power supply. So I'd like him to look at that and consider it when he does.

He talked a little bit, in some of his comments, about risk. Again, I'd like him, when he goes to step up the next time for the budget, to think about the record deficit and the record debt that that party opposite has created in the last two budgets that, unfortunately, they—some of them, all of them—have supported.

He does ask questions about rural Ontario. He often grabs me in the back halls and we have chats about different things. I do believe he's actually trying to understand and find a balanced way to look at what we need. I would ask him that he try, wherever he can, to help support the significant allotment of funding to projects such as the marine emergency program for Owen Sound, dredging of the Owen Sound harbour.

He talked about the Prince Edward Viaduct and how long it has been. Well, that's like our Markdale hospital, which this government again made a promise on and we're still waiting for. They've had a couple shovel turnings, sod turnings, and we're still waiting. People there are starting to lose hope and faith.

I talked earlier in my comments about the Wiarton Keppel airport, which needs a new runway, to ensure that it's there—and the broadband.

The minister actually just talked about gas tax. He was talking, I think, more at the federal level, but they now have the opportunity, considering that that private member's bill by my colleague Mr. Yakabuski has been approved. We hope that comes to rural Ontario as well because that will help address a lot of these infrastructure needs in places like Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

The minister talked about long-term sustainable—again, if he would put money into things like I just referenced from my riding, and all my colleagues will have similar needs, that will ensure that we have hope and sustainability and that we have a province that we once are proud to be part of.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: My colleagues talked about the P3s. In the Niagara Falls riding, during the by-election, it was talked about that the Liberal government, on a P3, put \$26.2 million into the planning. The question becomes, are we going to have the dialogue around, should it be a P3 or should it be a public hospital? When you take a look at the P3 just down the road in St. Catharines, where they built a new hospital, it ended up costing \$1 billion to build the new hospital. They ended up also having a contract with the company to run the hospital at a cost of \$700 million, which is another \$25 million per year to run that hospital. So the question becomes, is that the way to go, when you might have been able to build it cheaper?

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Now, if you take a look at the Peterborough hospital in Ontario, which was built, again, with public funds, it was around \$300 million.

Hon. Jeff Leal: That's my hospital.

Mr. Wayne Gates: And you would probably know exactly how many beds they had, but I know that it was well over 300 beds. It actually has, in Peterborough, more beds than we have in St. Catharines. So there is a question around exactly what you're talking about. Is it smart to build a P3 if it's going to cost taxpayers more money, deliver fewer beds and actually deliver less health care? At the end of the day, instead of that \$700 million going into a corporation's pocket to run the hospital and to give it to their shareholders, they could actually take that \$700 million and give it to front-line-care nurses and front-line-care doctors. That's the debate that has to happen. So I'm hoping that in the new Niagara Falls hospital, we have that debate with the \$26.2 million. Let's find out exactly how we should fund that hospital. Should it be publicly funded or a P3? I'm looking forward to that debate.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: I'm delighted that my friend from Niagara Falls just happened to mention the Peterborough hospital. I would just like to give a plug to my good friend Ken Tremblay, the president and CEO, and the hard-working men and women, right from the top to the bottom, who do such an outstanding job each and every

day to provide quality health care not only in the city of Peterborough, but in the county of Peterborough and well beyond the Peterborough area.

In fact, just last week there was a ranking of ERs across the province of Ontario, and the Peterborough ER at PRHC just moved up tremendously in the ranking of providing great service under the folks there. I had the opportunity just once to be there in the ER, and the care was second to none.

But I have to get back to my good friend the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. One of the things that we've been working on in the last few years is to provide dollars to municipalities right across Ontario to do their asset management plan, and that is a great tool. I know that communities in your riding, Mr. Speaker, took those dollars from the provincial government to develop those asset management plans.

For people who are watching, perhaps, in Fergus right now, they took those dollars to develop the asset management plan, which is a real reflection of infrastructure priorities in those communities, and they used that as a planning tool. As dollars come about from both the government of Canada and the province of Ontario, they'll be able to go through that inventory, as established by that asset management plan, to do roads, to do bridges, to do waste water treatment plants.

My colleague the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure was a real champion to make sure that those asset management plans were put in place. As a former city councillor in Peterborough for 18 years, from 1985 until the fall of 2003, I know how important it is for asset management plans to deal with those infrastructure issues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We return to the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton for his two-minute response.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I should start with the member from Peterborough's comments. It's a great example of how much better a publicly funded option is than a P3. I think that perhaps the member from Peterborough can use that and perhaps convince the rest of the members in his caucus to consider looking at the benefits and merits of a publicly funded hospital, as opposed to a P3.

