



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Thursday 6 March 2014

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Jeudi 6 mars 2014

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

Hansard on the Internet

Hansard and other documents of the Legislative Assembly can be on your personal computer within hours after each sitting. The address is:

<http://www.ontla.on.ca/>

Index inquiries

Reference to a cumulative index of previous issues may be obtained by calling the Hansard Reporting Service indexing staff at 416-325-7410 or 325-3708.

Le Journal des débats sur Internet

L'adresse pour faire paraître sur votre ordinateur personnel le Journal et d'autres documents de l'Assemblée législative en quelques heures seulement après la séance est :

Renseignements sur l'index

Adressez vos questions portant sur des numéros précédents du Journal des débats au personnel de l'index, qui vous fourniront des références aux pages dans l'index cumulatif, en composant le 416-325-7410 ou le 325-3708.

Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
111 Wellesley Street West, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Telephone 416-325-7400; fax 416-325-7430
Published by the Legislative Assembly of Ontario



Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
Salle 500, aile ouest, Édifice du Parlement
111, rue Wellesley ouest, Queen's Park
Toronto ON M7A 1A2
Téléphone, 416-325-7400; télécopieur, 416-325-7430
Publié par l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Thursday 6 March 2014

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Jeudi 6 mars 2014

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

**ENHANCING PATIENT CARE
AND PHARMACY SAFETY
(STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT) ACT, 2014**

**LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
AFIN D'AMÉLIORER LES SOINS
AUX MALADES ET LA SÉCURITÉ
DES PHARMACIES**

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 21, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 117, An Act to amend certain statutes with respect to the regulation of pharmacies and other matters concerning regulated health professions / *Projet de loi 117, Loi visant à modifier certaines lois en ce qui concerne la réglementation des pharmacies et d'autres questions relatives aux professions de la santé réglementées.*

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am very pleased to have the opportunity to resume the debate on Bill 117, the drug and pharmacies regulation act, which was actually introduced last October—October 10, 2013. My colleague Mr. Yurek, who is the member from Middlesex—the St. Thomas area; I can't remember the name exactly—did the leadoff for us on October 22, 2013. Being a pharmacist himself, he was an invaluable resource to us as we reviewed this bill as a caucus, and we are certainly prepared to support this bill.

I think the last time it was spoken to was November 21, when Madame Gélinas, from the third party, did her leadoff as well. I think it's important to note that there have been several responses to what happened.

I think that, before I go through the debate, I'd like to just indicate what led to the introduction of Bill 117 and why we're dealing with it here and now. It arose from a tragic case of underdosing with respect to two chemotherapy drugs, gemcitabine and cyclophosphamide, which took place between February 2012 and March 2013 at four Ontario hospitals, in addition to a hospital in New Brunswick. The four affected hospitals were the Windsor

Regional Hospital, the London Health Sciences Centre, Lakeridge Health and the Peterborough Regional Health Centre.

It wasn't until March 2013 that the error was discovered: The chemo drugs had been diluted and had affected almost 1,200 patients across the province of Ontario, and it was discovered that an error had been made. At that point, I would say that all officials acted quickly, and I would like to commend the Minister of Health for taking quick action in this and for appointing Dr. Jake Thiessen, who is a well-known expert in the area of pharmacy, to conduct an investigation into what went wrong so that we can make sure such an event never happens again.

Dr. Thiessen did a thorough examination and issued his report in July 2013. It was a very timely response, and he came up with a number of recommendations but concluded essentially that, "The problem boiled down to gaps in communication and its unintended consequences." What happened? How did we end up with so many people receiving diluted chemotherapy drugs? We'll never really know the consequences of it, whether people were adversely affected—some people have passed away since then. Whether they died because of that we'll never know, but we owe it to those patients and their families to conduct a thorough investigation, and that has been done.

Dr. Thiessen's report is very thorough, but I would also like to indicate to people who may be watching this debate this morning that the social policy committee has also undertaken a very extensive review. We also called witnesses; heard testimony from a variety of individuals and organizations involved. We will be issuing a report in the next short while. While I can't speak to the specifics of that, because it hasn't been made public yet, I want to assure the public that we have taken that very, very seriously, and we have examined it to the extent to which we can as legislators.

I think when you take a look to see what actually happened, we have to look at the circumstances around the purchasing of these drugs. What we now have in the province of Ontario are organizations known as group purchasing organizations, which act on behalf of hospitals in order to get better volume discounts for the drugs that are purchased. In order to contract these services, the group purchasing organizations issue tenders for certain drugs. In this case, it was admixtures of chemotherapy drugs, which are drugs that have to be mixed with saline in order to be used. A lot of the hospitals are contracting this out because it saves time.

It's something that can be readily used by pharmacy staff, and it's fairly commonplace that this has been done.

The group purchasing organization here—in this case it was called Medbuy—put out the tender for these two admixtures for these two chemotherapy drugs. They hired a group of 11 pharmacists to review the tender, and three different companies submitted bids. Ultimately, the bid from Marchese Hospital Solutions was selected. It was a different company that had had the previous tender. I think this is where there was a fundamental mistake that was made. The previous company had made concentration-specific admixtures; in other words, they could be used in the form that they appeared and could be administered to patients requiring chemotherapy solutions. It's commonly known, though, that generally speaking, these compounds are overfilled. So in many circumstances they may be filled to 107 millilitres rather than 100 millilitres. They're not concentration-specific, so they would have to be specifically measured for use by each patient. There was a fundamental misunderstanding here between Medbuy and Marchese as to whether the entire bag of concentrated solution was going to be used for one patient or whether it was going to be used for a number of patients.

Generally speaking, I understand that there is a great variety in the amounts that can be administered to any one person. It wouldn't generally be common to use one full bag for each person, because the amount of medication or chemotherapy drug that each person would require would depend upon their height, weight and so on and various other circumstances. But that wasn't the case for the solutions that were prepared by Marchese Hospital Solutions. They understood that they were responding exactly to the tender that had been put out by Medbuy, and Medbuy understood that they were producing the solutions in the same way that the previous contractor had done. As a result, people were given these overfilled bags, and that's how the underdosing happened.

It wasn't until some of the front-line workers at the Peterborough Regional Health Centre discovered this problem in March 2013 that this whole matter came to light. As it happened, they had just recently run out of their supply of bags from the previous vendor, and they noticed that the label on the new IV bag from Marchese wasn't labelled in the same way that previous solutions had been, and they were concerned about how they should be administering this drug. So they were the ones that raised the alarm bells, and they were the ones that brought it to the attention of the authorities in the first place, and action was taken after that.

In his report, Dr. Thiessen took a look at a number of things. I'd just like to take a look at what his actual mandate was, before I go any further. His mandate was three things: first of all, to conduct a review to determine the causes of recently discovered instances of underdosing of chemotherapy drugs at Windsor Regional Hospital, London Health Sciences Centre, Lakeridge Health and Peterborough Regional Health Centre; secondly, to

provide recommendations to prevent future incidents of this nature; and, third, to provide a report to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care no later than July 12, 2013. Dr. Thiessen certainly did that.

0910

Dr. Thiessen did come forward with a total of 12 recommendations, one of which is the subject of Bill 117, which gives the Ontario College of Pharmacists authority over hospital pharmacies in addition to community pharmacies. This is an important first step. As I said before, we are certainly prepared to agree with this and to vote in favour of Bill 117. But I think it's important to note that there were 11 other, equally important recommendations that weren't followed, which I'll get to in a moment. In the sense of what we have here, giving the Ontario College of Pharmacists jurisdiction over hospital pharmacies, I think, completes the picture and makes sure that patient safety is going to be given paramount consideration.

The other aspects of the bill: It puts in measures intended to enhance the system's ability to prevent one or more events that can jeopardize patient care and safety. It appoints a contact person, at every hospital with a pharmacy, whose job is to facilitate communication with the Ontario College of Pharmacists. We know that that was an issue in this case, and this makes a lot of sense.

Secondly, the bill also allows health regulatory colleges to share information with public health authorities and with public hospitals. Finally, the bill would also enable regulatory colleges to provide a faster response to complaints. So now the OCP, Ontario College of Pharmacists, can accredit, inspect and enforce hospital pharmacies' operations as well as make regulations and bylaws to establish the standards and requirements for accreditation and inspection.

It's great as far as it goes, but there are several other issues that Dr. Thiessen reported on that I would just like to spend a few minutes speaking about.

His first recommendation was: "Notwithstanding the underdosing incident, the continued use of group purchasing organizations ... to negotiate vendor product preparation pharmaceutical services shall not be discouraged. However, improvements are needed in the GPO-based processes." We would certainly agree with that. I think it's fair to say, without divulging anything specific, that that was something that the social policy committee did take a serious look at and will have some recommendations concerning.

Secondly: "Every GPO shall review its procurement process to ensure that risk for patients is considered an essential evaluation and adjudication criterion when considering proposals." Again, this is just, I think, a matter of common sense, that patient safety has to be the paramount consideration. Of course, price is an important consideration, and we need to make sure that we get good value for every taxpayer dollar that is spent in health care, but the paramount consideration must always be patient safety.

The third recommendation was: "Every GPO shall develop and adopt a standardized product and/or service

specification description that outlines the requirements for contracted sterile or non-sterile pharmaceutical product services.” I think this really gets to the crux of the matter here: That fundamental misunderstanding between Medbuy, as the group purchasing organization, and Marchese Hospital Solutions about what type of solution was to be prepared—whether it was to be used for single patient use or whether it was concentration-specific and could be used for a number of patients—really led to the tragic circumstances that we’re faced with. Had that not been a question, arguably the events that transpired probably would not have.

The fourth recommendation: “Annually in January, each GPO shall publicize information regarding the contracted pharmaceutical services provided by all its vendors.” Again, this is aimed at transparency and accountability, just knowing what has been contracted and what is being prepared in-house. We want to make sure that the pharmacies are going to be able to operate as efficiently as possible, but certainly it is also possible that not every service provided by a pharmacy should be contracted out.

Recommendation number 5: “Marchese Hospital Solutions ... shall review and revise its product preparation processes to ensure that all its products meet the specifications required by professionals in treating patients effectively and safely.” We want to make sure that at every step along the line, all of the parties that are involved in preparing these types of solutions, whether they’re in the hospital pharmacies or whether they’re contracted out through the group purchasing organizations to another provider, make sure that patient safety is in place and that the proper processes to ensure that are in place all along the way.

Recommendation number 6: “The Ontario College of Pharmacists ... (and by extension, the National Association of Pharmacy Regulatory Authorities ...) shall work quickly with Health Canada to define best practices and contemporary objective standards for non-sterile and sterile product preparation within a licensed pharmacy.” We need to make sure, again, anywhere, that we’re dealing with these types of products, whether they are non-sterile or sterile—that it’s organized and coordinated, both federally and provincially. Of course, there is a role to play by Health Canada as well.

Recommendation number 7: The OCP “shall stipulate specialized electronic material records and label requirements for non-sterile and sterile product preparation within a licensed pharmacy.” Again, the labelling issue was a significant issue that was spoken about both by Dr. Thiessen as well as in the social policy committee. I think it’s of note that though this preparation had been used for some time in some of the other hospital facilities, it was really only the front-line workers at the Peterborough Regional Health Centre’s cancer centre who were the ones that noticed the discrepancy.

I think there is some confusion out there as to appropriate labelling. We need to have standardized labelling to make sure that anybody who’s working with these

preparations, whether it’s the pharmacist, the pharmacy technician or anyone else, knows exactly how the preparations are going to be used.

Recommendation 9: The OCP—the Ontario College of Pharmacists—“shall specify credentials beyond education and licensing for personnel engaged in non-sterile and sterile product preparation practices within a licensed pharmacy.” Again, it’s just making sure that everyone who is within the hospital pharmacy system—because this is a new thing for the Ontario College of Pharmacists—is reviewed to make sure that they all have the appropriate credentials, because they are working with medications that can allow someone to live or die if they’re not used appropriately.

Recommendation number 10: “Health Canada shall license all enterprises that function beyond the product preparation permitted within a licensed pharmacy; that is, all product preparation enterprises not within a licensed pharmacy shall be licensed” by Health Canada.

Here, there was a discrepancy between what is considered to be a pharmacy and what is considered to be a manufacturing facility. The Ontario College of Pharmacists has jurisdiction over the former; Health Canada has jurisdiction over the latter. But unfortunately, the situation here with Marchese Hospitals Solutions fell into a grey area, sort of a no man’s land, where nobody really knew who had jurisdiction, and as a result, it fell through the cracks.

I think it should be said that Marchese Hospital Solutions was very proactive in this matter. They did actively seek to find out who had regulatory authority over them and they weren’t given a complete response at the time; so as a matter of fact, this issue of regulation fell between the cracks. It is something that needs to be clearly defined, as to what a pharmacy is and what a manufacturing facility is so that the appropriate jurisdictions know in the future who is going to be responsible for these entities.

Recommendation number 11: “The Ontario Hospital Association ... shall conduct a formal review/audit to determine the efficiency and traceability of computer-based clinic and hospital records for patients and their treatments, and report the findings to the” Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. That’s an interesting one, because I think part of the problem here is that we don’t have an ongoing, up-and-running system of electronic medical records here in the province of Ontario.

0920

While I don’t think one can say that if we had them, it would have prevented this chemotherapy underdosing incident, it certainly would be helpful, within the hospitals, to be able to have a functioning system to track medications for patients; to make sure that there are not toxic interactions; to make sure that people are being dosed at appropriate levels; to make sure that physicians and other health care providers can have the appropriate information at their fingertips to know whether patients are receiving toxic doses, toxic mixtures and so on.

I think that it’s fine to tell the Ontario Hospital Association to conduct this audit, but in all fairness, I

believe they need to have the tools in hospitals in order to be able to carry out their business efficiently and to maintain, over and above all of that, patient safety.

Then the last recommendation, of course, was recommendation number 12: “The Ontario College of Pharmacists shall license all pharmacies operating within Ontario’s clinics or hospitals.”

Dr. Thiessen concluded: “This review has uncovered the cause of the oncology underdosing. The recommendations are intended to prevent future oncology incidents of this nature and to mitigate identifiable risks in the broader realm of non-sterile and sterile product preparation within licensed pharmacies and other enterprises.”

Again, in conclusion, I would say it is commendable that the government has brought forward Bill 117, but because it only deals with one of the 12 recommendations made by Dr. Thiessen, I would certainly urge the government to move forward with the rest of the recommendations and to give a good, hard look at the social policy committee’s report when it is issued. It contains some additional recommendations that we hope will be helpful in making sure that such a situation never happens again.

Nobody wants to have this sort of thing hanging over their head. A diagnosis of cancer is difficult enough, but to never know whether you received the right dosage—and for those families who may have lost loved ones, for them to never know—had they not received the underdosing; had they received the appropriate level—whether this might never have happened.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak this morning on this, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It’s an honour to be able to rise in this House and comment on the remarks by the member from Whitby–Oshawa regarding Bill 117, Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety Act. Her remarks were very well thought out.

This is such a personal and tragic issue, because the people who received the mis-dosed chemotherapy drugs—their lives are on the line. They gave their trust to our medical system that they were diagnosed and that the treatments would be the best available to treat their affliction. Their trust was shattered by mistakes made in our system. This bill is meant to address that, and it takes into account some of the recommendations that Dr. Thiessen made.

We are concerned that the bill was brought forward before the social policy committee had a real chance to look at the overview of the whole situation. We hope, as this bill goes forward, that it will take into account the recommendations, because these recommendations are still not out.

We are very confident that, hopefully, we can regain the public’s trust by implementing measures that will stop this from happening again, because, as I’ve said before, the people’s trust has been broken. People’s lives have been shattered. Lives might have been lost from this

mistake. It is our duty to do everything in our power to make sure that mistakes like this don’t happen again.

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

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It gives me great pleasure to speak today on Bill 117, the Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety Act.

As a former nurse myself, I cannot imagine how the health professionals and the patients who discovered that patients had received the wrong dosage, and also the health care providers who have given the wrong dosage without knowing about it—just imagine: You’re a patient, and you are suffering from cancer. You put your life into the hands of a professional you believe very highly in, and then you discover later on that you were not given the proper treatment. I cannot imagine, because I have friends and colleagues who have suffered from cancer. Right now they are under treatment.

I’m very pleased that the minister reacted so quickly and asked Dr. Thiessen to look into and to bring about a recommendation that will hopefully prevent such an incident from happening again. I want to also thank the health professional who reacted so quickly and recognized that there was something wrong with what she was prepared to give to one of her patients. It shows that we have very conscientious and very good health professionals out there who want nothing but the best care for their own patients.

We have accepted and endorsed all 12 recommendations from Dr. Thiessen. I hope that we will all help to speed up the approval of this bill.

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

Mr. John O’Toole: I listened closely and attentively to the member from Whitby–Oshawa, our critic of health. Back in October 2013, I think our lead speaker was Jeff Yurek, the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, a pharmacist. Ms. Elliott outlined the 12 recommendations in the Thiessen report.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to stick to riding names and not personal names.

Mr. John O’Toole: Okay. I appreciate that, Mr. Speaker.

The bill itself is not particularly large. It has 19 different sections to it. It’s only four pages in English and four in French. As has been said by the member from Whitby–Oshawa, it really only deals with one of the recommendations.

In fact, it’s important to put on the record that patient safety being put at risk—especially families when they have the greatest trust, as has been said by many members—we have to get it right. It’s unfortunate. I think it was discovered at the Peterborough Regional Health Centre; one of the persons in the pharmacy in the hospital, I gather, realized that there was underdosing. It’s very troubling, in that confidence in the health care system is paramount when you discuss it.

Section number three of the bill and act is amended by adding a section saying that where drug compounding or

dispensing of supplies in a hospital, by hospitals and on the premise of the hospital, it's considered to be a pharmacy. That, perhaps, as has been said, is one of the loop-holes.

Another section very specifically: If a person resigns from the profession, there's a duty to report it within 30 days to the college. So hopefully this will correct the problem and re-establish the confidence in our health care system, which is badly shaken at this point in time in Ontario.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I want to congratulate the member from Whitby–Oshawa for her speech this morning that basically gives a very accurate description as to what has happened so far. I also want to support my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane, who really focused on the effect that this has had on the 1,202 people who were affected by the diluted chemo drugs.

Now, my comments are disappointment. We have a committee of the Legislature that has spent an entire year looking at where the mistake happened, why the mistake happened, why it was not detected, what the mechanisms were in place that failed so that we did not pick up this error before this product was actually used to offer chemotherapy treatment to all of those people.

0930

I'm quite proud of the work that the committee has done. We are coming forward with recommendations that I feel will assure the people of Ontario that what went wrong will never happen again, and if something of the sort was to happen, the mechanism in place will catch the problem way, way before it even reaches close to the bedside.

The bill has been brought forward before the work of the committee has been made public. The problem is that the recommendations of the committee are substantive, will need legislation, and yet this bill came before the work was done. There is a disconnect there that can only be detrimental to the trust that those people have lost in our health care system.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Whitby–Oshawa, you have two minutes.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'd like to thank all of the members who have commented this morning. The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane spoke about the public trust being broken, and I think that is fundamental to this whole discussion because people do put themselves in the hands of health care professionals when they're sick. A cancer diagnosis is terrifying, and they absolutely trust the health professionals to do the right thing for them—which of course they intended to do here, but there was this breakdown that absolutely needs to be fixed, if we can go about regaining public trust in the system. We owe that to the people affected and their families.

The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services also congratulated the health professionals for bringing this matter to light and for taking such quick action. I can only imagine the people in Peterborough

who were pharmacy assistants and technicians who brought this forward. It must have been a very difficult thing for them to do. They showed a lot of courage in bringing this forward, and I thank them as well.

The member from Durham talked about the need to enact the rest of the recommendations. I would certainly agree with that. The minister indicated that the government has endorsed all 12 recommendations. We certainly hope that we'll be able to move forward with them.

Finally, the member from Nickel Belt has been my colleague on the social policy committee, and I agree with her: We have spent a lot of time in analyzing the information we've received from the various witnesses. We do have a report that is quite substantive that is going to be coming forward. But I would really like to commend her in particular for her excellent work on this. I would say she, more than anybody else in the committee, has put countless hours into this, using her knowledge as a health care professional. I would really like to commend her for her dedication to this, because I think that the work that is going to come out as a result of the committee working together owes a lot to the work that she's done.

I thank everybody for the comments. I think we're all aligned in wanting to protect patient safety and move this bill forward, but let's not forget the rest of the recommendations that have to come forward, too.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. Indeed, I welcome the opportunity to stand in the House today to speak to Bill 117, the Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety Act, 2013. As you know, this was first introduced back on the 10th of October last year. It's An Act to amend certain statutes with respect to the regulation of pharmacies and other matters concerning regulated health professions.

By way of official explanation, the government wishes to amend the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act, the Public Hospitals Act, as well as the Regulated Health Professions Act. For the most part, we're discussing this because, as we all know, for close to a year, more than 1,200 cancer patients at five hospitals received doses of chemotherapy drugs that were weaker than caregivers realized.

We know that this bill is a direct response to recommendations made by Dr. Jake Thiessen's report on chemotherapy underdosing. Dr. Jake Thiessen is a pharmacy expert, and he was appointed to conduct an independent review of Ontario's cancer drug supply chain. Four of those hospitals were in Ontario; the other one was in New Brunswick. One of the four hospitals was in my community of Windsor, and 290 patients from Windsor-Essex county were among the 1,200 who didn't get what they were supposed to be given. Many of those patients were constituents of mine and also of my colleague, the member from Essex, of course, as well as the member from Windsor West.

First, allow me to thank the three sharp-eyed pharmacy assistants in Peterborough who discovered the

problem within a couple of hours of cracking open their first batch of this weaker stuff. While the drugs were mistakenly allocated in Windsor and elsewhere, the three assistants in Peterborough couldn't figure out the specifics of the labelling on their first shipment of outsourced chemotherapy drugs from a new supplier. According to the *Toronto Star*, they asked for advice, and apparently a pharmacist from a regional cancer centre in Durham told them not to worry about it because the discrepancy in the recommended dosage was not considered to be clinically significant at first glance. One patient in Peterborough was given the diluted mixture, but because the pharmacy assistants there were used to working with intravenous drugs that clearly spelled out the total concentration of the drugs, the total volume of saline as well as the amount of active drug per millilitre of saline, they asked for another opinion, a second opinion, if you will, from another pharmacist. Thankfully, an hour and five minutes later, the entire supply was ordered quarantined.

That brings us to today, except to acknowledge—and in no way am I assigning blame—that 150 or more of the 1,200 patients who were administered the weaker, diluted drugs have died. Now, it's not known—I repeat, not known—what, if any, role the weakened mixture played in those deaths. I know, though, in the Windsor region, there is still a big cloud of uncertainty. Marlene Roy, who was having treatment for breast cancer—by the way, the drugs in question are used on a regular basis to help treat patients with cancers of the breast, ovaries and pancreas. But 60-year-old Marlene Roy was quoted in the *Windsor Star*, actually a week after I was elected in my by-election last August 1, discussing the impact of her—after receiving the diluted mixture, she said, “You're left wondering, did this cause my life to be shorter?” This is a huge question. When you get a medication that's weakened, over-diluted by 7% or 10% or more, what will be the short- and medium- and long-term effect of that underdosing? You talk about stress. Now on a daily basis, stress governs her life. Mrs. Roy told Brian Cross of the *Windsor Star* that she can't sleep at night now, because she's so troubled about all of this.

Another Windsor-area cancer patient, Diane Marley, whose husband, Ken, is a good friend of mine—he's a criminal defence lawyer in Windsor—says, when speaking of the report by Dr. Jake Thiessen, which led in part to this bill being introduced by the minister, that the report doesn't remove the big question of whether receiving the diluted drugs will affect her survival. But she says, “The only good that can come of it is if these recommendations are followed through on and things really are tightened up.” I agree. I couldn't agree more with that statement.

So that's what's on the table. Will there be improvements to the system? Will there be protections for the patients? Shelley-ann Meloche is certainly hoping so. She was diagnosed with breast cancer last year. She has been riding on an emotional roller coaster ever since being told that she was given the diluted chemo drugs by mistake. She was quoted in that *Windsor Star* story as

saying, “You have a double mastectomy, you have months of healing and then they're putting ports in and giving chemo. You're just starting to feel better and this hits you.” Imagine, Mr. Speaker, imagine the shock, the uncertainty, the unknown, the fear. Shelley-ann Meloche adds, “And nothing anyone says is going to make you feel better.”

0940

The hospital where these patients were given the wrong doses was Windsor Regional. The hospital CEO was quoted as saying, “Everybody plays a part in fixing this. That includes Windsor Regional Hospital, hospitals across Ontario and Canada. Every entity plays a part.” Speaker, that includes this Legislature.

We have a role to play. This is a non-partisan issue. This is an issue that demands our attention and that we must take very seriously. We have to do what is right. We have to do our part to make sure nothing like this ever happens again. We have to make sure patients will not be asking themselves, “I wonder how much longer I would have lived if I hadn't experienced this situation.”

In order to not repeat these mistakes, we have to understand exactly what happened and put in place supervisory controls and oversight accountability. We need regulations and amendments, and we need to question how this came about so that we don't have another replay of this horrific story.

Dr. Thiessen found shortcomings at all levels of the drug chain. He didn't find any evidence of malicious or deliberate dilution of the drugs.

Speaker, mixing chemotherapy drugs with saline solution for intravenous use is time-consuming. It's potentially hazardous. We all know it's becoming increasingly common for hospitals to outsource the process to private companies operating with little regulation or oversight.

I must point out that our party's health critic, the member from Nickel Belt, has questioned why it took a public health crisis for the government to notice the dangers posed by gaps in oversight. Our health critic has pointed out that hospitals are outsourcing more and more services, from heart diagnostic testing to urology. The member from Nickel Belt questions whether proper oversight is in place across the entire health care system in Ontario.

It leaves us wondering, what else is out there? To date, no one involved in all of this has ever said, “It's my fault. I'm responsible.” Sure, people have apologized, but no one wants to accept the blame.

Let's go back for a moment and look at the chain of events. A middle man, if you will, Medbuy, put out a tender call for a non-concentration-specific drug mixture. But what should have been put out for bids was a tender for a concentration-specific mixture, which could have been customized for the individual user. That's where the blame begins.

Marchese gets the contract. This company, Marchese, the company that mixed the drugs, was not overseen by the College of Pharmacists. It was not under the direct supervision of Health Canada either. We know the for-

mer supplier had no problems. We know their bags were properly labelled and easily understood. We know there was a tender call and a new supplier chosen—a low bidder.

Some of us still find it troubling that this new supplier, Marchese Hospital Solutions, the company that mixed and supplied the intravenous bags of chemotherapy drugs—the drugs involved in this massive medication error—got the contract despite the fact it wasn't a licensed pharmacy or drug manufacturer. Where was the oversight?

Some of us still find it troubling that, despite recognizing the need for new regulations, the bill was drafted and introduced prior to the committee studying the issue and Dr. Thiessen's report, prior to the committee making its recommendation.

So what do we have in this bill? Well, there are provisions to allow the Ontario College of Pharmacists to accredit, inspect and enforce various measures of the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act in regard to hospital pharmacies, and those in our provincial institutions. These institutional pharmacies could be located in prisons or in long-term-care homes.

We'll have separate classes of certificates of accreditation. Hospitals will now have to report to a regulatory college when a member resigns and there is a reasonable ground to believe the resignation is related to a member's professional misconduct, incompetence or incapacity. It makes you wonder, Speaker, why this hasn't been in place before now, but let me continue.

The changes will allow health colleges to share information with public health authorities when public health implications are suspected. It will be easier to appoint a supervisor to a medical college if it's deemed to be in the public interest.

In order not to waste the time of the people who are obligated to investigate complaints, it removes the obligation of a health college to investigate every complaint where it's believed by the registrar of that college that even if that allegation was proven, it would not constitute misconduct. Apparently, there are just too many complaints coming in that would be more in the class of neighbour-to-neighbour conflict and not based on medical misconduct.

The intent is to tighten up a lot of loose ends, and that is a good thing. What isn't necessarily a good thing is that the Standing Committee on Social Policy continues to look at the diluted chemotherapy drugs scandal, and this bill was drafted and introduced before members of that committee made their final recommendations.

I don't have a crystal ball, and I can't predict the future. But, Speaker, like you, I can guess this likely could mean that Bill 117 will only partially address the problems that led to this tragic error.

Earlier I referenced a story done by Brian Cross in the Windsor Star. Let me conclude by quoting once more from that story. Kate Warner is another cancer patient from the Windsor-Essex county area. When asked what she thought of Dr. Thiessen's report, she wasn't pleased,

Mr. Speaker. She said, "Somebody's got to step up and say, 'Yes, we're responsible for this and it won't happen again.'" She further added, "It sounds to me like [no one is] really accepting the blame, but they're still apologizing for it. I don't see that it's going to do us any good at all."

Speaker, this bill doesn't assign responsibility for what happened to more than 1,200 unsuspecting cancer patients. No one is stepping up and saying, "It's my fault." Medbuy hasn't explained how it could put out a call for a non-concentration-specific solution when what was needed was a concentration-specific mixture which could be customized, patient by patient.

For many patients—people such as Kate Warner—this bill is too little, too late. That's not to say it can't be improved upon, because, despite its many shortcomings, it does deserve support from all three parties. My party's health critic, the member from Nickel Belt, has recommended that we in the New Democratic Party support this legislation.

I, for one, certainly hope that what occurred with the diluted chemotherapy drugs scandal will never happen again. This bill will bring Ontario in line with other provinces, such as British Columbia, that already regulate hospital pharmacies, and I will be voting in favour of it.

Thank you for the opportunity, Mr. Speaker. It's always a privilege to stand in this chamber and provide input, and I never take my position here for granted. At times such as these, however, I wish there was more we could do. I wish we could get the responsible parties to admit their guilt, so that apologies would have a ring of truth and patients—those who survived—might finally be able to get a start on their road to closure.

What happened wasn't their fault. They put their faith into Ontario's medical system, Ontario's health care system. When it works, it's one of the best in the world, but it's not perfect. It can always be improved upon, and this is a start, Speaker, but there's still more that could be done.

When the Standing Committee on Social Policy concludes its hearings and makes its recommendations, perhaps that bill will be stronger and this never will happen again.

0950

Speaker, I hope I'm not breaking any confidences here, but I am of the understanding that the report from the standing committee will be released within the next three weeks or less.

To those who were affected directly: I have full confidence in the two New Democrats on that committee: the member from Nickel Belt and the member from Welland. They have been working to ensure nothing like this ever happens again and if there's any hint of it, it will be caught quickly, remedial action will be taken immediately, and we'll never get to the point where we have to have an investigation such as this.

We need to believe in our health care system. We need to believe again in our health care system. We put our faith in it. We take ourselves to the hospital or we send

our loved ones to the hospital, and we do so with full faith that the system is there to look after them, to take care of them and the treatment that they're given when they're in our hospital system and within the medical system is top-notch. We're paying good dollars, good money, for the best system. We deserve the best attention.

We can't have uncertainty, and this has caused a lot of uncertainty throughout the entire medical professions. It has caused people around the world to learn of it and to question how this can happen in Ontario, Canada. My friends in America look upon Canada and our health care system with envy. They can't believe our health care system is so affordable and so reliable. Then something like this happens and they say, "Ah, maybe it's not so good. Maybe we're better off where we are."

We do have the best system. It's proven time and time again. I do have faith in the system. I hope, after the committee makes its report, that the recommendations are followed through; that the ministry takes those recommendations and improves upon and implements them; that the system we end up with will once again send out a message that what has happened will never happen again and that we can all put our faith in the system, and that Ontario's health care system continues to be the very best in the world.

Thank you for your time, Speaker.

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

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I want to commend the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for his input into this bill.

Yes, in Ontario, we're very lucky. We have an excellent health care system. To have worked in the system for many years, and to have seen the improvement in treatment for patients who are suffering from cancer—it's just unbelievable.

Before, if you were diagnosed with cancer, there was one way to go. But now there is hope for people who are diagnosed with cancer, thanks to the investments that all Ontarians have made into the health care system, and thanks to the health professionals, those who have done research and all of those who, on a daily basis, work with patients with cancer.

We all hope that this incident will not happen again. That's why the minister did not wait for a report of a committee but took swift action to correct the situation. If the committee comes with good recommendations, I'm sure that she will listen to it and also take action.

Again, to these health professionals who get up every day to do good work, and to those who identified that something was wrong with the medications that they were about to send to the floor or to administer, I say thank you. Thank you. You have contributed to improving the health care system, and you have contributed also to helping these patients who did receive the wrong dosage to be looked at a second time by their health care professionals.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: It certainly gives me great pleasure to be able to take the next few moments to comment on the bill before us today.

I think all of us—as MPPs, as Ontarians—were shocked when we found that this, in fact, could take place. We're all vulnerable when we walk into a hospital, when we walk into a doctor's office. We have a sense of the professionalism that stands within those walls. Obviously, to a very large degree, that is well founded; I don't want to suggest anything otherwise. But just the very fact that something such as this could happen sends shock waves within the community. I think it demonstrates how good governance and oversight are always paramount, or should be.

I think that the discussions that the committee had on this topic again demonstrate the fact that people forgot how important it is to have a system of oversight that ensures that this doesn't happen. What we have in this piece of legislation is a directive, if you like, to be able to provide that kind of oversight.

But I want to just add a word of caution: It doesn't matter how many rules you write or how many pieces of legislation you have; it is always the responsibility of individuals who are charged with the responsibility of making sure things happen. What we see here is a breakdown in that sense of responsibility that has to be shared by everyone who's involved, whether it's making a safe car or providing chemotherapy.

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

M. Michael Mantha: C'est avec plaisir que je me lève avec des commentaires sur le projet de loi 117, la Loi visant à modifier certaines lois en ce qui concerne la réglementation des pharmacies et d'autres questions relatives aux professions de la santé réglementées.

Mon collègue de Windsor–Tecumseh a vraiment démontré et puis nous a donné le portrait et le visage des gens dans sa région qui ont été affectés par certaines décisions qui n'ont pas été prises, et de certaines actions des personnes qui ont fait le mélange des médicaments nécessaires pour le traitement du cancer qui n'ont pas été portées responsables. Tu vois avec ses commentaires comment ça a touché certaines personnes de sa communauté, le montant de frustration et de désespoir, on peut dire, qu'il y a eu dans la communauté, et puis comment ça a affecté les gens.

Mais dans ses commentaires, il a vraiment indiqué aussi qu'il faut qu'on mette notre focus et notre attention sur faire ce qu'on devrait faire en tant que personnes ici dans des positions de responsabilité, et puis d'agir et de faire certain qu'on mette les étapes et règlements nécessaires pour faire certain que ces situations-ci ne se représentent pas.

Je veux aussi donner un vraiment bon crédit à notre critique de Nickel Belt pour la santé et les soins de longue durée, une personne qui a vraiment allumé et emporté beaucoup d'attention. Sa ténacité sur le sujet et les commentaires qu'elle a aussi apportés, c'est de faire certain que les recommandations qui vont venir du com-

ité dans les deux, trois ou quatre prochaines semaines—qu'on fasse certain d'avoir une façon d'implémenter ces réglementations et recommandations-là dans le projet de loi. C'est de valeur que le projet de loi soit en devant nous comme il est, mais on espère voir du changement.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: It's important to comment on Bill 117 and the comments from the member from Windsor-Tecumseh. This is a matter of great importance.

I'm a member of the Standing Committee on Social Policy. I've been listening to the presentations for the last number of months, and I do concur. I think this committee is an example of the three parties coming together and working on this. The member from Whitby-Oshawa has been excellent. The member from Oak Ridges-Markham, Dr. Helena Jaczek, has been very, very involved in this. Also, France Gélinas has been excellent. So it's really an example of intelligent co-operation. Very decisive and penetrating questions have been asked.

1000

It just reminds us all that sometimes, when we look at our health care system and our ministry—I think it's the largest health ministry in North America. All the doctors, nurses, front-line people, lab technicians and everyone that supplies everything from the chemo drugs to all the other medications that are required—the immense responsibility we put on our health care workers, from our doctors down to our lab technicians. We can't take for granted for a minute—this is critically important work. It doesn't happen automatically. There have to be constant improvements, monitoring and supervision, because these things can happen. But we should appreciate the incredible responsibility they have—life-and-death responsibility—over our loved ones.

I think we owe it to them to thank the front-line workers that are doing this kind of thing for 13 million Ontarians every day, because without their dedication and professionalism, many, many health care issues would be tragic. Let's thank them for the work they do. Maybe this will help them do better work.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Windsor-Tecumseh, you have two minutes.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker, and to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the minister responsible for francophone affairs, and the members for York-Simcoe, Algoma-Manitoulin and Eglinton-Lawrence. Thank you for those additional comments on this very important issue.

Also, thank you to Brian Cross at the Windsor Star for making public the voices and the concerns of Marlene Roy, Diane Marley, Shelley-ann Meloche and Kate Warner, because I believe it's through their eyes, their hearts, their passion and their fears that we get a sense of what this mistake has cost individuals and cost us all throughout the system because they have given us their voices.

I know that the members of the social policy committee looking into this are taking this very seriously.

I've had direct communication with the member from Nickel Belt and the member from Welland. I know that everybody on that committee is putting long hours and hard work into this because it is a non-partisan issue.

What happened was a huge embarrassment, but it would be even more embarrassing if we played politics with it and if we didn't do everything that is required to fix the system again, to bring faith back to the system and to let people trust Ontario's health care system again.

I think the member from Eglinton-Lawrence hit it right on the head when he said that we all should be giving a big thank you, day in and day out, to the people on the front lines of Ontario's health care system who provide the service that we respect and value so much. I think that's very important. In all of this, the people who are working every day on our health care system deserve our respect. Thank you very much.

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

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'm pleased to rise this morning to join the debate around Bill 117, the Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety Act. This bill, if passed, would give the Ontario College of Pharmacists the authority to accredit and inspect pharmacies within public and private hospitals in the same way that it currently accredits and inspects community pharmacies.

Bill 117 would give the Ontario College of Pharmacists the ability to enforce accreditation requirements. That college would also be granted the authority to make regulations and bylaws to establish the requirements and standards for accreditation.

Bill 117 would also provide the Lieutenant Governor in Council with regulation-making authority to designate dispensaries and pharmacies, and it would require all pharmacies to designate a specific contact person for the college.

Throughout the spring of 2013, I had the honour of serving as part of the Standing Committee on Social Policy, which was given the responsibility of looking into the matter of oversight of pharmaceutical companies. For those who served on committee, who stopped by in person or who followed it closely in the press, it's hard now to remember where this all started. We have the benefit of hindsight. The Minister of Health has made much of her response to the situation in question, and there was certainly an element of truth to that. But it remains to be said that, as with so many things that this government undertakes, the follow-through is less impressive than the initial reaction.

The underdosing episode in question, which involved two specific chemotherapy medications, came to light almost a year ago: March 20, 2013. In all, over 1,200 patients were affected. Most of them were undergoing treatment for cancer. Dr. Thiessen's report came in July, 2013, and the bill was introduced and called for second reading debate in October, 2013. It was last debated three weeks before the House rose for the holidays, and it is now three weeks since we returned. As I say, we are coming up on the anniversary of the discovery, and here we are.

This act, of course, arose out of the tragic chemotherapy underdosing incident and also out of the report put forward by Dr. Jake Thiessen, which contained a number of excellent recommendations. Dr. Thiessen was appointed by the Minister of Health to provide an independent assessment and expert opinion on the circumstances surrounding the urgent and highly charged situation. His investigation set out to find the basic cause of the underdosing. He set out to assess how hospitals responded to the incident, to size up the broader realm of pharmaceutical product preparations, and to examine the influence of the various regulatory and oversight bodies, such as Health Canada, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Cancer Care Ontario, the Ontario College of Pharmacists and the Ontario Hospital Association.

Dr. Thiessen also looked at the two key players at the heart of the medication incident. These would be Medbuy and Marchese. It was a very ambitious undertaking but, given the nature of the incident, anything less would be unthinkable and probably not that instructive. His task was to draw some practical wisdom and solutions out of the situation; to make a story told in shades of grey more black and white; to clarify the landscape so that government, health care officials and the public at large would have a better understanding of what went wrong and what we might do to prevent something like this from happening again.

Importantly, he found no evidence of any malicious or deliberate dilution of the chemotherapy drugs. It's worth mentioning yet again that Dr. Thiessen also voiced the opinion that the way the front-liners came together under the circumstances was outstanding. I share his view that dedication and innovation allowed this matter to be brought to light in short order.

This crisis was a warning sign, but it was also an opening to do things differently, to discard what is not working and to improve our health care system not just for a short-term win, but for the long-term well-being of all who call Ontario home. Don Drummond, the government's go-to economist, has previously raised alarms about the province's health care system, its costs, its effectiveness and its sustainability. A health care system that demands an even larger share of precious resources can't help but lead to erosion elsewhere in the system. That's not what anyone wants, so this government needs to set aside the standard spin and take seriously the work before it.

Pharmaceuticals have been the fastest-growing component of health care costs in recent decades. Here's a little perspective: Between 1975 to 2006, our inflation-adjusted expenditure per capita on hospitals ticked up by a respectable 51%. Considerably above this, the cost of physician services almost doubled, rising by 98%. Pharmaceutical costs, meanwhile, increased by a whopping 338%. In other words, by 2006, we were spending more than four times as much on prescription drugs than we were in 1975.

1010

The diversity of pharmaceuticals, the fact that it is an R&D-intensive field, and the increasing range and diver-

sity of applications has contributed to this reality. In fact, the rising cost of prescription drugs has outpaced overall growth for health care spending consistently and for decades. Spending under the Ontario Drug Benefit Program has, of course, grown right alongside that. The program makes up around 10% of what we now spend on public health.

But clinical pharmaceuticals have also taken on an increasingly prominent role in our hospitals and our health care system. This has had the effect of making competitive pricing a central concern for administrators and bureaucrats alike.

Even though the health care system commands a huge chunk of our province's budget, there is always an intense competition for limited resources. Everyone is looking for innovative efficiencies, but however central that drive becomes, this crisis should serve to remind all of us that we cannot—absolutely cannot—forget our core mission. The safety and well-being of the people of this province must be our most basic concern.

This factored into the first of Dr. Thiessen's recommendations that despite the alarming underdosing incident, the continued use of group purchasing organizations to negotiate vendor product preparation pharmaceutical services should not be discouraged. That said, he also says what should be obvious to anyone who followed this story, which is that the process could stand to be improved and standardized.

Potential risk to patients should be one of the criteria considered when evaluating proposals, and every group purchasing organization should develop and adopt a clear, standardized product and/or service specification description. This is important for the very basic reason that this crisis was not caused by malicious will or calculated effort. It was the result of botched communications that outlined the requirements for contracted sterile or non-sterile pharmaceutical preparation services.

This act follows up on recommendation number 12, which recommends that the Ontario College of Pharmacists inspect and license hospital pharmacies. Currently, they only have the ability to do so with respect to community pharmacies. As such, Bill 117 is an important step forward.

But while the Minister of Health has had high praise for the expertise and work of Dr. Thiessen, and while she has endorsed all 12 of the recommendations contained within Dr. Thiessen's report, this bill only directly addresses the last of his recommendations. She has only chosen to act on recommendation 12, which notes: "The OCP shall license all pharmacies operating within Ontario's clinics or hospitals."

Recommendation number 12 also calls for specialized electronic records and label requirements for non-sterile product preparation within a hospital pharmacy. In addition, all hospital pharmacies' labels must comply with comprehensive barcoded identification for all products and all patients. This bill fails to establish these recommendations.

However, Bill 117 fails to address Dr. Thiessen's first recommendation, recommendation 1, which addresses

the role of the group purchasing organizations, or GPOs, in distributing drugs to hospitals, and the improvements needed in the GPO-based process. Bill 117 does not address the role of the vendor to the GPO and the guidelines they will follow.

In the particular chemotherapy underdosing incident, the vendor—Marchese Hospital Solutions—and the GPO—Medbuy—mistakenly delivered diluted chemotherapy to four Ontario hospitals. It is hard to fathom why the ministry would not deal directly with one of the most basic factors that led to the underdosing situation. This omission is critically important. Despite what the public might be led to believe, if Bill 117 was enacted as it stands today, this legislation would not—I repeat, would not—prevent the underdosing of chemotherapy drugs from happening all over again.

Bill 117 changes some things but it does not alter what most people would agree is the most important thing. In his report, Dr. Thiessen pointed out that, “It is clear that the contractual elements and specifications surrounding the agreement between the GPO—Medbuy Corp.—and vendor are pivotal to the underdosing incident.”

Despite this sound and well-considered insight, Bill 117 goes on to address—

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

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. Rob E. Milligan: Today with us in the west gallery I have my very good friends from the Warkworth correctional institution: Toby Van Roon, Aaron D’Onofrio-Jones and Kim McClinton. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

M. Michael Mantha: C’est avec plaisir que je souhaite la bienvenue à tous les étudiants qui sont ici en fonction du Parlement jeunesse, et surtout à trois étudiants d’Algoma–Manitoulin, qui sont Ross Johnston et Ryan Breen, de Villa Française des Jeunes, et puis Dany Raymond, de l’Orée des Bois. Bienvenue, les amis.