I just have to spend a couple of minutes—I only have a couple of minutes, so a couple of seconds—addressing the Minister of Transportation. I think his comments initially started off quite positive, with the viaduct, but the problem is that he opens himself up to a great deal of criticism when he looks to criticize the leader of the third party when he sits in a government that's been in power for over 10 years with a dismal track record on transit, child care and a great number of issues. I think it's a bit troublesome to—the proverb that we often use—throw stones in a glass house, particularly when your house is so fragile. I think that it's somewhat questionable in terms of a strategy.

I thank the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for drawing attention to the Bruce Power example. I think that there are a lot of problems with the concept of

nuclear energy in general given the fact that the costs for refurbishment are so unpredictable and so costly. That is something we really need to look at and whether or not we actually need to be investing further into nuclear power when it's not the most economically feasible or advisable option. We have to have a serious assessment of its cost-versus-benefit ratio, and I think that in a lot of regards, nuclear power has certain pitfalls and problems that we need to look at.

I've got to thank the member from Niagara Falls for drawing attention to a current P3-versus-publicly-funded question and dilemma. I hope we look at that very seriously when we look at building the new hospital because there are a lot of merits to the publicly funded model and a lot of problems with the P3 model.

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

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I listened with great intent here this afternoon during the discussion of Bill 141. This is, again, very typical of this Liberal government, bringing forth legislation that actually has not a lot of substance or content to it.

If you'll indulge me, Mr. Speaker, I'd like to go through a few of the segments of the bill and just outline to the people of Ontario out there some of the concerns that I myself see with some of the language that's being used and some of the points that this bill brings forward.

It says here, "Infrastructure planning principles." What this government is proposing is bringing forth a framework, if you will, of principles that would look at long-term investment and infrastructure. Well, this government has been in power for 10 years now, and I would like to say it's been the decade of debt and some might say—I can't use the word "deceit," can I, Mr. Speaker? So I won't use that word—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask you to withdraw it.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I withdraw that, Mr. Speaker. I'll withdraw "deceit."

It says here in section 3, under "Principles," "Infrastructure planning and investment should take a long-term view"—we agree—"and decision-makers should take into account the needs of Ontarians...." Well, this is something that this government seems to have not brought forward in most cases in the last decade that they've been at the helm. It says here that it should take into consideration "demographic and economic trends in Ontario."

Mr. Speaker, I come from the great riding of Northumberland–Quinte West. Of course, you are well-studied and learned in the fact that my riding is one of the most aged ridings not only in Ontario, but all of Canada. One of the things I have been pushing the Minister of Health on has been the fact that funding for health care and the services provided for certain elderly demographics in my riding need to be addressed. We're seeing some massive shortfalls in that funding to my riding, but I'll get to that a little later.

I do want to point out that it says here, "Infrastructure planning and investment should ensure the continued

provision of core public services, such as health care and education.” I concur. Who in this chamber, regardless of political party, doesn’t think that health care and education should be a priority? But what we have seen over the last decade of this government’s reckless spending and scandals is actually having a detrimental impact on our ability as a government to fund health care and education.

This government spends \$2 million an hour to service the debt they’ve created. They’ve doubled the debt in 10 years. Imagine for a moment, if you will, what \$2 million an hour could do for education and health care, for the young pages who are sitting here this afternoon. That’s taking money out of their education system, and it’s doing a great disservice for them. It’s taking money out of health care, and that’s doing a great disservice for the people of Northumberland–Quinte West.

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I have grave concerns over this, because that \$2 million an hour that this government is spending to service the debt that they’ve created can go into health care and education. In a 24-hour period, that’s \$48 million. That’s almost a brand new school a day that you could build throughout the province.

It’s obviously a priority for ourselves here as the Progressive Conservatives to ensure that these services are protected, but first we have to get our fiscal House in order, and it has to start by getting rid of this Liberal government.

I have to acknowledge the great work of a former member here, Dr. Doug Galt. Dr. Doug Galt actually fought for the new hospital in Cobourg, the Northumberland Hills Hospital, so every time I hear, coming from the government side, that Tories don’t care about health care or Tories don’t care about education, as a former high school teacher, I take personal offence to these charges by this government who are reckless and scandal-plagued.