M. Grant Crack: Monsieur le Président, mes collègues élus, il me fait grand plaisir et grand honneur de souhaiter la bienvenue à tous les participants du huitième Parlement jeunesse à l’Assemblée législative. Ils sont assis en haut dans la galerie ouest. J’aimerais que nous les accueillions avec une chaude main d’applaudissement. Bienvenue, tout le monde.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Two sets today: First of all, the mother of page captain Jaclyn Hurley is here today: Mary Beth Hurley from my riding of Nipissing.

We also have six students who are here for the francophone model Parliament: Maxime Pagé, Émmanuelle

Faucher, Mathieu St-Jules, Rachel Robertson, Cassidy Villeneuve, Adèle Orr and Daniel Orr.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I’d like to welcome Jim Sullivan from the Enniskillen Environmental Association to the chamber today.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: It is my pleasure to welcome the page captain’s mother, Manpreet Walia; father, Randhir Walia; sister Ekroop Walia; brother Keerat Walia; aunt Simran Puri; and uncle Gurjitpal Singh, from the great riding of Mississauga–Brampton South. They are in the east members’ gallery.

Mr. John O’Toole: I’d also like to introduce members from the Enniskillen Environmental Association. There’s Doug Taylor, Clint Cole, Jim Sullivan, who has been introduced, and Pedro Pelletier. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

M. John Vanthof: C’est avec plaisir que je présente les étudiants qui viennent de ma circonscription: Étienne St-Jean, Alexandra Paquette, Brittany Pepin, Danielle Roy, Alexa Leduc, Lionel Lemieux, Nicolas Roy, Zakarie Robert et Émilie Séguin. Ils sont ici présents en fonction du Parlement jeunesse. Bienvenue à vous.

M. Mike Colle: Je veux dire bienvenue à mon collègue, le grand bonhomme d’Ottawa–Vanier, Gilles Morin, qui est ici aujourd’hui. Bienvenue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for stepping on the Speaker’s role.

Ms. Soo Wong: I’m pleased to welcome two classes of grade 5 students from Kennedy Public School along with their teachers, Jeff Hui and Vivian Gadanidis. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I’d like to introduce to you, in the members’ gallery, Steve and Don Crouchman from Stayner and Washago. They’re here to watch the proceedings here at Queen’s Park today.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I wish to introduce my good friend Joanne Barnett, a good friend for many years and the first planner I ever met in the city of Brampton. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Mr. Norm Miller: I would like to wish my seatmate, the member from Newmarket–Aurora, a happy birthday today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thirty-nine and holding.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Well, we have a couple of birthdays here today. I call him my adopted little brother, Rob Leone; I call him MacLeone. It’s his birthday today, too, the member from Cambridge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Happy birthday. Last call for introductions from the members.

With your indulgence, I’d like to reintroduce the gentleman from Carleton East from the 33rd, 34th, 35th and 36th Parliaments: Gilles Morin. Welcome.

Also with us today in the Speaker’s gallery is Ms. Patricia Clarke, the consul and head of post for the Consulate General of Grenada at Toronto. Please join me in welcoming our guest.

Mr. Todd Smith: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order from the member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: I'm very pleased to stand today and seek unanimous consent to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 156. That's an act to proclaim Tamil Heritage Month. I know there's full support in the Legislature, and I would seek unanimous consent to pass Tamil Heritage Month Act, Bill 156.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings is seeking unanimous consent to pass Bill 156. Do we agree? I heard a no.

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Timmins–James Bay

Mr. Gilles Bisson: In an attempt not to have any partisanship tricks, I want to note that we did not say no. We actually are in agreement of passage.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is not a point of order. I believe I've already made a statement on this issue, and I request that all members re-read it.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On a brighter note, I would like to announce to the assembly that this is the last day for our pages, and we want to thank them for their hard work and efforts.

Applause.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: We want them back, Speaker. Unanimous consent for three more weeks.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In this case, I have to confess to being one of the biggest hecklers asking them to stay.

However, that said, it is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Chrysler has now announced they'll be making investments in Windsor and Brampton and not going to taxpayers for \$700 million. I want to celebrate that. I think that is a real testament to the quality of work from the Chrysler workers and the product they make.

Premier, your reaction was one of shock. I was pleased, and I wasn't surprised by the announcement because it's an outstanding product—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —workers.

The problem I had, Premier, is, it looked like you were going to hand out hundreds and hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars in a corporate giveaway, when in fact it looks like it wasn't needed.

Premier, how do you make that judgment call? How do you determine when you hand out suitcases full of

cash? How do you make the determination that it's a good project based on the quality of outstanding work that Chrysler workers do? I think it's good news; why don't you?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: All I can say to the Leader of the Opposition is that our position on this side of the House is that working in partnership with business in this province and competing in the global marketplace is what we believe is critical and will keep the auto sector here.

The comments that were made by the Leader of the Opposition were reckless, and they were ill-thought-out. They did not acknowledge the decades of support and partnership that we have had with the auto sector. What I have said is that our door is open. We will continue to work and negotiate with the auto sector to keep those jobs here into the long term.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Let me get this straight: We're getting the investment, we're getting the jobs, we're getting the new generation minivan, and the taxpayers are saving \$700 million? Isn't this a good thing? Your answer troubles me, Premier, that you and, actually, your colleague in the NDP, Andrea Horwath, just seem to want to hand out suitcases full of cash, even if they're not weighted. You don't seem to have any kind of judgment if the project requires provincial cash. I worry that the Liberals have been nothing more than pushovers when it comes to these sorts of corporate handouts.

I'll ask you again, Premier: Since you were willing to give away hundreds of millions of dollars when it wasn't needed, how do you actually decide, when you give out your \$3 billion a year in corporate handouts—how do you make a judgment whether it's actually needed or not or if the business would make the investment anyway?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The fact is that we were working very closely with the federal government, which, last time I checked, was a Conservative government—friends of the Leader of the Opposition. They seem to understand that it's very important that all levels of government work with business, particularly the auto sector, not just this company, not just Chrysler, but with the auto sector in general, to make sure that the conditions are in place to bring jobs to Ontario, keep the jobs that are here and, more importantly, secure a future footprint for the auto sector in the province. That's the piece that the Leader of the Opposition does not seem to understand, to the detriment of the discussion of the auto sector in Ontario.

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville will come to order.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's odd, Speaker. The Premier seems angry because she doesn't get to hand out \$700 million and a briefcase full of cash. I don't understand. My point of view: Let's actually make Ontario attractive for all investment, get taxes down, get energy under control and reduce the red tape burden. I think the fact that companies are investing because of the quality of our workers without a government handout is a good thing. I don't know why the Premier is angry about that.

Let me ask you this, Premier. You seem to view that the fact that we've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs is because we didn't have 300,000 more corporate giveaways. I disagree. In fact, I think the greatest threat to auto jobs, agri-business, and manufacturing jobs is a continuation of the Liberal-NDP coalition in this province of Ontario. That's the greatest threat.

I want to ask you too: You gave Kellogg's corporation \$2.5 million in a corporate handout, and then they closed down the London plant, throwing 550 workers out of a job. Do you think that was a wise investment—

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am very pleased that Chrysler will proceed with its investments in both Windsor and Brampton. We're pleased with that news. That's very good news.

But what the Leader of the Opposition needs to acknowledge and doesn't seem to understand is that we need, as a province, to have a relationship with the auto sector that will be a long-term relationship, that there will be commitments long-term and that there will be the ability to continue to partner with the auto sector.

I met with the Governor of Missouri this morning. It's very important to the economy of Missouri that we have the auto sector thriving in both our jurisdictions. There's an interdependence between us and states like Missouri that are dependent on a strong auto sector, not just today, not just to 2016, but into the future. That's the piece that the Leader of the Opposition seems to be missing.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Tim Hudak: Here's the difference: I believe in attracting businesses across the board through lower taxes, affordable energy, working with the colleges for more skilled trade workers, knocking aside the red tape barriers by reducing the number of rules and regulations by a third. The Premier believes in raising tax on energy for everybody else to hand out suitcases full of money. The problem is, Premier, that that will only last until the suitcase of money runs out, and they'll come back for more.

I'll ask you again: If you believe that your corporate giveaways works, why then did Kellogg's Co., that you gave \$1.5 million to in a big grant, then close down their factory throwing out of work 550 men and women? How is that, a wise investment of taxpayers' dollars if they took the money and ran?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the Leader of the Opposition knows that there are particular circumstances

with every company, but I think he also knows that, since 2009, we have gained 440,000 net new jobs in this province.

I think he also knows that if he listens to the leadership of companies like Cisco about why they are here and why they are expanding their businesses here, he will hear, for example, Robert Lloyd, president of development and sales, Cisco: "We find a very educated and loyal workforce here...." He goes on to say: "We just go where the talent is and have the best environment ... the predictability for us to build a workforce here in a good tax environment." That is what Robert Lloyd said about Ontario. That is why businesses are coming here. That is the solid foundation that we have built and will continue to enhance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I agree with what Mr. Lloyd said. I think we have tremendously skilled and educated and hard-working people here in the province of Ontario. I'd put our workers against anybody else's in the world. I've got faith in them. But I ask you, if that's the case why Cisco came here, why the heck did you give them \$200 million in a corporate handout? They are coming here for the quality of our workers. Why are you giving away suitcases of cash? I think because you want to cut a red ribbon because you've lost 300,000 jobs.

You say Kellogg's is a particular circumstance. You say Cisco came here for the workers, but you still gave them \$200 million.

Let me ask you about WindTronics in Windsor. You gave WindTronics in Windsor \$2.7 million in a corporate giveaway and WindTronics said they would create 200 jobs. Two years later, they're gone. The plant has been shuttered. It is empty. The lights are off. Premier, do you think that was a wise investment of money: \$2.7 million for zero jobs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I really believe that the question that has to be asked of the Leader of the Opposition is, if we are competing in a global economy where other jurisdictions are putting on the table conditions like tax regime, like wages, but also cash that actually would draw businesses in, Mr. Speaker, does he believe that we need to compete with those other jurisdictions around the globe? Or does he believe that we can just blinker ourselves and make a decision that we are not going to play on that playing field, that we are going to make up our own rules and we're not going to compete with other jurisdictions?

We're going to compete with other jurisdictions. We've got a terrific workforce. We are not going to undermine it the way the Leader of the Opposition would, and we are going to acknowledge that those other jurisdictions are competing with us.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, we're going to compete and win against the best in the world when we get rid of a lousy and corrupt Liberal government—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carry on.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Look, I've got tremendous faith in our workers. I think that we've got a reckless, expensive and corrupt government that's put us deep in debt. It's under two OPP—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You cannot. Withdraw, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Okay, I withdraw, Speaker.

So Chrysler made the investment without government cash and you wanted to give them cash from taxpayers. You say Kellogg's was a particular circumstance. I'm not sure what your excuse is for WindTronics. I think the latest—

Interjection.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: —Nestlé in Trenton, Ontario, received \$3 million in a suitcase full of cash from the Liberal government, two grants of \$1.5 million each. You said that would create 28 new jobs. Premier, yesterday they laid off 25 more workers.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Please tell me that you're going to actually change your mind and adopt our—

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

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, what we're not going to do is fire 10,000 people from the education sector. We're not going to fire 2,000 health care workers. We're not going to drive down wages. We're not going to weaken pensions. We're not going to cancel infrastructure projects in Mississauga, York region, Toronto and Durham, and we're not going to cancel job-creating green energy jobs that will create clean, renewable energy. We're not going to do those things, Mr. Speaker. That's what the Leader of the Opposition would have us do, and we're not going to go there.

1050

What I would ask the Leader of the Opposition to do is to speak to the people in Ford in Oakville, who are working for Ford, Mr. Speaker—the securing of 2,800 jobs that we did by investing \$70.9 million. I'd ask him to speak to the people who are working for Toyota in Cambridge, where 400 new jobs are being created because of our partnership. I'd ask him to speak to Original Foods in Dunnville: 150 new jobs. I'd ask him to speak to Conestoga Meat Packers' employees in Breslau, where 100 new jobs are being created. I'd ask him to speak to those people and ask them if they think that government partnering with businesses is a good idea, because that's what has created those jobs, Mr. Speaker.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Acting Premier and the Minister of Energy continued to defend Ontario's \$1-billion annual subsidy for exports. Families paying some of the highest bills in Canada have a simple question: Why is the government unable to admit that this is not working for ratepayers?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I'm quite sure that the Deputy Premier and the Minister of Energy said no such thing. What I know is that there are relationships and contracts with jurisdictions and that, last year, there was a \$300-million net profit from those energy contracts, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Just a note to the Premier: Your ministers had to correct that word on the record previously, and you may want to check at the end of this session.

On average, Ontario families pay eight and a half cents a kilowatt hour to make electricity, and we're selling it to the United States at two and a half cents. Where do you make the profit on that?

To our east and our west, provinces are getting nearly double that price for the electricity they sell. They've cut out the middlemen and the Wall Street energy traders. Why is this government so unwilling to consider the same?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Energy is going to want to respond to this in the supplementary, but I just want to say this: When this government came into office in 2003, the energy sector was in a mess. We have made investments that have made the energy sector stable and predictable. We have invested in clean, new renewable energy. We have shut down the coal plants.

The other day—yesterday, or the day before—the third party suggested that they would hand a \$100 cheque to folks across the province in the next couple of years, Mr. Speaker. That will not enhance the energy grid. It will not improve or connect people in the north, and there is no long-term plan in that to control energy prices. It does not promote conservation. It is not a responsible plan.

We have that responsible plan. Our long-term energy plan will do all of those things, Mr. Speaker, and we're going to go forward with it.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, Speaker, thanks to 10 years of mismanagement, Ontarians feel like they're working harder than ever to support the hydro system. They don't feel the hydro system is working for them, and this is the truth. Your Minister of Energy has had to correct himself on the record about a claim that we're making profits on those sales. They've seen public data from Manitoba Hydro showing Ontarians are paying amongst the highest bills in this country, and they know bills are going up.

Why is the Premier so determined to keep a broken status quo when people demand change to the system?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the fact that we provided a briefing for the critic with the IESO, who is responsible for this particular issue, and, yes, they clarified—I want to read what they clarified: Revenue from electricity exports reduced costs for Ontarians by \$300 million in 2013, and, since 2006, the costs were reduced by \$2 billion. There's a debate whether it's a profit or not, but the fact of the matter is, our export of electricity is reducing costs to ratepayers in the province of Ontario. Our IEI Program is using surplus electricity to reduce electricity rates for industrial consumers in a big way, and he doesn't even appreciate that.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Once again today, Premier, we've heard the Liberals promising to get public sector salaries under control. My question is this: What's your cap? What is it going to be?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: We've addressed this before, Mr. Speaker. The opposition likes to come up with kind of a bumper-sticker slogan for all this. The fact of the matter is, the leader of the third party went out and put forward a hard cap, then had to swallow herself whole when people started to raise exceptions.

The fact of the matter is, public sector salaries are a complex issue. What this legislation will do is allow us to collect all the relevant information to do the analysis and to come up with caps for different sectors, caps that make sense based on what's happening in the private sector and other jurisdictions.

Unfortunately for our side, it doesn't fit nicely on a bumper sticker, but it's the responsible thing to do, and I'm not going to have to swallow myself whole at a press conference.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaking of bumper stickers, this is like a drive-by by Liberals. You're going to have legislation so that we can figure out what those salaries are, so we can figure out what we've got to do? My God, we could do that now. You don't need legislation.

I'm going to ask you again: What is going to be the hard cap that comes out of this? Or is this just more cynical Liberal politics that we've seen as of late?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I'm a little bit surprised. I guess the honourable member didn't watch his leader's press conference, because she went out and proposed a hard cap, and then someone brought up an exception—I believe it was a senior power executive—and she said, "Oh, well, we'll have to have exceptions for it. It won't apply there." The fact of the matter is that we have a range of leaders within the public service whose

salaries need to be based on private sector comparators, as well as comparators in other public sector agencies.

As I said, it's not simple. It doesn't fit on a bumper sticker, but it's fair and responsible to make sure that we have public sector leaders who are paid appropriately but are not paid excessively. That's what this legislation will do, and I look forward to the New Democratic Party supporting it so that we can get it through the Legislature and get on with this work.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I think people are going to find it hard to swallow this. This is coming from the same government who's been happy to burn money for years and is claiming they're going to put out the fire. Give me a break. This is not a solution; this is a crass political exercise on the part of the Liberal Party in front of what might be a spring election.

I ask you again: Give us a number. What is the cap that you are prepared to propose when it comes to salaries for these individuals who are extremely overpaid?

Hon. John Milloy: As I say, we will come forward with a set of caps, depending on the circumstances. I've answered that, Mr. Speaker.

But what I was surprised by is that my honourable friend didn't stand up and talk about the rest of the legislation that we propose to bring forward to this Legislature and suggest the New Democratic Party, I am hoping, will support it. It encourages things such as the putting online of expenses by cabinet ministers and the Premier, something that's done right now, but extends it to the leaders of the opposition and their staff, something—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: —that the New Democratic Party has been a bit forgetful in doing over the past couple of years.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: My question is for the Premier. About a month and a half ago, we requested a freedom-of-information request on your expenses for the year 2013. Then the letter came back February 6 saying that if we paid \$1,200—actually, \$1,185, to be exact—we could probably get the information.

We also know—and this has happened since I've arrived here—that Tim Hudak and this caucus have been trying to get information on the gas plants and the cost of them, and it's been like pulling teeth. It wasn't until the auditor finally showed up with the information that we had anything to go on at all. Now we know the police are involved in this.

I want to know: How did you finally arrive at an accountability position where you're finally going to come forward and put information and make it open and

transparent, when all along you've been hiding everything?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

1100

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the member opposite was not a member when I came into this office a year ago, but what I said when I came in a year ago was that we were going to open up the process. At that point, we talked specifically about opening up the committee and providing information on the relocation of the gas plants, to which all parties had agreed. We said that we wanted to open up the process.

Hundreds of thousands of documents have been placed before the committee. There have been dozens of people who have come before the committee to answer questions. I have been there twice, so we did open that process.

On the issue of expenses, I think the member opposite would need to know that he's just wrong about that. My expenses are online. They're up to date. They were posted voluntarily, along with the expenses of ministers and staff. We did receive a freedom-of-information request and it will be released through the normal freedom-of-information process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: Again, to the Premier: The information on total dollars might be online, but the details that are required, and that should be in your openness provision here, are not there. I just wonder why it's taken a whole year or even 10 years before this information finally comes forward. I think it's high time that this was done.

You talk about your openness as far as the gas plants are concerned, but you know full well that it took the auditor and the police to finally get to the bottom of the matter. Whether you've been here a year or six months, it doesn't matter. You weren't open. When are you going to be open?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite knows that we have complied with all of the requests that the committee has asked of us. We have provided thousands of pages of documents. As I said, there was a freedom-of-information request put in and the information will be released as part of that.

There is a cost associated with those requests and, in fact, there was a cost paid to obtain the Leader of the Opposition's expenses, many of which are not online. There are very large gaps, and a freedom-of-information request was filed and there was a cost associated with that.

I hope that this line of questioning from the member opposite implies that they will be supporting the legis-

lation when it's introduced in the House. I fully expect that they will do that.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question this morning is for the Premier. Good morning, Premier.

First, I want to thank you for the phone call last night and keeping me in the loop in the situation at Chrysler. When there are jobs on the line, we need to set aside our political games and grandstanding and work to make investments happen.

People in Windsor and Essex county are very concerned about the long-term future of our Chrysler plant and the jobs of the thousands of people who work there. What assurances can you give, Premier, that your government is doing everything possible to work with Chrysler to ensure its Windsor operations will remain viable?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the member opposite for the question. I know that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade is going to want to speak to this.

I want to just say that I want to let everyone in this House know and the public know that the member for Windsor West has been—Windsor West; right?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Yes.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Children and Youth Services has been an absolute champion on this file. She has worked tirelessly to make sure that our policy of having an open door and working for those long-term commitments was absolutely what we were doing at the table, in conjunction with the federal government. The auto sector in this province and in Windsor has a huge champion in our member, and I hope that we will be able to continue those negotiations. We have our door open.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I want to assure this House that my New Democratic colleagues and I take our responsibilities seriously when it comes to securing good auto sector jobs in this province. We're calling on all parties at all levels of government to set aside their political differences and pull together on this one.

Premier, can you assure our Chrysler employees, indeed our entire community, that your door remains open for future dialogue with Chrysler officials about the long-term viability of Windsor's assembly plant operations?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I hope the member opposite walks over and provides the leader of the official opposition a copy of that letter right now, because currently, the leader of the official opposition is living in a fantasyland where he believes that his irresponsible and negative comments about the Chrysler negotiations at a particularly sensitive time in the negotiations—he's living in a fantasyland where he actually thinks that Chrysler's decision validates his irresponsible behaviour, and it's not simply our view on this side of the House.

The federal Minister of Industry, James Moore, who has been working very closely with myself and supportive of this deal with Chrysler, has indicated that the Hudak comments have been detrimental to the negotiations. That's not just his opinion; he heard that directly from the head of Chrysler Canada.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. I was pleased to be part of an announcement this morning in which you and the Premier spoke about our intention to introduce major enhancements to accountability for both our government and for members of this Legislature. Under Premier Wynne, our government has committed to leading by example and being as transparent and accountable as possible.

I was encouraged to hear this morning that these new proposed improvements would bring the same high level of transparency to members of this House. Since being elected to the Legislature last fall, I've worked hard to bring the issue of accountability of elected members to this House. Ontarians have a right to access, in a clear way, the information on how elected officials are spending their tax dollars.

I was very happy to learn that the government plans to introduce new legislation that, if passed, would create a climate of open government and enhanced accountability here in Ontario.

Minister, can you outline to this House how the government will be proposing to make the important improvements that will make posting expenses mandatory for all members?

Hon. John Milloy: I really sincerely want to thank the member for Ottawa South for his advocacy on this issue. I think members are aware of the private member's bill that he put forward on this.

As members are aware, today the Premier announced our proposed plan to introduce legislation to enhance accountability and transparency in government. Within that is our intention to introduce amendments which would require expense information for cabinet ministers, parliamentary assistants and opposition leaders and their respective staff to be posted online for anybody to see.

As members may know, expense information for cabinet ministers, parliamentary assistants and their staff has been posted online on a voluntary basis by the government since 2010. The proposed amendments would, if passed, turn these voluntary practices into a mandatory requirement and extend the same requirement to opposition leaders and their staff. We expect the same level of transparency from everyone in the House.

Mr. Speaker, at the same time—

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

Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you, Speaker; it's very encouraging news. Through you to the minister, I'm glad to hear that under this proposal all members of this House

would be required to embrace the same level of accountability as members of cabinet and parliamentary assistants.

I am especially impressed that the leaders of the opposition parties would be required, if the legislation passes, to be as accountable as the Premier and cabinet ministers. As representatives of the people, we must all hold ourselves to a higher standard.

Ontarians not only expect transparency from their elected officials but also from the people working in the agencies funded by their tax dollars. In speaking to Ontarians about my private member's bill on this issue, they often ask what is being done to enhance accountability not only for elected officials but for officials working in agencies.

Hon. John Milloy: Since 2010, expense information for senior executive appointees and the top five claimants in 21 of the government's largest agencies and organizations are required to be posted under the government's travel, meal and hospitality expense directive. Ministry senior managers are covered under this directive as well. Expense claims undergo a rigorous approval process, first within each of the organizations and then by the Integrity Commissioner.

1110

In our announcement today, we've committed to proposing new, improved oversight powers of the Integrity Commissioner to review the expenses of all of Ontario's 197 classified agencies. If passed, this proposed legislation would allow the Integrity Commissioner to select any number of these agencies and review the expenses of their executives.

The Premier has committed to making the government of Ontario the most accountable government in Canada. Measures like these would, if passed, go a long way to ensuring that Ontarians can access this important information.

GOVERNMENT'S RECORD

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. Hopefully I won't have to pay \$1,200 for an answer.

The government has found itself in the middle of a white collar crime investigation by the elite OPP anti-rackets squad for its role in the cancelled gas plants and its role in the deleted emails that attempted to suppress opposition concerns. Yesterday, hard drives from government computers were seized. We know 20 Liberal officials have been interviewed by the OPP. We know the Premier's own office was visited by the OPP. We know that if charges are laid, those responsible could face up to 14 years in jail.

Ontario Liberals have now seen their government under investigation twice by the OPP. They have broken international law. The Premier herself refuses to hand over her expenses unless you pay \$1,200.

What makes this more vile is that she has no mandate from the people. The honourable thing is for her to call an election. Will she do it? Will she seek a mandate from the people?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, this question really is beneath the member. It really is.

The Ontario Provincial Police are undertaking work, and I think all members of this House recognize the fact that we allow the Ontario Provincial Police to undertake their work. We don't reach conclusions on our own. We don't speculate.

Perhaps in the supplementary, the honourable member can talk about our new piece of legislation, because she mentions some of the concerns around emails. In fact, that legislation contains responses to the Information and Privacy Commissioner's recommendations in that regard. So I look forward to her support on it.

The other thing it does, Mr. Speaker, is it makes it mandatory for the Leader of the Opposition to post his expenses, something, through our access-to-information request, we found out he hasn't been doing. In fact, we found \$15,000 of expenses that he forgot to put on his website. Perhaps she wants to address that in her supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd gladly address that. It was the Truth in Government Act put forward by the Ontario PC caucus four years ago that would have addressed that.

I'm going to have the page take this over to the Premier. This is the \$1,200 bill she sent the Ontario PC caucus to get access to her information and her expenses. I'll throw in all of Tim Hudak's expenses as well, just so they have them.

But the facts speak for themselves: two OPP investigations, one broken international law and a government without a mandate. The Premier appears to be clinging to the wood panelling in her office with clenched fingernails. She can't leave the office because she wants the power. The right thing to do, the honourable thing to do, is to call an election, get rid of the scandal, get rid of the controversy, create the jobs, reduce the taxes. That's what Ontarians want. They can't deliver it. Will they do the right thing?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. John Milloy: I wish that the opposition had been as forthcoming when it came to the leader's expenses when we had to go through the freedom-of-information process to get them and wait for the requisite amount of time.

I do want to correct my record: I think I said \$15,000 but, in fact, there was \$13,271.30 charged to taxpayers by Mr. Hudak that was missing from his public postings, including flights and accommodations.

Again, I listened carefully and didn't hear the honourable member express her support for this legislation. The point behind this legislation is to encourage—shall we

say, force—the leaders of the two opposition parties to do what our government has been doing voluntarily since 2010.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. Last week, 4,000 people showed up at a job fair for the opening of a new mall of Niagara-on-the-Lake. That's a testimony to how much our region needs jobs. Instead of helping businesses in Niagara create jobs, this government is raising their costs with skyrocketing hydro bills while subsidizing private companies in western New York with cheaper hydro. What is the government's plan for Niagara businesses when competing against western New York in relation to electricity prices?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm pleased to take this question as well and talk about the important progress that we've made in job creation right across this province. Since the bottom of the recession, we've added nearly 450,000 jobs. The most recent data—and I'm looking forward to the jobs data coming out tomorrow—show that we're making progress, not just generally in terms of bringing those jobs back—6,000 jobs last month, for example, or rather in the month of January; we're going to hear about February tomorrow—but also, importantly, 7,800 new jobs for our young people. I can't help myself but to reference my colleague in the back, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. An important part of that progress that we're seeing on youth job creation is our youth jobs fund. Under his careful stewardship, we have more than 8,000 young people across the province who now have training positions, in those first opportunities with employers across the province, including in the Niagara region.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. A new report shows that one in every two residents in Niagara Falls is struggling financially. At the same time, we saw 4,000 people standing in line in hopes of finding a job, any job, even part-time. Niagara Falls has a massive amount of cheap hydroelectricity in our own backyard, yet businesses and ratepayers are paying the highest energy prices in the country—much higher than western New York. Premier, why are ratepayers subsidizing the export of electricity so businesses in western New York can hire while people in Niagara face the highest unemployment in the province?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: First of all, we do have surplus energy, and that's good. We came from a deficit situation. We invested heavily in the system. We do sell electricity, and we reduced the cost to our system last year by \$300 million, but we also are turning our thoughts and our direction towards using surplus electricity to support Ontario businesses. We created the

Industrial Electricity Incentive Program, and that is providing electricity to companies that want to expand or settle in Ontario by giving them electricity at about a 50% reduction, a 50% discount. We've announced about six or seven of those companies. We are also not supporting New York companies anymore. That surplus energy is in Ontario for Ontario businesses.

TEACHERS' COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, a lot of parents in my riding are a little confused and concerned as to what is going on with collective bargaining in the education sector. My parents understand that there is an urgency for the speedy passage of the government's proposed Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, but do not understand why legislation that was introduced back in October is still stuck in the legislative process. We've heard you say many times that this is a bill you've been closely working on with all of our partners in education when it was developed. So could the minister please explain why such a bill, which is the result of such extensive consultation and collaboration, has come to a standstill in the legislative process?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member for raising such an important issue. First, this member is absolutely correct that the speedy passage of this bill is extremely important. This bill would create central tables for collective bargaining with formal roles for the province, the trustee associations, school boards, teacher federations and support staff unions. This new process would encourage discussion, promote innovative ideas and ensure every partner has a clear role to play. The proposed model would help us promote constructive dialogue and maintain positive, respectful relationships with our education partners in the best interests of the students who are here today.

1120

Speaker, it is important to understand that this is a made-in-Ontario approach to collective bargaining that was developed through extensive consultations with our education partners. It will help us with collective bargaining, and we need it passed now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister. Listening to your response, it struck me that instead of the opposition holding the government to account, we're now in a situation where the government is having to hold the opposition's feet to the fire to ensure our children's education is not sacrificed at the altar of petty political gamesmanship. My understanding is that things have come to such a pass that, yesterday, we had to vote in this Legislature to seek permission for the committee to sit during constituency week. Now I understand that that sitting is also at risk.

Could you, Minister, please tell us yet again why this legislation is at risk of the official opposition's political games?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd be happy to explain what's going on here. As the member mentioned, when a similar motion passed in this House last fall, allowing the committee to sit during the winter break, the official opposition chose to boycott the process. This is the same risk that we are now facing from the same party that finally, yesterday, decided it had an education plan.

Speaker, I am calling on all members of this Legislature to ensure that what happened in the winter break doesn't happen next week, and that the committee will sit for clause-by-clause consideration so the legislation can move through the process. Throughout the course of the day, I've seen the Chair and the subcommittee members sitting here, and I call on those subcommittee members to meet immediately after question period and get this sorted out so they can meet next week and do clause-by-clause.

Interjections.

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

New question.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Premier. Premier, I have a letter from Trent Gervais, the manager of the Peterborough airport, expressing his strong objections to the approved Sumac Ridge wind turbine project. This airport is a great source of economic development for not only my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, but for the city of Peterborough. It boasts the longest paved runway between Ottawa and Toronto, at an astounding 7,000 feet.

Millions of dollars have been invested by all three levels of government to see this airport grow. Seneca College's school of aviation opened its doors there in January, and it's expected to generate \$12.32 million of economic activity in the community each year and support 151 jobs. With Seneca and five other flight schools operating out of the Peterborough airport, the safety of new pilots is now at risk because of the siting of this wind turbine project.

Since the Minister of Rural Affairs won't stand up for the people of his riding in Peterborough, I'm standing here today on behalf of his—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. I've made a comment about this before—about talking about other people's ridings. I would caution the member not to do that again.

Please finish your question; you have time for wrap-up.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Will you stop the Sumac Ridge project and let the Peterborough airport get back to the business of creating much-needed jobs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member knows that FIT contracts, renewable contracts, allow for termination only in cases where project developers do not meet their contractual obligations, and the OPA could be

subject to legal action if it terminates FIT contracts for projects which have met their obligations.

Having said that, there is an environmental process, and an appeal to that environmental process to deal with issues. The Leader of the Opposition in his Million Jobs Act has indicated that he would give the Minister of Energy the authority to cancel those contracts. Mr. Speaker, that would expose the provincial government to over \$20 billion in liabilities. We're not prepared to do that.

We are prepared to adhere to the environmental process, the appeal process that's in place, and I will hopefully be able to refer the supplementary to the Minister of the Environment on that issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: To whichever minister is going to take the next question, I guess: There are certainly lots of Ministry of Environment outs for that contract. I asked the Premier on Monday to call a moratorium on wind turbines, to which you responded that the Liberal government has "put new rules in place," and that you would "give communities more input" on siting. In the letter from the manager of the Peterborough airport, he says these wind turbines are threatening the success of the business, putting up barriers to job creation and risking the safety of flight patterns and approaches—it's kind of important. Your government clearly did not have the necessary guidelines and regulations in place before siting this project.

You claim your government has new rules in place. Why is it that you cannot listen to this community, like you said you would, and cancel the wind turbines at the Sumac Ridge and Peterborough airport location?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: There is a process which has been established to allow people to have the appropriate input on matters of this kind. The proponent has to go through a very rigorous regime to ensure that that proponent would be in compliance with the regulations set out by the Ministry of Energy and by the Ministry of the Environment.

I am confident that all aspects of this issue will be dealt with appropriately through the process. Ministry of the Environment officials and, indeed, officials of other ministries, who provide comments in these circumstances, are always pleased to hear from those who have views to express and are respectful of those views being expressed by those individuals, and give serious consideration to them.

I encourage all to participate in that process and ensure that those views are put forward. I can tell you that they will be considered seriously, as they always are.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

Last week, the minister met with the mayor of Thunder Bay and city councillors, who expressed their concern over the ongoing problems with their local health

care system. After 50 long days of gridlock, caused by an overwhelming number of patients who should not be in their hospital but have nowhere else to go, the hospital is now facing a deficit. Will the minister recognize that the hospital should not be forced to cut services because of a lack of capacity in their community?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite for the question. This is an issue that I have been discussing daily with the members from Thunder Bay—Superior North and Thunder Bay—Atikokan. They are keeping me informed on a daily basis about the challenges in Thunder Bay. I'm very much aware of it. I know the hospital, the community care access centre, the LHIN, the city—everyone is working together to develop a plan to rectify the situation.

It is unacceptable, what's happening at Thunder Bay; I will be the first to admit that. I look forward to being able to speak directly with the people of Thunder Bay on how we're going to move forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The minister is partly right: The hospital is working with the community care access centre, with the LHINs and with any other community-based organization to try to address the community problem. But the weeks of gridlock have taken their toll on the hospital budget. Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre is running a deficit of about \$2.4 million and is looking at cutting services to balance their books, like they are mandated to do by law.

What is the minister going to do to address this ongoing problem and the hospital deficit that comes with it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in the initial question, the situation in Thunder Bay is not acceptable. That's why we are working to support the community, because they have come together and offered some solutions.

This is very much a project that's under way. I am very much focused on finding a resolution to this. As I say, I look forward to being able to communicate with the people of Thunder Bay about some of the steps we can take in addition to those we have already taken to rectify the situation.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. Ontario's tech sector is a vital part of our economy, both across the province and locally in my constituency, with thousands of tech grads from institutions in and around my riding of Scarborough—Guildwood.

1130

I know first-hand the importance of a strong tech sector in Ontario. Just recently, Cisco has renewed their commitment to continuing their R&D operations. As a significant employer, they are an integral part of Ontario's economy. It is important that we continue to create and retain jobs across the province and ensure that we are supporting key sectors like tech.

These are competitive times, and Ontario has proven it can compete globally on the world stage, remaining one of the highest-ranking jurisdictions in North America when it comes to foreign direct investment. With Cisco's recent announcement to create an R&D hub in Toronto, could the minister please update the House on what our government's recent partnership means for Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member from Scarborough–Guildwood for this important question. I have to say, I'm very excited and proud of this announcement yesterday by Cisco. I had the honour of attending, along with the deputy mayor of the city of Toronto and other business leaders and dignitaries, where Cisco announced its quite remarkable \$100-million investment in this city to create what they're calling the Internet of Everything Innovation Centre. This is a centre which is going to be available to support start-ups, to work on business-to-business relationships and really to significantly grow the economy and grow the IT sector in Ontario.

I should mention that this is only the fourth of Cisco's innovation centres in the entire world, so we're following. They have one in South Korea, one in Brazil, one in Germany, and we are the only innovation centre for Cisco in all of North America, so this really was an important announcement. Of course, it comes on the heels of our important and positive announcement in December with Cisco: They're investing \$4 billion over the next 10 years to create as many as 3,700 jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Minister, for the update. While the tech industry in my riding and across the province will continue to see the strong commitment our government is making in the industry, there are still some concerns from my constituents about the overall growth of the tech sector. We know Ontario has fared better than many other jurisdictions in North America and that our economy is back on track, having recovered all the jobs lost during the global recession.

We know having a good job to wake up to every day is what keeps Ontario strong. Speaker, through you, back to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment: What is the government doing to support the continued growth by helping to create good, meaningful jobs in Ontario's tech sector?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you again for the question. Although I know that the PC Party does not support our partnership with Cisco and didn't support the investment that we made to secure that \$4-billion investment and the creation of 3,700 jobs, this partnership is the largest job-creating investment in the history of Ontario's and Canada's tech sector. It really is unprecedented and it will certainly enhance Ontario's reputation as a leader in research and innovation.

It's also a great example of how the government of the day can work together with the private sector to realize these important investments. We have more than a quarter of a million people working in the high-tech sector in Ontario. Last year, we were third in North America, after California and Texas. Well, I'm happy to say

that we've taken that second-place spot away from Texas. We're actually number two in all of North America, after Silicon Valley, in terms of IT investments.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Premier. Premier, your government's 2012 budget devastated the horse racing industry. As we all know, the NDP allowed that budget to pass, putting thousands of people out of work. You set up an expensive transition panel. You set up another new bureaucracy and a funding program with no details. You raced to the rescue of Fort Erie just days before a by-election, but racetracks across Ontario are still waiting for their race dates. Some are waiting to see if they'll even have a season.

I ask the Premier: How many contracts have you signed?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the member opposite knows that the plan that we have put in place is a stable plan that will allow the horse racing industry to stay on track into the future.

The Slots at Racetracks plan was not transparent. It was not sustainable, and it had to be changed. We have made that change. John Snobelen, Elmer Buchanan and John Wilkinson worked to make sure that the \$400 million that we put in place will establish that framework going forward.

I hope that the member opposite understands that the Ontario Racing Commission announced the details of the 2014 component of the Horse Improvement Program. We are working with breeders, and we are working with the tracks to make sure that those dates are in place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Again, to the Premier: If this is a stable plan, it should be in the stable.

I've spoken to the horse racing industry leaders, and they are fed up with this government's delays. They are tired of excuses. They are frustrated, because they can't plan this year's season, which may or may not even exist.

It's my understanding that the contracts are due to be in place by April 1. It is now March 6, and I'm told that racetracks are still waiting to hear if their race dates have even been approved.

When can racetracks expect to hear from you so that they can begin planning their upcoming season? When will you pick up the phone, and when will you finalize race dates?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The ORC negotiations are ongoing, and I'm sure that the member opposite knows that. He knows that it was important that there be those individual conversations with each track, because each track is different. The fact is, the Fort Erie situation is different from the other tracks, and those negotiations are ongoing.

My intention is that we have a stable industry that is transparent and that works for all sectors of the horse racing industry. I made that commitment when I came into this office. The panel had been put in place by my predecessor. We have now got a plan that is sustainable,

and we will be working with the tracks to make sure that they have those dates for 2014.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Attorney General. Partner Assault Response Programs play a vital role in holding abusive men accountable for violence against women and keeping women safe. Each year, about 14,000 men participate in Partner Assault Response Programs, most of them through court order. Yet the province only provides funding for about 9,000 of these offenders.

Minister, why did your government arbitrarily decide to reduce the length of the PAR program from 16 to 12 weeks just to cut costs without any research on how this change will affect family safety?

Hon. John Gerretsen: She's quite correct that the Partner Assault Response Program is a very important component of our coordinated response to domestic violence. She's also correct that we have changed the number of weeks that an individual can be part of this program from 16 to 12 weeks. But one of the reasons why we did that is that there are many more people now who need that kind of service. The funding has not been cut. It's still exactly the same amount as it was last year, at \$10.6 million.

We found that there was simply too long a delay for new individuals who needed the service to get into the program. So what we have done is, we have slightly reduced the number of weeks that each participant will be involved in the program so that the individuals who need the service can be dealt with a lot quicker, because it has gone from something like 11,000 individuals two or three years ago to 14,000 today. People shouldn't have to wait four to six months to get into the program.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again to the Attorney General: This government, by the way, has allowed 15,000 women to be turned away from emergency shelters due to lack of funding, potentially back into the hands of those abusers. Partner Assault Response Programs are an essential component of a coordinated community response to women, giving offenders the opportunity to examine their beliefs and attitudes toward domestic abuse and to learn non-abusive ways of resolving conflict.

The ministry's own provincial advisory committee has recommended against this change. Why is this government ignoring the advice of its own experts and pushing through a change that is putting women's lives at risk?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Well, Speaker, as I mentioned before, the number of people who are in the program has gone up from 11,000 to about 14,000 in the last two to three years. We want to make sure that these individuals who need this much-needed service—so that we can reduce domestic violence—can be treated as quickly as possible. There has been no evidence at all that a 12-week program isn't just as efficient and good for the individuals involved as a 16-week program.

The funding has not been cut. The organizations are aware of that. There has been an awful lot of consultations with all of these good groups in our province that are doing this kind of work. I think that it's very important that people get access to the program as quickly as possible, because they are in the greatest need immediately after their first charge. It's a good program. We're continuing the program.

SPEAKER'S BOOK AWARD

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, I want to commend you for hosting your annual Speaker's Book Award last night, honouring Ontario's authors and publishers. It was great to see Charlie Angus, the federal MP for Timmins–James Bay, win the competition last night—and, also, the father of the member for Haldimand–Norfolk, who was there and one of the finalists as well.

You did a great job last night, Speaker. I hope you continue honouring Ontario's authors and publishers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I appreciate the member's comments. All of our authors were very thrilled, and our publishers were of the same opinion. We want to celebrate literacy in Ontario.

There are—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Write a paragraph.

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

The House recessed from 1141 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I ask all members of the House to join me in welcoming one of the best criminal defence lawyers in the city of Toronto, Jonathan Rosenthal, to the House today. This is his first time in the House, so please join me in welcoming him, as well as my brother Gurratan Singh, who is also in the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ADVANCED AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I rise today to share comments about a really important program in the agri-food industry. Last week, I had the privilege to speak to class 15 of the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program as part of their Toronto seminar. You may recall that we also welcomed them to Queen's Park.

Today, I'm pleased to share a little bit about the excellent work that this program is doing, developing Ontario's future leaders in the agri-food sector.

Established in 1984, AALP, as it is known, is an executive development program for men and women who want to broaden their horizons and expand their networks to help shape the future of the agriculture and food sectors in Ontario.

AALP is administered by the Rural Ontario Institute. Through a series of seminars, AALP participants develop leadership skills and an increased knowledge of the agri-food system at the local level, the provincial level, the national, North American and, actually, international levels, and they study the different perspectives and critical issues that are involved in that sector.

I am proud to say, Mr. Speaker, I'm an alumnus of that program. I was in class 6 just a few years ago, and I can personally say that it provides a strong foundation in terms of attributes necessary to keep moving the agri-food industry forward in Ontario.

In the recognition of the agriculture literacy week that we're celebrating right now, I'd like to share with you that Ontario's agri-food industry supports more than 740,000 jobs in this province. In order to make sure the industry continues to grow, it's important that we train industry leaders, and the Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program is very successful in doing just that.

NORTHERN ONTARIO MINING SUPPLY SHOWCASE

Mr. John Vanthof: On Monday, March 3, 2014, the first annual Northern Ontario Mining Supply Showcase was held at the Steam Whistle Brewery, and judging by the number of exhibitors and people at the event, it was a resounding success.

The showcase coincided with the second day of the Prospectors and Developers Association of Canada—commonly known as PDAC—conference, one of the world's largest conferences for the mineral industry; 30,000-plus people attend the annual PDAC conference, and the northern showcase provided a unique opportunity for northern Ontario companies to showcase their products to people from around the world.

Special recognition should go to Marla Tremblay, James Frank and the rest of the team who organized the showcase. They did a tremendous job.

My riding of Timiskaming–Cochrane was well represented at the showcase. Municipalities like Cochrane, Temiskaming Shores and Elk Lake had displays, as well as two mining service companies from my hometown of Earlton, Nor Arc and Fabri-thane. Local colleges like Northern and Boréal were also displaying their mining training capabilities. Our area has a rich mining heritage, and our local mining service sector has grown from that base.

As I walked into the exhibit hall, one of the first people I met was Latchford Mayor George Lefebvre. He looked like a proud father, and for good reason. People like George and Mayor Terry Fiset of Elk Lake have been promoting our area at PDAC for several years, and

their hard work has been the springboard for the showcase. Thank you for a job well done.

SCHOMBERG FARM TOUR

Ms. Helena Jaczek: On Saturday, the Schomberg Agricultural Society, based in my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, will have their 10th annual farm tour. Held on the first Saturday of March break, the tour seeks to celebrate agriculture and showcase to the public the work that local farmers do. Led by the efforts of local volunteers like Janet Orr, the tour now attracts over 700 people.

The public will be able to visit seven different farms in the area, such as Maple Lawn Farm, which has been home to the Mills family for over seven generations, where the public will learn about the milling of whole wheat; Baker Ridge Farm—not surprisingly, owned by the Baker family—features over 150 sheep and horses that range from big black Percherons to small miniature horses.

Rexlea Jerseys cattle farm will teach the public how milk is produced. The farm has been owned and operated by the Sheardown family since 1912, and it recently won top honours from Jersey Canada in the constructive breeder category.