The other part here says, “Infrastructure planning and investment should be evidence-based”—that makes sense; you don’t build bridges where you don’t need bridges, so it has to be evidence-based. But here’s the key—“and transparent.” Now, this word, by definition, is a term I think this government is lacking. We’ve seen this with the gas scandals that have taken place. They haven’t been transparent. It was only under the due diligence of the fine member from Cambridge, who brought forward the OPP investigation that’s currently going on with this government. They redacted tens of thousands of documents. They deleted emails. So “transparency” or “transparent” are terms that this government is not familiar with.

But let me say this: Our PC caucus, under Tim Hudak, has been very transparent, very open, and that’s the kind of government you’re going to get when Tim Hudak is the Premier of this province.

It also goes on to say that “investment decisions respecting infrastructure should be made on the basis of information that is either publicly available or is made

available to the public.” Again, following up on the transparency aspect of this, we are going to ensure that this actually, moving forward any kind of policy that a Tim Hudak government brings forward, is going to be transparent and open. I think that’s what our people back home expect from their elected representatives.

It’s interesting to note as I go a little further down the bill, it says, “(ii) municipal water sustainability plans submitted under the Water Opportunities Act, 2010,

“(iii) the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan established”—they’re talking about water and respect. It says here, “Infrastructure planning and investment should minimize the impact of infrastructure on the environment and respect and help maintain ecological and biological diversity, and infrastructure should be designed to be resilient to the effects of climate change.”

Well, Mr. Speaker, lo and behold, here we have a government, under the Green Energy Act, that was putting up industrial wind turbines in ecologically sensitive areas. The Oak Ridges moraine, is the great aquifer, the largest aquifer of fresh water for not just Ontario, but the largest aquifer in North America, and this government actually goes against its own policies of protecting not only the endangered species and the habitat on the Oak Ridges moraine, but they go ahead and do it without the consent of willing host municipalities. The member from Huron–Bruce—I have to commend her. She’s done a fantastic job in bringing this issue forward, because it’s not only on the Oak Ridges moraine, back in my riding where the Oak Ridges moraine lies, but it’s throughout the province of Ontario.

So this government, when I sit here in the House and they bring forward a piece of legislation like this, I have to ask myself, can I and the people of Northumberland–Quinte West trust this Liberal government to stand up and actually do what’s right and do what the will of the people is? Because we’re here as elected officials to represent our constituents and the best interests of our constituents and Ontario as a whole.

I understand sometimes that there has to be certain policies that are brought forward that aren’t necessarily conducive or very well received, if you will, from certain jurisdictions. But as the whole of the province, we have to ensure that this kind of policy that the Liberals are bringing forward—I can’t trust them, Mr. Speaker. I can’t stress that enough.

The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton made a very astute observation. He talked about the subways and the foresight back in 1913. Kudos to you. I would also interject and say that there was a great Premier, a visionary, if you will, Mr. Leslie Frost, from the Lindsay area, who actually had the foresight to develop the 401. Speaking to my grandparents and my parents, they recall, as young children, before the 401 was even there, looking and seeing—and people in the Toronto area at the time were saying, “My goodness, what is this lunatic doing building this massive road”—what is now the 401—“way north of the city?” The Don Valley Parkway was not more than a cow path at the time, and he’s building this

massive infrastructure. That's the kind of visionary. Mr. Speaker, I know you traverse down the 401 corridor on a regular basis and you've been stuck in traffic on the Don Valley Parkway, so you understand and appreciate what kind of visionary leadership we need.

We're not getting this kind of visionary leadership from this Liberal government. I can honestly say that Tim Hudak has a vision for this province to bring it back on track economically and also socially to get us back to that great visionary that Leslie Frost brought to the province.

To that effect, I was in Wesleyville recently. Of course, Wesleyville is where that gas plant—well, it was an oil-based plant that never really opened, built in the 1970s. But I was there visiting, and there was a topographical map that showed you the 401. I think it was 1971, and there was about a five-mile stretch on the 401, and it actually—what I thought was quite interesting—I

counted the number of vehicles on the 401, and there were six vehicles on a five-mile stretch of the 401 back in 1970.

Mr. Rob Leone: Doesn't even happen at midnight.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: No, at midnight it's just packed.

We do need to talk about long-term infrastructure plans, and Tim Hudak is the man to do that, and the PC caucus is the caucus that's going to do that. I look forward to—I know you're looking at the time, Mr. Speaker, so I'll just leave it at that.

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

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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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**

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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

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des comptes publics**

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France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

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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
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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

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sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience
intellectuelle**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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