Winsong Farms is owned by Bill and Winnie Stott, where guests will see animals perform a wide variety of entertaining tricks.

Annual events like the farm tour remind me how privileged I am to represent a riding that has deep roots in both rural and urban Ontario.

DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Speaker, in April of last year I spoke about the ice storm that hit Perth–Wellington. I kept the government informed. I asked them to recognize our local states of emergency and I asked them to come through with the assistance we needed. Unfortunately, they did not come through.

Then, in December, we were hit with another ice storm—along with many other parts of the province. Again, I kept the government informed. I spoke up for the municipality of North Perth and the town of Minto, which have applied for assistance. Twice I wrote to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and I appreciate her promise to review both requests without regard to where their municipality is located.

Following the government's announcement last week, city of Toronto officials confidently stated that virtually all of their costs would be covered. That's good news. I hope the government will soon confirm that assistance for the GTA, but also for other areas affected by the storm, including Minto and North Perth.

When a storm comes our way, small and rural municipalities are often most in need of assistance, and even more so when a second storm comes our way.

Respectfully, I call on the government to support us, and I ask them to support our call for an all-party committee to study the province's emergency preparedness.

NORMA BERTI

Miss Monique Taylor: Today I rise to speak of Norma Berti. Norma was the first steelworker woman in Canada to serve on her local union executive as financial secretary. Norma was hired in 1950 and retired in 1984, after 34 years as a member of Local 1005 at Stelco's Hilton Works.

Norma was an activist all of her life. She was a member of SOAR, and a member of the Hamilton and District Council of Women, where she served as the treasurer. She was the house convenor for the Provincial Council of Women, and had so many other wonderful roles in our community.

In 1976, Norma was the first recipient of the Woman of the Year Award from the Status of Women of Hamilton. During an executive meeting, she was quoted as saying, "The more I learned, the more I wanted to learn."

Norma died in Hamilton on October 9, 2001, after a lengthy battle with cancer. There is now a Norma Berti Education Scholarship awarded to the son or daughter of a steelworker in her memory.

We are very proud of the work that Norma Berti has done in Hamilton, and I look forward to our annual International Women's Day breakfast that is always held in Norma Berti's name.

I would like to take this time also to wish all of the women in this House a very happy International Women's Day.

RANKED BALLOTING

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I would like to rise today to speak about a volunteer organization that has been operating in Toronto for the past few years. It was spearheaded by my friend Dave Meslin, who will be here later today, with many thousands of volunteers and supporters behind the organization, who are also in support of the bill I will be tabling later this afternoon.

The group is called the Ranked Ballot Initiative of Toronto, and they have been working to implement a ranked ballot voting system for Toronto municipal elections.

The organization started a few years ago, following a series of town hall consultations carried out by the Emerging Leaders Network called the Better Ballots project.

The RaBIT initiative has worked tirelessly for a democratic voting system in Toronto, and I am proud to support these rising leaders in our community who are committed to Toronto's diversity and inclusion and to strengthening our voting system.

LOCAL FOOD FUND

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I rise today because I've been hearing from farmers and local food groups who are upset that they are being ignored by this government again.

This government has held many photo ops to talk about the Local Food Fund, but when the cameras are turned off, they seem to simply have forgotten about it.

The first round of applications was due by Halloween, and the program guidelines clearly state that the application would be reviewed in 45 days. It's been 126 days—over four months—but farmers and food groups are still waiting for an answer. The applications were submitted before it started to snow—we all know how long ago that was—and yet they still haven't received an answer.

1310

Farmers have been told that the Local Food Fund applications are stuck on the Premier's desk because, as part-time minister, she simply doesn't have time to deal with them.

There is speculation that the Premier is holding off on allocating the funds so that she can use these announcements for pre-election photo ops. I hope neither of those things is true, Madam Premier.

Today I'm asking the Premier to take the time to focus on our agriculture and food sector, respond to the applications and prove that she wasn't playing political games at the expense of rural Ontario by committing not to use these announcements for photo ops.

VAUGHAN FILM FESTIVAL

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I'm very happy to rise in my place this afternoon to discuss a great local event that happened just a couple of days ago in my riding of Vaughan.

Monday, March 3, marked the annual Vaughan Film Festival media launch. This launch is a precursor to the April Vaughan Film Festival, a three-day event showcasing up-and-coming international filmmakers who have used my riding, my community, as their platform.

The event is an excellent example of the great local talent we have brewing in the community in Vaughan. It's organized by co-chairs Mark Pagliaroli and Antonio Ienco, who have a wealth of experience in the arts themselves. They are the founders and co-owners of Reel Film Pictures, a great Vaughan-based production company.

Monday's media launch is the opening act, if you will, of the Vaughan Film Festival. It announces those movies that will be in the lineup for the big event and provides people with a sneak peek into those films that have been nominated for awards this year.

It also officially announced the winning school in the Giant Reel competition. This year's winner was Father Bressanni Catholic High School, in Vaughan, which received \$2,000 towards their art department. And two high school students have also been selected to receive \$1,500 scholarships toward their post-secondary education.

Film and television production contributes \$2.4 billion annually to our economy and supports over 46,000 jobs. That's why I'm happy to support great events like the Vaughan Film Festival. This industry is thriving, and it also promotes arts and culture in our province. That's something that I know we can all support.

TRANSFORMER STATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to welcome representatives of the Enniskillen Environmental Association to the House today: Clint Cole, Doug Taylor, Jim Sullivan and Pedro Pelletier.

The association held a news conference today in opposition to this government's very poor decision on a mega transformer project in my riding of Durham. The Enniskillen Environmental Association has warned this government that this massive transformer proposal on the site of the Oak Ridges moraine will risk millions of litres of toxic chemicals going into the moraine itself.

Their question to this government is, "Why would you allow the Clarington transformer station to threaten clean, reliable drinking water for 250,000 people in Ontario?"

On behalf of the residents living near the transformer site and the Enniskillen Environmental Association, I want to put on the public record that this government and the Premier must be held responsible for all damages to property, life and limb of the citizens in this area.

Hydrogeological specialist Dr. John Cherry, of G360, the Applied Groundwater Research Centre, has reviewed the transformer station proposal and recommended study. Clarington council has agreed to put up \$25,000.

I charge today that the Minister of the Environment had no time and did not review the report.

I urge this government to listen to the advice of the citizens, scientists and elected representatives and protect the Oak Ridges moraine and the very drinking water of the people in this area that you've ignored.

VISITORS

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Nine years ago, almost to the date, I gave birth to a little girl named Victoria Varner. Eight years ago, almost to the date, I was elected to the assembly. I'm really proud that my little girl, Victoria, has joined us here today with her dad, my husband, Joe Varner. They're here to see the assembly, and I'm really happy for that.

Thank you for the indulgence.

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

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CANADIAN AGRICULTURE LITERACY WEEK

SEMAINE DE SENSIBILISATION À L'AGRICULTURE CANADIENNE

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's my honour to stand in the Legislature to recognize the third annual Canadian Agriculture Literacy Week. This week provides

elementary and high school students from across the country with an opportunity to celebrate agriculture and to learn more about its importance in our everyday lives.

Mr. Speaker, the agri-food sector is extremely important to Ontario. When it thrives, everyone benefits. As the Minister of Agriculture and Food, I've had the opportunity to work to raise the profile of the sector across the province, and I know that farmers and agricultural organizations appreciate the profile that they are receiving; I've heard that first hand.

En tant que ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation, j'ai eu la possibilité de faire mieux connaître le secteur partout dans la province, et je sais que les agriculteurs et les organismes agricoles en sont reconnaissants.

Our goal this week—to gain a better understanding of how our food is grown and produced—is about raising that profile even higher because it's so important to me that everyone knows a thriving agri-food industry means a thriving Ontario. That is why we are supporting and advocating for involvement in agriculture week.

When we buy and eat the good things that are grown, harvested and made right here in our province, we feed local economies, support great jobs and help communities grow and succeed. It's why we introduced the Local Food Fund to support innovative local food projects, and it's why we created the Local Food Act, the first legislation of its kind in Canada. That legislation is aimed to increase local food awareness by setting food literacy goals in consultation with agri-food industry partners.

It's also why I challenged the agri-food sector to double its growth rate and create more than 120,000 new jobs by 2020. I would just say that the agri-food industry has really stepped up to this challenge. They are working to set targets and they have plans in place, and I'm very, very proud of the involvement of all in that challenge, because this industry is strong and we want to help to make it stronger.

C'est aussi pourquoi j'ai mis le secteur agroalimentaire au défi de multiplier par deux son taux de croissance et de créer plus de 120 000 nouveaux emplois d'ici à 2020, parce que ce secteur est fort et que nous voulons l'aider à devenir encore plus fort.

Mr. Speaker, I know that the capacity is there. We're seeing that capacity as the organizations set their own targets and rally their members to be involved.

I'm so pleased that Ontario students are taking the opportunity to learn more about the hard work that goes into putting fresh local food on their plates. I want to thank the hard-working folks at Ontario Agri-Food Education, OAFE, for bringing a firm understanding of our agri-food industry to every student in our province. It's through initiatives and partnerships like this that we can ensure that everyone in our cities and towns knows the important role agriculture and our rural communities play in our daily lives.

Please join me in celebrating Canadian Agriculture Literacy Week and thanking Ontario Agri-Food Education for their exceptional work.

Je vous invite à célébrer avec moi la Semaine de sensibilisation à l'agriculture canadienne et à remercier Ontario Agri-Food Education de son travail exceptionnel.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Minister responsible for women's issues as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: For which I stand, Mr. Speaker. It's my pleasure today to rise to recognize this week as International Women's Week, and Saturday as International Women's Day. As minister responsible for women's issues, I'm proud to celebrate the progress that has been made in advancing women's equality around the world and here at home.

This year, Ontario's theme for International Women's Day is "Equality Through Leadership." As the leaders of today, we must continue to push for female equality.

Throughout history, our mothers, grandmothers, aunts, sisters and our mentors have fought for the right to vote, own land, and in 1929, gained us recognition as persons under the law. Strong women like Agnes Macphail, the first female MP, and the Famous Five, who stood up for equal rights, insisted on equal opportunity and made progress toward equality for all women. If it wasn't for their strong leadership, I wouldn't be here today. It is because of them that I feel an overwhelming sense of responsibility to break down barriers for the next generation.

1320

We've come a long way in Ontario. We now have the first female Premier in our history—and one day we won't have to have that "female" in front of Premier; she'll just be the Premier of Ontario. While this is an important achievement, we must continue to advocate for women in leadership positions. Barriers for women still exist in the corporate world. In Canada, women make up only 16% of the seats on corporate boards. That is unacceptable. Research shows that a stronger economy and equality for women go hand in hand. This has been proven around the world, and it holds true in Ontario as well. The 2013 Catalyst census shows that from 2011 to 2013, female representation on Canadian public companies has increased by 2%. While that's a promising sign, it's evident that there's more to do.

This past summer, our government asked the Ontario Securities Commission to undertake a review and public consultation on a comply-or-explain approach to corporate governance. We did that because there's a stigma in the corporate world that we must work hard to change. The data shows that, when it comes to return on investment, companies with more female directors outperform those with the least by 26%. We've seen that when other countries have adopted a comply-or-explain approach, there has been an increase in female corporate leadership.

As a government and as female role models, we must continue to work hard to break down barriers for the women of today and the leaders of tomorrow.

Thirty years after the creation of the Ontario Women's Directorate, progress has been made toward full economic equality. Today we see more women in senior leadership positions, more women in politics and more women in non-traditional jobs. While that's great, there's a long way to go, and we acknowledge that. Unfortunately, it's still the case that women earn 72 cents for every dollar earned by their male counterpart. We must continue to work together and work hard to address this discrepancy.

Mr. Speaker, I truly believe that equality for women is progress for all. It's not a women's issue; it's an economic imperative and a social imperative. I remain committed to that goal. I encourage all Ontarians to participate in their community's events during International Women's Week and to look for ways that they can support women's equality and a brighter future for all Ontarians, not just during International Women's Week or International Women's Day but every day.

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

CANADIAN AGRICULTURE LITERACY WEEK

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'm happy and pleased to rise on behalf of the PC caucus to recognize Canadian Agriculture Literacy Week. We need to do much more to educate people on where our food comes from and how it's produced, as well as increase the knowledge of how it's prepared.

Last year when we held local food round tables around the province, the number one thing that we heard was that we need to increase food education. Today, there are too many people who don't understand how their food is grown, they don't understand the hard work that goes into producing it, and they don't understand the capital investment that farmers make and need to make. They don't consider a career in agriculture because they don't understand the opportunities that are available. In fact, a recent study by Farmers Feed Cities found that only 41% of 18- to 34-year-olds said that they knew where their food comes from.

It's part of a bigger problem of people who are no longer learning about food. Instead of trying to just ban junk food, we should teach students the skills to make smart, balanced choices. Last year, when we put forward an amendment which would have required that food education be taught in all grades, we wanted to ensure all young people had the opportunity to learn nutritional knowledge, basic food skills and where their food comes from.

Just last weekend, I was at a conference organized by the Ontario Home Economics Association. I heard the results of a study that that amendment had found it had 94% support. We heard support for it from all different sectors. But when the Local Food Act went to committee,

the government blocked the amendment. I'm happy that the Premier acknowledges agricultural literacy week today, but I would have preferred instead that she had taken concrete steps to improve agriculture literacy by supporting our amendment. It's not enough to say the right words, Premier. We need action to increase agriculture literacy.

Today, whether a student learns about their food and where it comes from depends too much on which teacher they have. Some have great agriculture knowledge and are working hard to ensure that their students are getting food and agriculture education. There are a number of organizations, such as the Dairy Farmers, Egg Farmers and the Grain Farmers of Ontario, that are working hard to provide speakers and materials to make that possible. I particularly want to recognize Ontario Agri-Food Education Inc. for their work to bring agriculture into the classroom. They act as a resource for teachers looking for quality agriculture information, and they've launched a website, www.growingcareers.ca, that promotes careers in agriculture.

I also want to recognize organizations like FoodShare Toronto, Tastebuds Hamilton and the Ottawa Network for Education, who are raising awareness of agriculture and local food by promoting the Great Big Crunch, which will have people in schools and workplaces eating local apples this afternoon. I know that the PC caucus is looking forward to biting into great Ontario apples at 2:30, because the PC caucus understands the importance of supporting Ontario's farmers and increasing agricultural literacy. We understand how hard our farmers work and how much they contribute to our province. We understand the importance of celebrating events like agriculture literacy week, but I want to assure you that our commitment to agriculture, food and rural Ontario doesn't end when the week does.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to rise as the critic for women and on behalf of the PC caucus and our leader Tim Hudak today, speaking to observe International Women's Day on March 8. It's an opportunity for all of us to reflect on the many achievements that women of the past, present and the future have, and will accomplish.

This year's Canadian theme for International Women's Day is "Strong Women, Strong Canada, Canadian Women—Creating Jobs One Business at a Time." I think this theme highlights the important role that female entrepreneurs play in driving growth, creating jobs and fostering innovation in the Canadian economy. Women really are making a big impact in business across Canada, with women-owned businesses employing over 1.5 million Canadians. We must look to women who will take on leadership roles in an effort to implement the change and continue to develop the status of women in business, politics and society as a whole.

Judy Dickson from Rosedale, in my riding, will be joining representatives from around the world when she

travels to New York this month to take part in the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women. I applaud Judy for her dedication.

Another example of Canadian women achieving success on the world stage is, of course, our Olympic athletes. Canadian women won more medals than women from any other country during the 2014 Olympics, including six gold, four silver and one bronze medal. The successes of these women at the Sochi Olympics have inspired our country.

I am proud to celebrate International Women's Day, and I look forward to celebrating many more women's achievements in the future. I hope you all enjoy the many events in your ridings this weekend.

CANADIAN AGRICULTURE LITERACY WEEK

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to stand in this place and speak on behalf of Andrea Horwath and the New Democratic Party in recognition of Canadian Agriculture Literacy Week. As the majority of Canadians become farther and farther removed from the farm, agriculture education becomes more and more important. As a society, we need to know and appreciate where our food comes from.

The third annual agriculture literacy week runs from March 2 to 8. In our great province it's spearheaded by Ontario Agri-Food Education Inc., commonly and affectionately known as OAFE. This dedicated group of volunteers, with funding help from many agricultural organizations, provides learning materials, modules and even agricultural ambassadors to help teachers, providing agriculture info during the week. We would like to commend OAFE for the work it has done over the years.

Although ag literacy week helps focus people on agriculture once a year, we need to promote and educate people all the time. We have hosted many school tours on our dairy farm. The smiles on the kids' and adults' faces are ample proof and reward for our trouble. And, Speaker, those kids ask some very interesting and tough questions like, "Where do cows find grass to eat in the wintertime?" That's a very good question.

1330

Since I've been elected to the Legislature, I've had many conversations with others here about agriculture, and many people at Queen's Park have asked the same questions as the kids on our farm. I found that very eye-opening and very concerning, because that's proof that we need to do so much more to educate people of all ages about the cornerstone industry in this province and about where their food comes from, how it's processed. We need to do so much more.

I know that when we host farm tours—a lot of farmers don't do it anymore because it's so much harder. It's harder to work with the schools. We need to look at ways that we in this Legislature can do things to help the country and city come together so that we understand each other much better and can support each other.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm proud, on behalf of Andrea Horwath and all the women here, to speak about International Women's Day.

Mr. Speaker, it's not about what women can and cannot do. Women can do anything we set our minds to. It's what the government will do along with us. There we have a bit of a problem, because as you heard the minister herself say, we earn 72 cents on the dollar—still. And yet there's a motion on the order paper to make April 9 Equal Pay Day, because that's when women start to make the same amount as men. Why can't we do that simple thing?

Yes, we're under-represented in businesses across this province; there's no question about that. But we're also under-represented in government, and we can do something about that. In fact, in the NDP we have done something about that. We have the highest representation of women in Ontario and in Ottawa. We're proud of that.

Here's the real situation for women on the ground in Ontario: 15,000 of us were turned away from shelters in one year alone. That's under this government. Victim services funding has been slashed year to year per victim under this government for the last almost 11 years. Counselling for their abusive partners has been slashed by this government. Only one out of 10 women in Ontario can find a licensed, safe daycare spot for their children, and that's outrageously expensive. Yet next door are Manitoba and Quebec, which have affordable child care. Why can they do it? Why has this government not done it?

Ultimately, though, I have to end with a note of hope, and that hope is this: I have hope in the women not only in this chamber but, more to the point, the women out there who elected us and sent us here. Those women out there, applying pressure, even with this government, no matter who's in power, will effect change. And we have over the decades. In fact, every time I walk up the steps of this Legislature, I rub the shoulder of Agnes Macphail, the first woman ever elected. We're so proud of Agnes, and I rub it for good luck. It's good luck not just for me, not just for the women here, but for all the women out there and, even more importantly, for our children, our daughters and our grandchildren, that they may have a better government and a better life. Thank you.

Mr. Todd Smith: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Speaker. Back on February 18, during Thai Pongal celebrations in Ontario's Tamil community, I promised that I would table a bill entitled Tamil Heritage Month Act, Bill 156. I would seek unanimous consent at this time to move a motion without notice regarding Bill 156, An Act to proclaim the month of January Tamil Heritage Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to take a moment to explain to the member that this has been done three times and that it cannot be repeated as often as that

when we have a definitive answer being placed. I will hear it this time and remind the member of my ruling and ask him to reread it. All members should read that ruling.

However, the member from Prince Edward–Hastings is asking to put forward a motion without notice. Do we agree?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I heard a no. It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have a petition here 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."

Mr. Speaker, I concur with this petition and I'll affix my name to it.

HYDRO RATES

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

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas home heating and electricity are essential utilities for northern families;

"Whereas the government has a duty and an obligation to ensure that essential goods and services are affordable for all families living in the north and across the province;

"Whereas government policy such as the Green Energy Act, the harmonized sales tax, cancellation of gas plants in Oakville and Mississauga have caused the price of electricity to artificially increase to the point it is no longer affordable for families or small business;

"Whereas electricity generated and used in north-western Ontario is among the cleanest and cheapest to produce in Canada, yet has been inflated by government policy;

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

“To take immediate steps to reduce the price of electricity in the northwest and ensure that residents and businesses have access to energy that properly reflects the price of local generation.”

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

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Mr. Speaker, I fully support it and give the petition to page Alessia.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: A petition 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 is the result of factors other than Drive Clean, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

“Whereas the current government has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computer-

ized emissions test that is less reliable, and prone to error; and

“Whereas the Auditor General identified that Drive Clean has had little to no impact on the reduction of emissions in Ontario and that the program's pass rate has exceeded 90% every year since 2004; and

“Whereas the Auditor General's No. 1 recommendation is for the government to ‘formally evaluate the extent to which the Drive Clean program continues to be an effective initiative’;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program” in the province of Ontario.

I affix my name in full support.

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Catherine Fife: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas escalating rental costs are making Ontario less affordable and leaving many tenants financially insecure or falling into poverty;

“Whereas tenants living in residential apartments and condominiums built after 1991 are not protected within the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) by rent control guidelines, nor are they protected from other arbitrary changes to their rent which currently cannot be appealed to the Landlord and Tenant Board;

“Whereas this has created an unfair two-tier system of tenant protection in Ontario, where some tenants have no protection from large and arbitrary increases;

1340

“Whereas removing these simple exemption loopholes in the RTA law will help protect tenants and help make housing more affordable and secure for thousands of Ontarians;

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

“That the province of Ontario acts to protect all tenants in Ontario and immediately move to ensure that all Ontario tenants living in buildings, mobile home parks and land-lease communities are covered by the rent control guidelines in the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006.”

I am proud to affix my signature and give this to page Robin.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Joe Dickson: From my constituency of Ajax-Pickering to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

I will attach my signature to it and pass it to Kiranpreet.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to get a petition on that reads as follows:

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

“Whereas the site is on the Oak Ridges moraine/green-belt;

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

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

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

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

I’m pleased to sign and support this in support of my constituents and present it to page Meera on her last day.

DOG OWNERSHIP

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

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

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

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

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

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

This is probably about the 10,000th signature. I’m going to add here to this, and I’m going to give it to Kevin, on behalf of the thousand and more dogs that have been killed just because of the way they look.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mrs. Julia Munro: “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’ve affixed my signature, as I am in agreement with this, to give it to page Jessie.

TAXATION

Ms. Sarah Campbell: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

LCBO OUTLET

Mr. Joe Dickson: In concert with the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, I have a petition to present to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas our centrally located downtown LCBO store is scheduled to be relocated to the far west end of town in 2014, we believe that Lindsay can support two LCBO locations; our existing LCBO is ideally located on three transit routes and within walking distance of our waterfront and 80% of our residents. We have support of the local chamber of commerce, BIA and municipal councillors;

“Therefore, we, the undersigned, are concerned citizens who urge Premier Wynne and our political government representatives to support the residents of downtown and leave the second location open.”

I attach my name to that, Mr. Speaker, as I agree, and I pass it to Jo Jo.

CYSTIC FIBROSIS

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas cystic fibrosis is a multi-system genetic disease primarily affecting the lungs and digestive system;

“Whereas one in every 3,600 children born in Canada has cystic fibrosis, making it the most common fatal genetic disease affecting Canadian children and young adults;

“Whereas there is no cure for cystic fibrosis, but the drug Kalydeco is the first medication that has shown success in targeting the underlying genetic cause of cystic fibrosis for patients with the specific G551D mutation;

“Whereas this drug helps improve the function of the defective protein, leading to better lung function, weight gain, and lower sweat chloride levels and access to Kalydeco could lead to a healthier, longer life;

“Whereas Kalydeco has been approved by Health Canada, but the approximately \$300,000 annual cost makes it an unaffordable treatment option for the overwhelming majority of Ontario families;

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

“That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care take immediate action to expedite listing Kalydeco on the province’s drug formulary so this treatment is available to Ontario families.”

Mr. Speaker, I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

ALL-TERRAIN VEHICLES

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

“Whereas the Ontario Legislature expressed its unanimous wish to have regulation 316/03 amended to include several categories of all-terrain vehicles; and

“Whereas law-abiding ATV enthusiasts from across the province expect this change in order to be able to use their legitimately owned vehicles recreationally and for participating in significant charity events; and

“Whereas the Minister of Transportation should respect the unanimous will of the Legislature;

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

“To immediately amend regulation 316/03 to allow the operation of two-up all-terrain vehicles.”

I agree with this and will be signing it and passing it off to page Anne.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I support this, will affix my signature and give it to page Robin to deliver.

1350

PRIVATE MEMBERS’
PUBLIC BUSINESS

FEDERAL TRANSFER PAYMENTS

Mr. Joe Dickson: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the federal Minister of Finance should treat the people of Ontario fairly and reverse the \$641-million reduction in major federal transfers in 2014-15 and by providing an equitable level of support and immediately stop shortchanging Ontarians.

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

Mr. Joe Dickson: I rise today—I’m just looking at the time; okay—to speak about a subject that has a great impact on all Ontarians: the way in which the federal government is treating our province.

Let me be crystal-clear on my first point, Mr. Speaker: Ontarians are, first and foremost, proud Canadians. We

recognize the principle of equality that binds this great country together. We know that we, as a nation, are stronger when everyone enjoys reasonably comparable levels of public services at reasonably comparable levels of taxation.

We have put our money where our principles are. In fact, for the last 10 years, Ontarians have helped people across this country by contributing approximately \$50 billion to the equalization program—yes, Mr. Speaker, \$50 billion—\$50 billion that has helped other provinces in Canada to pay for their social programs, like hospitals and schools and daycare. We are proud to have helped other provinces. But let us be clear: Equality must be a two-way street. I know that when our province built Highway 16 to Ottawa, we built it both ways.

Speaking of Ottawa, it has recently been said by someone who works in our nation's capital that "Ontario complains when they are not doing well. And when they are doing a little bit better, they still complain. The Ontario economy is modestly better than it was, which means their entitlement to equalization payments is modestly lower. That's all that has happened. It has nothing to do with it being Ontario. It could be any equalization-receiving province."

At least we agree on one thing: Ontario's economy is doing better, thanks to the hard work and dedication of the people of Ontario.

Without complaining, Mr. Speaker, the Ontario government is proud to have done our part in this regard. We have taken strong actions to reduce spending growth, which has allowed us to overachieve on deficit reduction targets four years in a row.

Interjections.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Maybe I should repeat that. It has allowed us to overachieve on deficit reduction targets four years in a row.

Ontario's government undertook important reforms to control spending while maintaining and improving the quality of public services. Ontario has the lowest per capita program spending in Canada. For two years running, growth in program expenses overall has been less than 1%, and last year, total government spending fell for the first time in more than a decade. This has not been easy, and we salute all Ontario residents for their hard work and sacrifice and for their contributions to making not just Ontario but Canada as a whole a better place. Once again I must add: Ontarians did all of this without complaining, Mr. Speaker.

I say that their hard work and tax dollars have benefited all of Canada, and to illustrate my point, I would like to draw upon the research of the Mowat Centre, which bills itself as "Ontario's non-partisan, evidence-based voice on public policy." According to the independent Mowat Centre's report *Filling the Gap*, they estimate the gap between what Ontarians pay to the federal government and the amount returned in services and transfers to be \$11.1 billion, or 1.9% of Ontario's GDP in 2009-10, a trend that continues, Mr. Speaker. In 2014-15, Ontario will contribute approximately \$6.5 billion to the equaliz-

ation program, while Ontario will receive approximately \$2 billion in return. This is an important point that escapes some who criticize Ontario.

Ontario is an exception. Ontario is the only province that receives equalization payments and yet is also a net contributor to the program. We may receive equalization payments, but it is inaccurate to call us a have-not province. In effect, we are only getting back a fraction of the money we put into the Canadian program: our money, money from Ontario taxpayers.

The government believes that federal-provincial fiscal arrangements must be modernized to be more efficient and fair and to do better in addressing the economic and demographic challenges facing provinces. We are not alone in this belief. The Mowat Centre argues that the fiscal gap between what Ontario pays to Ottawa and what it receives in return is the result of an unfair federal practice towards Ontario in areas such as employment insurance, federal investments in economic development, infrastructure funding, affordable and social housing, support for the energy sector, and funding for labour market training. But these issues are something for another day.

What we must address today is the issue of transfer protection payments. You see, since 2010-11, the federal government has provided total transfer protection, or TTP, payments to ensure provinces do not see a year-over-year decline in the sum of their major transfers—transfers, I may add, that have included money from hard-working Ontarians. Since 2010-11, the federal government has paid out over \$2.2 billion in TTP. Seven out of the 10 provinces—Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Quebec, Manitoba and Saskatchewan—have all received TTP payments. That would leave British Columbia, PEI and Alberta. However, our friends in Alberta have not experienced a year-over-year reduction in transfers for the past four years.

Remember what I said about equality? Well, compared to 2013-14, major transfers to Ontario, such as equalization, Canada Health Transfer and Canada Social Transfer, will decline by \$641 million this year. In every other year, for every other province that faced a decline in major transfers, they received TTP payments, yet Ontario will not. In December 2013, in letters to provincial and territorial finance ministers, the federal finance minister, Jim Flaherty, wrote that total transfer protection as a temporary measure would no longer be extended. I ask you, Mr. Speaker, and, in fact, I ask all Canadians, is this fair? Is this treating all provinces equally? Ontario is the only province that will experience a year-over-year decline in the sum of its major transfers in 2014-15. The year that Ontario is facing such a decline, the federal government has decided to end the practice of total transfer protection.

We expect the federal government to treat Ontarians fairly by allowing them to keep more of their own money, just like Canadians anywhere across the country. We expect the federal government to live up to their

practice of providing one-time payments to provinces subjected to undue cuts. At a minimum, Ontarians should have \$641 million returned to them.

Let me be clear: The people of Ontario are not asking for a handout. We continue to be proud Canadians willing to contribute to other provinces to ensure that all Canadians receive adequate services. We are simply asking to receive money that is rightfully ours, money that hard-working Ontario residents have generated through their hard work, determination and perseverance as we battle back from the worst recession since the Great Depression, which was about 80 years ago.

1400

This government will continue to stand up for Ontario and invest in the priorities of our people: strong public services, a strong economy and a strong future for our province.

That's why I stand in this House and put forward the following statement to the provincial Legislature, and I will read that again: "That, in the opinion of the House, the federal Minister of Finance should treat the people of Ontario fairly and reverse the \$641-million reduction in major federal transfers in 2014-15 and by providing an equitable level of support and immediately stop short-changing Ontarians."

I thank you for that, Mr. Speaker. I do have a couple of other comments, if I may. I just worked at a couple of items that show what \$641 million would buy. That's our \$641 million.

It would buy nearly 2.6 million ER visits. It would buy prenatal and childbirth care for more than 100,000 women; more than 128,000 cardiac surgeries; nearly 600,000 acute in-patient days in hospitals; or almost 2.5 million hours of MRI scans. I can tell you something: That's very important for us, because we in Ajax-Pickering, after 60 years, now have an MRI, which we didn't have previously.

More specifically, by shortchanging Ontario, the federal government is sending a strong message about its priorities, priorities that don't include timely access to key medical procedures; reducing chronic disease and death resulting from smoking; and providing life-saving vaccines.

Here are just a few examples of unfair cuts that we now face. Under the Patient Wait Times Guarantee Trust, Ontario received \$205.4 million over three years to support reduced wait times for key procedures like cancer, cataract surgeries, cardiac care, radiation therapy, hip and knee replacements, MRI and CT scans. The funding expired and was not renewed.

These cuts put at great risk the great work we've done to reduce wait times, work that was recognized by the Wait Time Alliance's June 2013 report card, which gave Ontario straight A's for reducing wait times for hip, knee, cancer, cataract, and cardiac surgeries for the third year in a row.

This is exceptional. It shows you how much has been done by the province, and we would like to continue that by requesting our \$641 million back in the hands of the residents of the province of Ontario.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I do appreciate the opportunity to speak to this motion. Let me say at the outset that I disagree with it in the strongest manner possible, and I certainly will not be supporting this motion.

As many people know, I know the federal Minister of Finance quite well, and I'm very concerned about the premise of this motion, which would suggest that he is not treating Ontario fairly. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth.

I watched the press conference that was attended by both the member from Ajax-Pickering and the Minister of Health, and I found it very confusing, because the minister was clearly mixing up two very different concepts, one being the concept of the equalization payments and the other being the level of federal health transfer payments. It somehow suggested that the change in equalization payments was somehow going to result in a reduction in health spending and, therefore, health services in Ontario. That is simply not correct.

The reality is that the equalization formula is a mathematical calculation that's applied equally to all of the provinces. It has no effect—it's not partisan. It applies equally to all the provinces, and you simply have to follow the formula.

For anybody who is watching this debate, I would urge you to go onto the Finance Canada website, where you can see the actual calculations that have been set out very clearly, and the calculations that are used in order to get to those final numbers.

The fact of the matter is that the tax base in Ontario has increased by 8% since the recession, and that is why the payments are changing for the next year. It's a simple mathematical formula.

Of course, that has nothing to do with the federal health transfers, which the minister spoke about at her press conference and which the member referenced during his debate comments, but the federal transfers for health have not decreased at all. In fact, they've increased dramatically since 2006, when the Harper government was elected. The increase has been \$4.6 billion, or a 60% increase to Ontario since 2006.

In the 2007 federal budget, it was announced that health transfers would continue to increase under the existing formula until 2014-15, at which time the transfers would be made on an equal per capita cash basis.

I'd like to quote something that Mr. McGuinty, the former Premier—who this government is trying to distance themselves from right at the moment—in 2009, he said, "The federal government has also addressed an outstanding concern related to the Canada Health Transfer. We are now going to be treated the same as Canadians in the rest of the country when it comes to the funding that we receive for the Canada Health Transfer." That was then. He agreed with it, and that's what is happening.

For example, 2013-14, the amount that Ontario received under the Canada Health Transfer was \$11.925

billion. In 2014-15, that will increase to \$12.335 billion. So any suggestion that there are going to be cuts to health payments to Ontario is completely false. They are going to be increasing and then will be calculated on a per capita cash basis going forward. We're left to wonder why this motion is coming forward when it's made on a factually incorrect basis.

I would venture to say that they're looking for someone else to blame for their own financial mismanagement of Ontario's finances. I think you could really sum it up in two words: gas plants. When you look at the money that's been squandered—\$1 billion spent for purely partisan purposes to get a few Liberal members elected, eHealth, the Ornge scandal—I think we can see that the money has been squandered and they're looking for someone to blame. I would suggest if any blame is to be apportioned, this government should look at themselves in the mirror.

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

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm pleased to be able to rise and speak to the motion that's been put forward by the member for Ajax-Pickering, which asks the federal government and the federal Minister of Finance to "immediately stop shortchanging Ontarians" and reverse the planned \$641-million reduction in federal transfer payments in 2014-15. As many of us know, these federal transfer payments, often referred to as equalization payments, help address some of the fiscal imbalances that exist across the country by redistributing money from the prosperous provinces to those that are less profitable.

First I need to state that, let's face it, Ontario could probably really use this money, and it's certainly a lot easier to deal with the considerable financial challenges that we have in this province with more money. But, at some point, the madness needs to stop.

Since coming to power in 2003, the Liberals have spent and spent and spent, and they haven't had very much to show for it. Sure, they have a long list of scandals such as eHealth, Ornge, the gas plants, exorbitant executive salaries, and other boondoggles to show for their time in office. But at a time when the people in this province are struggling just to keep afloat, to pay their hydro bills and have some money left over to put some groceries on the table, and with significant infrastructure renewal challenges for municipalities and First Nations communities that lack basic essential services such as clean drinking water, safe and healthy homes and sufficient electricity, the Liberals have a blank sheet of successes. They have nothing to show for it.

Not only that, but the economic outlook of this province has turned almost bleak. Once the economic engine of Confederation, Ontario has taken a long, embarrassing tumble to have-not status under this Liberal government. It needs to be stated that prior to 2009-10, Ontario wasn't even receiving equalization payments. It's only under the Liberals that Ontario has become a have-not province.

It's a sorry fact that this Liberal government, in its 10 years in office, managed to nearly double the debt that

Ontario had incurred since Confederation. The Minister of Infrastructure may do well to listen to this statistic because it bears repeating: In 10 years, this group of Liberals has doubled the debt that it took Ontario 136 years to accumulate. That is beyond shameful; that is reprehensible.

1410

So instead of this government appealing cap in hand to the federal government to maximize the aid it receives, it should be focusing on creating jobs, making life more affordable, balancing the books and paying down some of this atrocious debt. Instead of relying on equalization payments from the federal government—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Member for Vaughan, would you come to order, please.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: —why are the Liberals not focusing on strengthening Ontario's economy? Are they not confident that they can lead us out of this financial disparity? Why are they expecting us to remain a have-not province? Where is their plan? Or are the Liberals simply relying on these equalization payments to help ease the pain of their astounding debt load and the mismanagement of so many wasted tax dollars?

While I appreciate the position that this Liberal government is in, in respect to Ontario's financial affairs, it is reckless and irresponsible to continue to throw more and more money at the problem, which in this case is the Liberals.

I want to close by addressing some of the criticisms that New Democrats have received from the Progressive Conservatives and the Liberals as of late. There seems to be some confusion on the part of the PCs and the Liberals about the values that New Democrats hold and have held with respect to fiscal management. To address this, I would like to borrow a story about Tommy Douglas that was recently relayed to me by my colleague and seatmate, the member from Timiskaming-Cochrane.

Tommy Douglas, the first federal leader of the NDP and Canada's greatest Canadian, was known for many accomplishments. Most notably, he was known for bringing medicare, first to his home province and then the country. But before that, he electrified rural Saskatchewan.

One thing that he is little known for or that is often overlooked is that what Tommy Douglas did before all of this was balance the books. The reality is that before we can build up this province and make many of the necessary larger-scale investments, we need to get our financial house in order, and that is a value that New Democrats believe and will continue to insist upon.

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

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I want to say that it gives me great pleasure to support my colleague the member for Pickering-Ajax on his motion—and it does—but I can't believe the conversation I'm hearing this afternoon. I guess I so value and so respect the power of private members' bills to bring this Legislature together on so

many disparate issues, and I can't believe the political posturing as a result of this fair-share conversation that my colleague has brought up when it comes to funding from the federal government. I'm so disappointed by the members from Whitby–Oshawa and Kenora–Rainy Rivers to make this political football—the language and the messaging that's coming from the federal government—and bringing it to this House. It is so disrespectful of what's happening during this Thursday afternoon of private members' bills.

I want to congratulate the member from Ajax–Pickering for bringing this motion forward and for fighting for Ontario. It's really important that we fight for our fair share for Ontario. Everyone in this House is supposed to be doing that.

The issue of securing Ontario's fair share is a recurring theme. It touches my ministry, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Social housing projects from Windsor to Ottawa, from Toronto to Kenora, will also lose federal funding in the near future, so I'm happy to have a conversation about this issue.

While I'm pleased to acknowledge that the federal government has committed to renewing the investment in affordable housing for another four years, here's what worries me: There's another, larger stream of money—because there are two pots of money; there's the new housing, and then there's the refurbishment money. That's the part that's currently going towards existing costs for social housing, and that number is drying up.

If Ottawa doesn't change course, these subsidies are scheduled to evaporate. Federal social housing funding to Ontario will decrease by \$1.3 billion over the next 10 years. The outlook is clear to us that the money is going away. That's a 50% reduction in funding. By 2033, it will be completely gone. Some communities have already seen their funds disappear.

The loss of these subsidies will have a very real impact on all of our residents and this Legislature. It means that Ontario and municipalities will be left footing the bills. Whether or not you like Liberals, our communities are going to be hurt by these decisions. We want to help as a government, but we can't make up the difference, especially with the most recent withdrawal of federal financial assistance in other areas.

The federal government is pulling back in a number of areas, and no matter what the messaging is that's coming from the opposite side, funding for patient wait-time reduction initiatives has gone down. Money for hiring front-line police officers and money for transportation funding for First Nation youth in need of specialized treatment outside of their communities—all those dollars have gone down. We just can't stand by. I won't stand by and let that happen.

Last week I spoke at the ROMA-OGRA conference, and I asked every mayor, reeve, councillor and CEO who came to see me to take a letter back to their councils. Collectively, I wanted us to work together. We need to stand shoulder to shoulder with those communities to ask Minister Jason Kenney to come back to the table, to

come back and meet with the provincial and territorial ministers to discuss the need for a national housing plan.

I received a very warm reception. I think all councillors, without exception, said they would do that. When that meeting does happen, I intend to bring to the minister's attention all the cuts that Ottawa is making, from housing to health to transfer payment protection. At the end of the day, Canadians—Ontarians—need their federal and provincial governments to work together in partnership.

It's time for the federal government to recognize that the cost of housing is taking a toll on families and communities across Canada. There's something so difficult about this job, and part of that is thinking of a child or family that has not got a place to call home. They have no place to go to sleep that night, no roof over their head. Without a place to call home, families suffer. For the sake of Canada's economic stability and growth, we need a national housing plan.

When families have a house to call their home, everything improves: their health care, their education and their employment. Both social and affordable housing are essential components of a strong overall housing market, and a strong housing market creates jobs and grows the economy. All governments have a role in making sure that that happens.

That's the business case we're making to the federal government, and we urge them to return to the table as a long-term partner. They used to be our housing partner. It appears as if the federal government is walking away from that role and that responsibility. I believe that's just shameful. Our government is calling on the federal government to engage and come back to the table. At the end of the day, housing isn't just a municipal issue, a provincial issue or a federal issue; it's a societal issue. We all own it, and we must tackle it together.

I'm proud to stand up today with my colleague from Ajax–Pickering, supporting my colleague, and I invite all the members in this House to reconsider some of their positions. Join us. Come together. Work together for all Ontarians and have Canada's most vulnerable taken care of by the representatives of this House.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker. I must start off by saying that the member and his government have some nerve bringing this motion forward to the floor of this Legislature. The premise of this motion, that Ontario somehow is being shortchanged by Canada, is borderline sacrilege.

The truth is that the McGuinty-Wynne government is shortchanging Canada by failing to provide the leadership and the economic and fiscal stability that has led Confederation for more than a century. The notion that Ontario is even complaining about receiving equalization payments doesn't just infuriate me; it's an insult to Canadians across this country.

Ontario shouldn't be in a position to receive federal transfer payments on equalization, period. That's the bottom line. The McGuinty-Wynne government, through

their disregard for taxpayers' money and through careless and scandalous spending, has turned the economic engine of Confederation into a have-not province, therefore needing equalization payments in the first place.

This government can't get their hands on enough of other people's money, whether it's the Ontario taxpayers, the ratepayers or federal transfer payments from other provinces. Let's look at some of the cold, hard facts—something that this party will not do. Federal support to Ontario has actually increased by \$8.3 billion, or 76%, to a total of \$19.1 billion, in 2014-15. Ontario has already received \$10 billion in equalization payments from Ottawa, including \$3.3 billion this year. And even though they have received \$10 billion of equalization money, they still can't balance a budget. Ontario's economy is improving in areas, relative to other receiving provinces, leading to a decline in the province's equalization. That's how equalization is supposed to work. Ontario, now a have-not province, should celebrate the day equalization payments are actually zero. That will be a great day for Ontario, when we've finally turned this province around from the wreck that this government has turned it into.

1420

The argument that Ontario is a net contributor to equalization is overly simplistic, as federal revenues are more concentrated in provinces with higher relative income, given the progressive tax structure, while federal programs, such as equalization, employment insurance and old age security, provide greater funding to lower-income provinces. The bottom line in all of this is that the Wynne government is so bad at managing its finances that next year we'll have a deficit more than three times the size of the federal government.

If this province's finances and economy were being managed properly, Ontario would not need to be receiving any of these equalization payments. This feud that the Liberals have started with Ottawa is nothing more than an attempt to distract from their own dismal fiscal record and the financial trouble this province is in. If anyone is shortchanging Ontario, it's the Liberal-NDP coalition, whose continued out-of-control spending is now threatening the things we care about, including front-line health care services and education.

Just as the Liberals were less than truthful about the cost of the gas plant scandal and their plan to balance the budget, they're not telling Ontarians the truth about this issue. If this motion wasn't so maddening, the member just might be laughed out of this Legislature for bringing this forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to withdraw the statement "less than truthful."

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Withdraw.

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

Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to have the opportunity to speak to motion 62, and I will be supporting it.

I have to say that we've had these debates since 1990, when I was here. Unfortunately, when the federal Con-

servative government was there, they whacked Ontario and they whacked us bad. The member from Nipissing wasn't here at the time. I don't know whether he was in municipal politics then. But the reality is, federal governments tend to whack Ontario on a regular basis. It's just a fact. It's not about complaining; it's about talking about a reality that has been with us for a long, long time.

In 1990, when we were in the grip of a serious recession, Bob Rae used to complain about the fact that the federal Conservative Party cut the transfer payments and cut them viciously, because they used to pay for most of the transfer payments connected to social assistance, and when we got into power, they slashed them by half.

I understand that the Tories, most of whom have not been around for too long, don't remember that and may not appreciate the fact that what I'm speaking to is a reality. But we neither had the Tories supporting us and, dare I say, we didn't have the Liberals supporting us either at that time. While it should be a non-partisan thing, the fact of the matter is, whoever is there is attacked for complaining about the transfer payments being decimated by federal governments.

It is sad that we can't join in together when that happens, but that was the reality of the 1990s, and it still happens.

The member from Oshawa says—Oshawa?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Whitby—Oshawa.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The member from Whitby—Oshawa talks about the equalization formula being fair, as if somehow there's some mathematical formula that is politically fair. There's no such thing. There isn't a formula that's created by politicians designed to be fair. Some provinces will get some benefits; other provinces are going to get whacked. Ontario usually gets whacked. That's just the reality of politics in this country.

When it comes to the \$650 million that Ontario is asking for, I think it's a fair request. Other provinces got their dollars; Ontario was expecting to get its money. Lo and behold, the federal Tories said, "Naw. We're cutting you off." My view is, it's not right and it's not fair. It doesn't matter what government was there that was doing the cutting; it's just not fair.

The point and the problem is that Ontario contributes an incredible amount of money to the country, and we get either little or less back in the province of Ontario. But it's no different, by the way, I would add, in terms of the pecking order of abuse—what the feds do to us, we do to the cities. You understand, Speaker, because you were there. Toronto used to say, "We contribute the bulk of the money to Ontario, but we do not get a commensurate amount of money based on the contribution we make to the province," and they're right. But we only focus on the fact that the federal government is abusing their power. We don't focus on how we the province abuse ours vis-à-vis municipalities. You get my point, Speaker.

That is something that we have to be careful about because there's a little bit of irony and paradoxical argumentation when we attack one level but we do the same to the other level that we control.

Just for the record; it's important to point these things out. I know you'd rather not hear it or that you'd rather me not say it, but it is a fact of life. The point I make is, you have to be careful because the same arguments you make with the federal government, you have to then be respectful of the municipal government. It's that disrespect of the municipal government that we sometimes have to deal with.

Dare I talk about the OMB? We did expect the minister to reform the OMB in some way, and there is no OMB reform.

The Minister of Housing had a meeting with 400 people in the development industry. They had three items: development charges, parkland allocation and section 37. The minister comes out of the meeting, and what does she say? "The only changes we're going to make are parkland allocation in terms of discussion, changes to section 37, and"—you get the third point.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: What about inclusionary zoning?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Inclusionary zoning: That would take another hour.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I hope you're going to tie this all back to the bill that's in front of us.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My colleague talks about inclusionary zoning and says the minister could do this today and we would be having housing for those least fortunate in our society. But that's another discussion. I agree with you.

The point I make is that here we have the city of Toronto saying, "Free us from the Ontario Municipal Board," and we can't get a hearing from the government. They said, "No, no. That's not up for discussion. We're reviewing the OMB, but that matter is not up for debate." You understand?

The development industry summoned her—I beg your pardon—invited her to a meeting. They dictated the terms, and she left saying, "Okay." As Rosario Marchese would say, it's about the pecunia. Right? They make huge contributions to the Liberal Party, and they make huge contributions to my fine Tory friends. In fact, when they were in power, the bulk of the money went to the Tories. Now that the Liberals are in power—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask the member to bring the discussion back to the motion.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, through you, now that the Liberals are in power, they divide that pie equally. God bless them.

We support this motion. I didn't get a chance to speak to the overachievement component of the Liberal Party. There are so many other problems that my colleague spoke to earlier about some of the incompetence of the government, but that's for another time when we have more time.

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

Mr. Steven Del Duca: This is a great opportunity. I see how much time I have left to speak, and I'm a little bit disappointed, to some extent, that I don't have more because there's so much ground I'd love to cover, given

what I've heard from most of the speakers from across the way.

But I do want to begin by congratulating my colleague the member from Ajax–Pickering for bringing forward this motion. I would have hoped that, before members opposite, save and except perhaps the last speaker, the member for Trinity–Spadina—I would have hoped that the members opposite would have actually read the motion before they got up to sort of twist and contort and distort what is, in fact, actually written into the motion.

1430

The member from Ajax–Pickering specifically is talking about a cut of \$641 million, with respect to reversing the \$641-million reduction in major federal transfers in 2014. With not too much research or effort, I'm sure members opposite could have learned that the \$641 million to which he refers in this particular motion is in regards to something known as the total transfer protection program. That is a program that existed here in Canada, a federal government program that was designed to help stabilize situations when there would be fluctuations in equalization. This past year would have been the first opportunity for our province to actually qualify for this potential effectively stabilization program and, coincidentally, the federal Conservative government chose this precise moment in the program's history to actually eliminate the program, just as Ontario was actually prepared to qualify for the program. So, again, bearing in mind very clearly that we are referring, and the member from Ajax–Pickering is referring, clearly, to that rash and reckless decision made by the federal Prime Minister and, more disturbingly, a decision made by a federal finance minister who represents a riding here in Ontario—that is something that is perhaps most troubling.

It was also interesting for me to listen to the member from Whitby–Oshawa and also the member from Nipissing stand up and speak. Every time I have the chance to hear the Conservatives speaking in this House, I'm always struck by their inability to grasp simple facts or accept simple math and simple facts. I guess if you take a look back at recent history in the province of Ontario, it's not surprising they would have such an aversion to facts and information, given that, back in 2003 when this government was first elected, the people of Ontario found that, in fact, that government, that former Conservative government, had not been forthright with the people of Ontario when they campaigned on claiming that Ontario had balanced books. Instead, we had a \$6-billion deficit, so it's not shocking to me to hear the members from Nipissing—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask the member from Vaughan to withdraw.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Sorry, Speaker. Okay. I will withdraw. I'm not quite sure what I'm withdrawing, but that's fine. I'll withdraw. Let me talk about the \$6-billion hidden deficit that folks from that party—it's interesting to me that a member from that caucus would stand as if to deny simple historical facts. At the end of the day, what we are talking about is an expectation—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Northumberland–Quinte West, if you'd come to order. I'm trying to listen to the speaker.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: —not simply an expectation that we have on this side of the House but I believe an expectation that every single Ontario resident has, and deservedly so: that members who were elected to this chamber to represent our respective communities would share one thing in common, and that is an absolute determination to stand up and fight for the people of this province. What the member from Ajax–Pickering has asked us to do today is support a motion that says, "Let's work together. Let's ignore partisanship and partisan lines. Let's stand together and defend the people of Ontario." What's shocking to me, what's shocking—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. To the member from Northumberland–Quinte West: If I am to listen to the speaker and gather everything he's saying, and you're interrupting, it makes it most difficult, because your voice does travel across the floor. I asked you to come to order.

Member for Vaughan, carry on.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Speaker. So as I was saying, what's shocking for the people who are watching at home, and this coming weekend, as we have a break coming up here from the Legislature, when I'm talking to residents in my community, what will be shocking for them to learn is that members of that particular caucus—and actually, the member from Kenora–Rainy River, who spoke from the NDP caucus a little bit earlier, seems unwilling—collectively, they seem unwilling to stand up and fight for the people of Ontario when we put forward this notion that we're seeking fairness from the federal government. I believe there are 107 MPs who represent the province of Ontario in the federal Parliament. Many of them are Conservatives, some are NDP, some are Liberals. I say, why aren't the 107 of them, all of them, standing up in agreement with the government here at Queen's Park because of this motion that we're putting forward to say, "Stand up and fight for your province"? They're unwilling to do it. It's a little bit shocking to me. I was delighted to hear the member from Trinity–Spadina's opening, the first number of minutes that he was up speaking, as he often does very eloquently, standing up to let us know he supports the thrust of the motion—it's unfortunate that, near the end of his remarks, he kind of lost me and, I think, frankly lost the direction that he had originally undertaken with respect to his support.

It's really important for us to remember that nothing good comes of a Conservative Party, be it provincially or federally, that is consistently talking down Ontario, that is consistently encouraging business not to invest in our province, be it the federal finance minister, Mr. Flaherty, or be it the current leader of the official opposition in his efforts to make sure that Ontario's auto industry doesn't continue to thrive—and we see evidence of that this week. To consistently listen to members from the Con-

servative Party at both levels of government talk down Ontario is something that is not helpful.

We even had other classic examples in recent history. When Premier Wynne decided that it was really important to talk to the rest of the Premiers about enhancing the Canada Pension Plan, what happened? The federal government said, "We don't care what the provinces think. We don't care about fairness. We're not going to do it," and, again, from the Conservative opposition here at Queen's Park, no support for a pan-Canadian solution to enhancing retirement security, and no support thus far for Ontario going it alone to make sure those who retire in our province in years to come have more support.

There is still time for my friends across the way to change their minds, see the light, stand with us, stand with the member from Ajax–Pickering, stand up to the federal government and fight for fairness in our country, and I urge all members opposite to join with us to do so.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, and hopefully you will be able to hear a few points that I would like to get across this afternoon regarding ballot item number 76.

The honourable member from across the way has made some statements regarding us on this side of the House not wanting to work for or fight for all of Ontario and the hard-working people of this great province. I would have to strongly disagree with that. That's one of the reasons that we here on this side of the House come here day in and day out: to hold this government—who, quite frankly, every time you turn around, tend to blame the federal government for their mismanagement, their fiscal scandals that have occurred and why this province is in the debt that it's in.

This government has had 11 years to get their fiscal house in order. They have failed to do so, yet they turn around at every moment—I would like to get from Hansard sometime, if we could, a word count of every time the Liberal government mentions the federal government and what a bad group of individuals we have up in Ottawa: "They're not giving us our fair share of money."

This government, to me, Mr. Speaker—I'll use the analogy of a spoiled little kid in the candy store. Just because the parent says that you're not allowed to have some jujubes or a lollipop or an ice cream cone, this government turns around, they stomp their feet and make accusations that we're not getting our fair share of funds.

This government has had 11 years, as I mentioned, to get their fiscal house in order. They haven't done that. What we have seen is scandal after scandal after scandal. This government has spent more money on scandals—I would like to get some research done on this. I don't want to be presumptuous and say that this is a fact to the member's point, but I would have to say that this government has spent more money on scandals than any other government in recent memory.

I want to talk about, in the final seconds that I have here: This government has made enormous OMPF cuts in

my riding. They're jeopardizing the viability of several programs in the region, and I just want to quickly read these numbers out. For the municipality of Trent Hills: funding cuts, \$114,000; upload increases, \$1,000. So that's a total funding cut of \$113,000. That is fact. I could go on. I have it here: all the other municipalities that are getting cuts. It's a travesty, Mr. Speaker.

1440

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Ajax–Pickering, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Joe Dickson: First of all, I'd like to acknowledge and thank very much the members from Whitby–Oshawa and Kenora–Rainy River, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the member from Nipissing, the member from Trinity–Spadina, and I'm just looking directly east of Durham region to see my riding, and it's Northumberland etc.—

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Quinte West.

Mr. Joe Dickson: Quinte West.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Mr. Rinaldi would be extremely upset with you.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I just think of the last time you and I sat at an airport.

Mr. Speaker, a number of things: I heard Ornge mentioned; I heard eHealth mentioned. I have to tell you, back in those days, eHealth was actually started by the Conservatives, and that's a good thing, because I went out to a country doctor 14 years ago and he said, as he pulled out his computer, "Mr. Dickson, you had a heart attack. Good thing I knew that, because I am going to change your medication." So I give credit where credit is due. I give credit to my colleagues across the floor. They had some difficult times because there was a major recession in the early 1990s, and that was seriously impacting a lot of things.

I would like to just close by saying that this is just about stopping the federal government from short-changing Ontarians and reversing the \$641-million cut to major federal transfers. These cuts are hurting families, businesses, but particularly seniors across this province, and so much so that as seniors grow in age and numbers, that's going to be more seriously impacted. I call on all my colleagues from all parties to support this motion. It's a fair deal for Ontario. Let's do it as a combined common front, and I appreciate everyone's support here today. Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We'll take the vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY
ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR
LA RESPONSABILITÉ FINANCIÈRE

Mr. Holyday moved second reading of the following bill:
Bill 160, An Act to amend the Financial
Accountability Officer Act, 2013 with respect to reports

concerning alternative service delivery of public services / Projet de loi 160, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2013 sur le directeur de la responsabilité financière en ce qui concerne les rapports portant sur la mise en place d'autres modes de prestation des services publics.

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

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: Twelve minutes seems like an awful lot of time, but I guess it probably won't be when we finally conclude.

What I wanted to do, I guess, was to tell the members of the House a bit of the history of myself and this issue, because it goes right back to the very start for me, in 1982, when I was first elected. It wasn't long before I started to recognize as a member of council out in Etobicoke that some things were being done in a very expensive manner and that they probably could be done in a better way. But, at the time, there just didn't seem to be the political will to make the changes that could have saved tax dollars.

In the second year, though—this was 1984—there was a system of negotiating in the city of Toronto, with the six separate cities, and I think they used to take turns striking the various municipalities. They wouldn't all strike one year, but they would take turns. In 1984, it became Etobicoke's turn to have a civic workers strike, which of course is known as a garbage strike. It went on for a month or so. In the end, the workers went back to work. They didn't receive one cent more than they would have had if they hadn't have gone out at all. But it was their turn to go out, and out they went. That really upset me then about, you know, how could services be withheld like this and for no good—on either side, actually, and a lot of disruption to the residents of the city of Etobicoke. We fought that strike valiantly. We filled our parks with garbage, and the residents did a noble job of doing what was asked of them. But after all was said and done, it was a mess. The thing went on for the whole month of June and into July. Parks weren't able to be used. Our camps didn't operate. A lot of our swimming pools and other things were affected by it.

But it made me really, really think, so I started to look into the matter of garbage collection, just to see if it was done differently anywhere else. When I looked into the matter, I found that most municipalities in Canada and the United States collected their garbage with a private contractor.

There were a couple of reasons for it. One was that you had a contract with that contractor that they had to post security to guarantee that they would perform and that they would do the job. If they didn't, you would take that bond and cash it and you'd hire other people or buy trucks and get back into the business yourself.

Even though it seemed like a pretty good way of handling the matter, they refused to do it. The fact of the strike was that it always comes down to garbage. The union always plays the contract out to the very end. In the end, it's harder to handle in June than it is in January, and they didn't seem to have a strategy to change all that.

As we go into the story a bit, I'm going to tell you how we did change that with the city of Toronto. It could have been changed in Etobicoke back in 1982, but it never was.

I struck a committee to review the garbage collection of Etobicoke, but after all was said and done, council just received my report and no action was taken. But that went along, I guess, until 1993. By that time, even our management staff were absolutely fed up with what was going on there. We had to hire five employees to do the work of four, because the absenteeism was atrocious. We never knew when they were coming to work or whether we could send the trucks out. Of course, the trucks have to go out every day—it's garbage day; you've got to pick up the garbage—but we never knew if we could do it or not. When you added up all the statutory holidays, all the general holidays that people had, and all the sick days and other things that came into play with days off, we actually had to have a fifth person for every four, just to be able to do that job. So it was very, very expensive.

There were a lot of things in the contract that had been left over from the very, very beginning, only because people had always done it that way. When Etobicoke was a small little area around Islington and Dundas, it had one garbage truck. The truck went out in the morning, picked up half the area and came back to the yard, which was at the centre. They had their lunch and then went out in the afternoon and dumped, and then went out and picked up the next half.

As the city grew—and it grew to 12 miles up and five miles wide—everybody came back to the yard at lunch, no matter where they were. At that time, you were picking up garbage with a driver and two loaders, so you've got three people coming in from Rexdale or coming up from the lakeshore or coming in from all over, and wasting all this time and money. It was just something that was in the contract that we couldn't seem to get out.

In the end, we finally got to the point where we could make a direct comparison. We were willing to listen to our own workers, who could have put a price in and could have done this work, if that's what they wanted to do. In the end, they chose not to do it. It wasn't anti-union at all, because we ended up with the Teamsters. The Teamsters were the workers for the contractor for the first seven years, and they did an exceptional job. They did a very good job.

One of the reasons that, even with the Teamsters, we didn't have the strike risk was because the Teamsters workers became kind of a party to the agreement. They had a contract with the contractor where dates matched the contractor's dates with the city. So if we had them on for seven years, they had a work agreement for seven years. Now, there were escalations along the way and improvements and so on, on both sides of this, but there was no chance for a legal strike to occur within the dates of that contract, and of course there wasn't.

The odd time there will be a strike with a contractor involved, but it invariably comes about because the city

or the jurisdiction has changed the dates of the contract. In the end, they've decided they want to try something different, and they'll extend a contract for a year outside of its normal dates, which then does give the union an opportunity to try to make some hay, and sometimes they do it. But it's nothing like the strikes that we've had here in the city of Toronto.

Anyway, after going through that in 1994, we did contract out the garbage. We took the money from the sale of the trucks and set it in a reserve in case something went wrong and we had to get back in it, but we never did have to get back in it.

We didn't, holus-bolus, throw people out the door. We early-retired some people, and we transferred some people to other sections. The contractor picked up some of the good workers, and they were happy as heck to have a good job with the Teamsters.

In the end, after that very first year, the city of Etobicoke saved \$1 million. This was a city with a population of 330,000, and \$1 million was a big savings. Now, in today's dollars, that's well over \$2 million. It has gone on since 1995, just because we took that action at that time.

1450

The point I'm trying to make with this is that this is not a matter of anybody's ideology, political philosophy or anything else. It's just a matter of management. From my standpoint, I don't care who does the work. As a matter of fact, I wouldn't even mind if our own workers did the work, as long as we've competed them and we know that we're getting a fair price for a fair job. But if we don't compete them and we just continue to go the way we've always gone, prices escalate and you have no control over what you're paying.

From my standpoint, if it's a Teamsters union that does it, fine; if it's a CUPE union doing it, fine; or if it's somebody who doesn't even have a union, that's fine, as long as we know we're getting the best value for the tax dollar. I think that's what it's all about, being down here. You're just down here to make the decisions on behalf of the people you represent. That really is the thrust of what this is about.

I know some people are going to try to say there's a political philosophy involved in this, but the political philosophy that's involved in it is on the side of people who want to protect the interests of special-interest groups. I suggest to you that that's not the best way to look after the taxpayers' interest. The best way to look after the taxpayers' interest is to see if there's not a better way to provide the services that we provide and save money doing it. That's exactly what happened with the garbage in Etobicoke, where the people's service was as good as or better than it had been all along. They really didn't care. They put their pails out in the morning when they went to work, and they came home and the pails were empty at night, and that's all they cared about. They didn't care who took it away; they didn't know, and it didn't matter. But if we could save that kind of money, that's what we should be doing.

Streaming forward now to 2012 in the city of Toronto, we finally got it done there, and they saved \$11 million on the residential collection, and they've saved even more millions on picking up on the streets and picking up in the parks, and other things that were also included in that contract. It's estimated that the total savings in the city of Toronto is between \$30 million and \$35 million annually.

Now, I went there in 1998 and tried to convince them of this, that they should be doing this. They would not listen. It wasn't until 2010, with the new mayor and a more receptive council, that we finally took a look at the matter. Those people had been coming up here, the people from the city of Toronto, all the time since 1998, begging for grants to balance their operating budget. They could have done a lot to help themselves, but they wouldn't take that action. They just simply would not look at a better way of doing it for a better price.

This is just asking the accountability officer to review the matter. It's not me reviewing it; it's not the Conservatives reviewing it; it's not anybody else in this House reviewing it. It's an independent source, somebody that we all have faith in and trust, the accountability officer. It's asking them to review service delivery situations where they think alternate service delivery might provide a benefit, and then they can report back to this House and this House can make a decision on the matter.

That's about what I'm asking you to do today. I appreciate your attentiveness. I thank you very much for listening, and I hope you do the right thing.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's interesting. I was listening intently to the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore. He said that if we don't support Bill 160, it's because we are more concerned with the special interests. Here on this side of the House, we don't consider the people of this province as a special-interest group. We consider them as the people who we are elected here to serve. We brought the Financial Accountability Officer role to the budget discussion last spring because it is needed, and there are so many cases.

I think there are two main issues, though, with the way that this bill has come to the floor. Quite honestly, the PCs are trying to solve a problem that doesn't exist. There are lots of problems, actually, in the province of Ontario that do need our collective attention. We clearly have some issues around the safety of workers in the province of Ontario. We have a desperate shortage of child care. We have an underground economy which is problematic on several different levels. We have a disconnect between where we are investing our money in research and the commercialization of that research to benefit the economy. And certainly there's \$600 billion in dead money that we need to pull back into the economy. So there are big problems.

This bill is essentially an exercise in redundancy. It's seeking to solve a problem that doesn't exist. So one has to wonder why it has actually come to the floor here at Queen's Park.

Let me just focus on the redundancy piece. The Financial Accountability Office can already look at proposals made by legislators. They have a broad, overarching responsibility around economic modelling and looking at the finances of the province, but they also serve the legislators. We built that into the legislation so that it wasn't like the budget officer at the federal level, who served at the discretion of one individual. The Financial Accountability Officer is accountable to us, and in doing so is therefore accountable to the people of this province.

So it's curious for me to see—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Didn't they vote against that?

Ms. Catherine Fife: No. They spoke against it, but they supported it. How could you possibly not support such a good idea? It's a progressive idea that seeks to interrupt a fairly scandalous record of government. Certainly, we're looking to address some of those issues, because they are systemic. We didn't want to bring something to this House that is just a one-off. We needed to get to the very heart of the matter, which is the way that funding is spent and the way funding decisions and policy decisions are made in this House. Certainly, those are long-standing issues over the course of the Liberal government.

Aside from this legislation trying to solve a problem that doesn't exist, it does sort of touch on alternative service delivery, which would be a reasonable request the member could make of the Financial Accountability Office, which then leads to the question, why is this bill even necessary? Why use this opportunity to bring this bill to the floor?

Because I don't have a good answer to that question from the PCs—I certainly didn't hear it from the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore—I have to assume they're introducing this bill for the same reason they seem to do anything in this place: playing political games and shouting from the sidelines. This bill is fixing something that isn't broken. It reminds me of what the PC government did with our electricity system in the 1990s. We can still see that playing out in the province of Ontario on everyone's hydro bill.

Aside from this bill being redundant—as I've already said, the Financial Accountability Office can already look at proposals made by legislators. The Financial Accountability Officer can already look at the state of the province's finances, including the budget and trends in the provincial and national economies, at her or his discretion, whomever we decide to hire—it's almost done, though, and I've made the point that it has taken a long time for us to get through that process.

What this bill does change is nothing. The powers the original legislation gives to the Financial Accountability Officer already allow him or her to perform the tasks set out in this bill that we are debating. With that said, it's confusing that this bill was even introduced, and it is even more confusing because the Conservative caucus, when we were originally debating the Financial Accountability Office, criticized the creation of a new bureaucracy. This office was designed to prevent the kind of

scandals they shout about every day in this House. They said at the time that it was just a waste of money.

But now they introduce a bill that would actually add to the bureaucracy by giving the Financial Accountability Office powers that it already has. It really is like a strange sort of *Seinfeld* episode; it's the bill about nothing. But really, it does tell a story. It tells a story about gamesmanship, and these aren't even entertaining games. This is not like the *Game of Thrones*, which has some value—some violence.

The people of the province do not benefit from MPPs bringing pieces of legislation like this to the floor. They have no patience for it, and who could blame them? For the last two and a half years, instead of addressing all the problems I outlined prior, like the lack of child care, the energy issue, the economy issue—there's so much work that can be done—the PC caucus has let the clock run down and done next to nothing. There have been some PMB motions that have come forth that we've actually supported, but the two significant opportunities that the PC caucus has had to positively impact the people of this province, through the last two budget sessions, they have let go by. They've been calling for an election since the day they lost the last election.

1500

It's a wasted opportunity, and it's frustrating. What we hear from the people of this province is that they want their politicians to work harder. They want us to work more. They want us to work more collaboratively. While there are some people on both sides of the House who are uncomfortable with a minority government, there are many people in the broader public who are happy that it's harder for us to get the work done, but they like seeing us get results, like increased funding for home care, like a youth employment strategy and like the Financial Accountability Officer. There is a serious, serious trust issue—a disengagement, also, from the people of this province—with this place.

You must wonder why a private member's bill like this, which seeks to impact the discretion, which Kevin Page, the federal budgetary officer, said he needed—of course, we saw great interference by the Prime Minister with that budget officer. Independence is key.

Here you have a private member's bill that's already seeking to change the expectations of the Financial Accountability Officer before we even have him, when it's already in there. It is so important for each one of us to understand that the people of this province want the Financial Accountability Officer to be effective. They understand, more so than some people in this House, that we need that oversight, that we need that second look at policies.

Imagine what we could have done. Imagine if, prior to selling the 407, we could have sent that information to the Financial Accountability Officer, and he or she would have indicated how much it will cost us down the line. That would have been forward-thinking. It would have, hopefully, impacted the decisions that we made around this.

In conclusion, I would just like to go back to the redundancy theme because this private member's bill is not needed. It is not in the interest of the people of this province. One wonders why it's even here on the floor of the Legislature.

I think that we have come to this place with a completely different and respectful understanding that, in this minority setting, negotiating the Financial Accountability Office in the last budget round is in the best interest of the people of this province. It's in our collective and shared interest that that office is successful, without interference, and it should operate as an independent office. Of course, we will not be supporting this.

We would rather be talking about creating good jobs, strengthening health care and addressing environmental issues. You know what? We will make a commitment to read the budget, because that's why people sent us here. We're going to read a budget before we say how we're going to vote on it, and I would highly recommend that the PC Party does the same.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I am pleased to rise today to speak on Bill 160, An Act to amend the Financial Accountability Officer Act, 2013 with respect to reports concerning alternative service delivery of public services. Of course, this is a private member's bill introduced by my friend and colleague the PC critic for government accountability and MPP for Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Mr. Doug Holyday.

It's an area that MPP Holyday brings a lot of experience and a lot of knowledge to. From his former roles as mayor of Etobicoke and deputy mayor of the city of Toronto, MPP Holyday is bringing his experience forward with this important bill, and he is to be commended for such an important piece of legislation which will help government identify ways to save money.

Speaker, given the current state of our economy in this province, and as current agreements and contracts begin to expire, government unions should be forced to compete with the private sector to provide government services. We can no longer simply turn over a blank cheque, regardless of service, regardless of cost. One only needs to look as far as the maintenance contract at the Toronto District School Board, where taxpayers paid over \$143 to install a \$20 pencil sharpener. It's examples like this, cases like this, where Ontario taxpayers are getting the short end of the stick, that MPP Holyday's bill will help prevent.

MPP Holyday's bill does not extend to core government services like policing, regulated health professionals and teachers, but there are many areas—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I interrupt the member? I'd ask you to use ridings, rather than names.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's areas like these, such as facilities management, IT services, food services and administrative work, that we can look at being provided by an alternative service.

When we implement open and fair competition to the public sector, it does not matter whether government employees or those working in the private sector earn the contract. The goal is obtaining the best value when using taxpayers' money and the best possible services. Taxpayers win, and that's really what this bill is all about: who can do the best job at the best price for Ontario taxpayers.

I'm proud of my colleague for bringing this bill forward, and I would encourage all members in this House to support MPP Doug Holyday's bill this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Once again, I warn the member: We use ridings and not names. Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I will take a couple of minutes to speak to my friend's bill, the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I listened to my friend, who was elected at the same time as me. We're both former city councillors. He talked about a garbage strike in his community. It lasted about a month, back in the 1980s. I went through a 101-day garbage strike not that many years ago as a city councillor, and at the end of the day we contracted out garbage collection in Windsor. But no jobs were lost. No jobs were lost. I want to point that out.

I think it's a good example to set the tone for the debate, except being new here in the Legislature, I'm not exactly sure how many refuse collectors—sanitation engineers—we have on the provincial payroll. I'm not sure how many we have that get paid by the province of Ontario to do the work that's been cited in the example. It's like the member for Lambton–Kent–Middlesex talking about pencil sharpeners in schools. I don't believe that in the province of Ontario people that replace—I don't know, do we have any pencil sharpeners in the House? I don't know. If we do, I doubt very much the example that was used would amount to the same cost analysis.

If we want to put the Financial Accountability Officer to work and give him make-work projects, I would like to see him do a cost-benefit analysis of the Conservative million jobs plan. Will they really create a million jobs? Where would the jobs come from? What would the people be paid? Would there be jobs with benefits? What would be the cost along the way? Would there be job losses because of other policies, such as their automotive policy, with no input whatsoever?

So I appreciate the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I consider him a friend, but I will not be supporting his bill.

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

Mr. Steven Del Duca: This is my second opportunity this afternoon to stand and talk about financial, fiscal-related matters in this House. I actually want to begin by congratulating the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore to an extent for bringing forward this particular item today. I did listen very closely to his remarks, because I do have respect. I have respect, not only for the member who

sponsored this particular item today, but I have respect for all other 106 members in this chamber who come from different walks of life, who bring their own unique circumstances, their own unique experiences to bear with respect to the ideas, the debate, the dialogue, the legislation, the motions or whatever it is they happened to be speaking about on a given day. In particular, the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore does—as we all know in this House—have a fair degree of experience with respect to what's taken place in other places at other times at other levels of government. So I did want to listen closely.

1510

I do have a certain degree of respect for the fact that—I want to take this one at face value. There's a lot of stuff that comes from the official opposition caucus that you can't always take necessarily at face value, because there may be some other motivation, and that may be the case here, but given that this is one of the first opportunities that I've had to hear the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore speak at length about a matter, I do want to give him the benefit of the doubt.

But I think, regardless of what I've just said, it's important to make sure that, as the member from Kitchener–Waterloo has said in her remarks, this is an idea, this is a bill—a private member's bill—that doesn't need to be supported, fundamentally because of its redundancy. We all know—and I know this has been discussed in the debate so far this afternoon—how the Financial Accountability Officer role came to be. It was a fairly crucial, a fairly fundamental part of Ontario budget 2013, something that I know Premier Kathleen Wynne and, of course, the finance minister and others on this side are very proud about.

As I said I at debate back months ago when we were discussing the creation of the FAO, the creation of this office, the undertaking on the part of our government to make this happen, is something that is, in fact, consistent with a number of steps that we have taken as a government since 2003 to make sure that the people of Ontario have that sense, that comfort level, of knowing that fiscal transparency and accountability are top of mind for those of us on this side of the House, and that has been the case since 2003.

Earlier, the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell and myself were chatting about this very fact, this very piece of information. If you take a look at the track record over the last just about 10 years or so, you'll see that there have been a number of steps taken by this government to make sure that we bring that level of awareness, that level of transparency, to the discussions that are taking place, to the activities of government, starting with one of our very first moves in our very first budget back in 2004, when we created legislation to make sure that no future government of Ontario could ever do what had taken place in the last budget that was tabled in this House before the 2003 election campaign. That's the measure that make it a requirement that the books of the province are reviewed by the Auditor General before an election campaign so that people can

have a clearer sense, regardless of whether the government is of this party or another party, Speaker—that no future government can, perhaps, attempt to confuse voters by alleging that the books are one way when, as we learned in 2003, they were in fact a completely different way, when there was a \$6-billion hidden deficit left over by the previous Conservative government.

We've heard from the discussion so far in the House today that—and I mentioned this a second ago. When the member from Kitchener–Waterloo and the member from Windsor–Tecumseh spoke, they talked about the fact that this is a bill that goes over territory, covers territory, that is already covered because of the creation of the Financial Accountability Officer. Speaking for myself—and I think this has already been discussed in this House during question period at one point weeks ago, so I think it's fair for me to say, safe for me to say—I actually, in my capacity as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, have the privilege of working with a member of the Conservative caucus and a member of the NDP caucus on the hiring process around this Financial Accountability Officer role. It's been a tremendous experience so far. It's been great to work with other members of this House. There's been a lot of constructive discussion, both at those meetings and also in this place about what this role will look like and what the powers will be and the extent to which the inaugural—the first—Financial Accountability Officer here in the province—when he or she takes on that role, what their responsibilities will be.

Fundamental to the position, as we discussed when we brought forward this motion or this idea, this concept in budget 2013, the notion that it's really important. It's really important. This is a position that enhances openness, transparency and independent analysis.

I know I'm echoing, to an extent, some of the remarks that were brought forward in debate by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, and deservedly so. She was right in what she said earlier today in this House about whether or not this particular measure, this legislation that's being brought forward by the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, is in fact necessary. It's my position, and I believe the position of most on this side of the House, if not all, that it is redundant. It's not necessary, because we have created, through budget 2013 and through subsequent legislation, this position of the Financial Accountability Officer, which will have all of the tools and have all of the power vested in him or her to make sure that the job gets done properly, to make sure that some of the concerns the member who has sponsored this particular bill—and again, I'm going to accept that it came from the best of intentions, or it has the best of intentions. That role, those responsibilities, all of those things that he seeks to see accomplished with this amendment are, in fact, already taken care of, because they're fundamental to the original bill that created this particular position.

I think it's also important to note, as we have talked about previously in debate, just so everyone is quite aware of this fact, to reinforce it—I am very proud to be

part of a government, very proud to be part of a Legislature that has moved forward successfully with the creation of the Financial Accountability Officer as a position. As we will all know, we are, here in Ontario, the first province here in this country to introduce this legislation and to create this exact position. This is a position that will provide independent analysis to all members of provincial Parliament. This is an individual who will have the opportunity and the responsibility for examining the state of the province's finances, including the Ontario budget, as well as trends in the provincial and national economies. This one is really important, I know, for every member of this House. This individual, the Financial Accountability Officer, will have the power, at the request of a legislative committee or an MPP—an MPP from any one of the three caucuses in this chamber—to provide other types of research, including the financial cost or benefit to the province of any public bill.

The list goes on, in terms of the responsibilities and the powers that are vested as a result of the legislation around the Financial Accountability Officer. It's a long list of responsibilities, opportunities, whatever the case may be, for this new position. That is perhaps the strongest reason as to why we've heard from members of the NDP caucus and you're hearing from me now on this matter that the bill is not necessary.

The bill is not necessary because the original intention that drove the creation of the Financial Accountability Officer was to vest in one individual, along with whatever kind of office and resources they may require to do the job that they're empowered to do—vested in that person are all of the responsibilities and, within the realm of the job description, all of the opportunities for that individual to do what the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore is seeking to accomplish with this particular private member's bill. So that's why, as both the member from Windsor–Tecumseh and the member from Kitchener–Waterloo have said, I think it's important to say that the bill does not need to go forward here at second reading. It doesn't need to go to a legislative committee because we've already, in fact, accomplished that.

There was some other stuff that came up in debate a little bit earlier. I don't have much time on the clock. I'm relatively new in this chamber as well, having been elected in September of 2012, just about a year before the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore. But I'm also a person who has studied fairly closely—in fact, I worked here in the Legislature for my predecessor, the former member from Vaughan, so I had been around the building many years ago. In fact, I'm a bit of a student, I suppose, of Ontario politics and history. I think it is important to remember that, as we go forward—and now here we are in the month of March—the Ministry of Finance and the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs are rolling up our sleeves collectively to do pre-budget consultations. I think one of the things that was mentioned by the member—I believe from Kitchener–Waterloo—is, it's important for the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore and all members of the

official opposition caucus to take into account, as we continue to work with very extensive consultations with people from right across the province of Ontario, doing our very best to inform Ontario budget 2014—to make sure that it continues to be a responsive document, to make sure that it's a plan to keep moving the Ontario economy forward. I would actually say to my friends, to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, to his leader, the leader of the official opposition, and to every member from the Ontario PC caucus who serves here in this place representing their communities, that, unlike the process leading up to budget 2013 and unlike the process leading up to budget 2012, the members of the official opposition do the right thing this time around—hopefully, third time is the charm, as they say—and that they actually keep an open mind; that they continue to work with all other members in this House; that, for the first time in at least a couple of years, they wait to see what Ontario budget 2014 will look like, what it will contain—

Ms. Soo Wong: And read it, too.

1520

Mr. Steven Del Duca:—that they actually take the opportunity to read that budget; that they successfully fulfill the role that normally falls to Her Majesty's official opposition; that they play a constructive role; and that they work with us, unlike what took place, as I said, back in 2013 and unlike what took place back in 2012, and that they don't rush to judgment.

There's an opportunity, there's plenty of discussion in the run-up to the budget, and there's plenty of discussion after a budget might be introduced in this House, for them to engage with residents in their respective communities and come back to this place. Perhaps, Speaker—perhaps—if they actually, for the first time in recent memory, take on a more constructive role with respect to the budget process, they will be spared what's taking place here today, where one of the members of their caucus, perhaps with the very best of intentions, has brought forward a proposed private member's bill that's redundant. Perhaps, if they play a constructive role here in budget 2014 and the process leading up to it, we won't land in a place, long after budget 2014 has been introduced and passed, where members from that caucus are introducing measures that aren't necessary.

With that, Speaker, I just remind everyone here that I plan to vote against this measure, primarily because I don't believe that it's necessary, and it's redundant.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm pleased to speak to Bill 160, the Financial Accountability Act, or what I've liked to call the respect for taxpayers act. Look, the government shouldn't be in the business of flipping hamburgers and cleaning out garbage bins. At a time when every dollar spent must be accounted for, we cannot continue with gold-plated contracts for routine services at the expense of hard-working taxpayers. It's the government's responsibility to provide the highest-quality public service for the taxpayers at the best possible price.

Unfortunately, though, this is not the case for facilities management, IT services, administrative work or food services. Something needs to change, and Bill 160, the Financial Accountability Act, will provide that required change. This important piece of legislation will allow for better, more cost-effective management of public service delivery. It will do that by allowing the government to tender contracts to private sector companies which would compete with government unions that currently provide routine public services. In turn, this competition would spur innovation and efficiency within government.

We're already seeing the benefits of this policy in countries like Great Britain, in American states like New Jersey, Florida and Indiana, and in cities like Chicago, Indianapolis and Phoenix. In fact, the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore implemented this policy right here in Toronto, in Etobicoke. As a result, he saved the taxpayers money: in Toronto, \$11 million annually in residential waste pickup, \$4 million in cleaning up parks and public buildings, and another \$2 million in Etobicoke for contracting out basic services when he was mayor. You know what? Satisfaction among residents for those services has actually gone up.

I encourage members to rethink their position, possibly, here and vote in favour of this bill, because it is not a partisan issue. It's about proper management, something I think the party opposite has a difficult time doing these days, proper management of government services for the people of Ontario, the ones we are sent here to represent and respect.

There was a report released by Deloitte that found that the savings could be between 10% and 30% by opening up competition in the bidding process. Savings like these would have a ripple effect throughout the province. If we award a contract to a facilities management company that is more cost-efficient and provides greater service, we can have cleaner hospitals, classrooms and public buildings.

Speaker, I'll tell you, before I was elected to this Legislature, I worked for a company called Honeywell Building Solutions, and we did just that: operating facilities throughout the province. I look at Woodstock Hospital, for instance, where Honeywell maintains and operates a facility for 25 years under the public-private partnership that they have. Honeywell is held to standards, targets. They are held accountable on measures that would ensure performance. This ultimately will save taxpayers—providing good services for a good price, respecting taxpayers.

That money that they've saved can be focused on hiring more nurses and doctors in our hospitals, more teachers in our schools, more social services throughout our province. Eleven million dollars in the city of Toronto alone: One can only imagine the social services the city can now provide simply because they've opted to go this route.

The Fiscal Accountability Act is also a job creation plan. In fact, it would encourage private sector businesses to bid on public service delivery contracts within their

own towns and cities. As more companies win contracts for public services, they'll be able to hire more people in their communities. This will allow for new businesses to get a foothold in the marketplace. It will create more growth in local economies, and it will provide more opportunities for entrepreneurs across this province.

Speaker, as you can see, Bill 160, the Financial Accountability Act, respects taxpayers' money by providing the highest-quality service at the best possible price for routine public services.

I'd like to thank you for the opportunity to speak to this important piece of legislation. Again, I'd like to thank the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore for bringing this bill forward, not only in terms of what we need in the province of Ontario but with a true track record within the city of Toronto, showing that it can happen.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It is an honour to rise today and speak to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore's Financial Accountability Act.

Bill 160 would simply ask the incoming budget watchdog to review government services and make recommendations on how we can maintain quality of service while saving money. Health care professionals, teachers and police officers would be exempt.

This is a simple, well-thought-out bill from a man who has had experience in saving the public's money. My colleague was able to save his constituents money as mayor of Etobicoke when he opened up garbage collection to competition. The new garbage collector required half as many employees as the previous arrangement and offered improved service.

We're talking about allowing people to bid on contracts for things like laundry and some IT services. Alberta, British Columbia and Saskatchewan already do this. It's something that economist Don Drummond has actually recommended.

When my constituents make a purchase, they shop around. They weigh all their options and make an informed decision based on their budget and what they need. The people of Chatham–Kent–Essex know the value of a dollar. They do not understand, nor appreciate, the fact that this Liberal government is outraged over the fact that we, the PC caucus, try harder to save money that doesn't belong to them in the first place. This money belongs to the taxpayers.

We need to send a clear message to our constituents that we are looking to maximize the value of their dollars. At the end of the day, this is their money that we're dealing with. I know that may come as a surprise to the Liberals, and perhaps even the NDP—or should I say the spend-DP? My constituents want good services at a good price. It's our duty to do everything we can to ensure that we're spending money wisely.

I take great pride in stating that my PC caucus are, in fact, the wallet watchers of Ontario. Actually, by opening up contracts to friendly competition, we open up the door

to Ontario businesses and unions that do not have exclusive deals with the province. Under the McGuinty–Wynne Liberals, it's the well-connected who seem to get all the opportunities, and we see it time and time again. Look at the Liberals' deal with Cisco, a company that earned \$2 billion in profits in a single quarter last year. The Liberals are handing them \$190 million to create up to 1,700 jobs. That's a cost of about \$112,000 per job, by the way. Any government that thinks this is prudent job policy is out of their mind. Further, this will do absolutely nothing to help out the areas of the province that need the jobs the most.

Economist Mike Moffatt stated that Premier Wynne's "awful" jobs plan "won't create a single job." All this will do is raise the wages for highly skilled workers who already enjoy a large salary in a sector that has a very low unemployment rate. The province is taking public dollars out of the hands of the ridings that are bleeding jobs and handing them over to a company making billions in profit in an industry that does not need a handout.

1530

What the member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore's bill will do is end the monopoly that the well-connected friends of the Liberal Party have been able to enjoy for over a decade. By opening up government contracts to different unions, contractors or companies, we will ensure that the taxpayers get good value for their dollar.

Speaker, this is common-sense legislation that our province desperately needs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: I thank everyone who participated in the debate, but I must tell you that I've heard the same arguments before over the years. There's a few more that go along with it, but by and large, people have told us, "It's not broken; you don't need to fix it." "Nothing is to be gained by this." "You could already do this without making any changes." But it has turned out that that wasn't the case.

In the city of Toronto, for instance, it took 12 years to make the change, and that 12 years, I estimate, cost \$400 million. That's good tax dollars, money that people worked hard for. They gave it to us to manage and run their affairs, and we might as well have put it, as I've said before, in a big dump truck and taken it down and thrown it in the lake, because it didn't provide any better service than we could have got if we had saved the \$400 million. But people weren't of a political mind to want to stand up and do what was right. So it's time now that we do stand up and do what is right.

It's not just me saying this, by the way. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce have written a paper on this, and they advocate this policy. They recently released their report Public Sector Problems, Private Sector Solutions that identifies a number of opportunities for alternative service delivery. That's the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

The Drummond report itself also suggests that we should move to private sector delivery wherever we can. Recommendation 3-5 states, “Do not hang on to public assets or public service delivery when better options exist.” Well, Mr. Drummond speaks common sense. It’s just advice to us. We’re just citizens like everyone else. We come here without a great expertise in any field, normally. We’re charged with the responsibility of looking after the best interests of our citizens, and we get this good advice and we don’t want to take it. I’m urging you today to take that advice. Do what’s right for the taxpayers. Forget your political philosophy and just do what’s right for the taxpayers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We’ll take the vote on this item at the end of private members’ public business.

The member for Nipissing on a point of order.

VISITORS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I would like to stand and introduce Hannah Bywater, a friend of mine from the city of North Bay. Hannah was just awarded an Ontario Junior Citizen of the Year Award by our Lieutenant Governor. She is here with her younger sister, Sophie, her mother, Jen Bywater, her father, Brent Bywater, and her very wonderful grandparents, Anne and Fred McNutt. Ladies and gentlemen.

TORONTO RANKED BALLOT ELECTIONS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR UN MODE DE SCRUTIN PRÉFÉRENTIEL POUR TORONTO

Ms. Hunter moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 166, An Act to amend the City of Toronto Act, 2006 to allow the City of Toronto to pass a ranked ballot by-law for city council elections / Projet de loi 166, Loi visant à modifier la Loi de 2006 sur la cité de Toronto afin de permettre à la cité de Toronto d’adopter un règlement municipal sur le scrutin préférentiel pour les élections au conseil municipal.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. I’m honoured to stand here today to debate the first bill that I have introduced in this House.

Bill 166, titled the Toronto Ranked Ballot Elections Act, 2014, would allow the city of Toronto to pass a bylaw allowing for the adoption of a ranked ballot voting system for the election of members of city council and the mayor, following extensive public consultations with residents of the city of Toronto.

On January 24, 2012, Councillor Paul Ainslie, a city councillor who represents the majority of my riding of

Scarborough–Guildwood, moved a motion to bring ranked balloting to municipal elections in the city of Toronto.

On April 24, 2013, a report was released by city staff which included a detailed review of ranked ballots and acknowledged that the province would have to pass an amendment to authorize the use of ranked ballots for the city of Toronto.

On May 13, 2013, the motion was debated within council through the Government Management Committee. Citizens and councillors were able to debate the bill and ask questions.

Toronto city council debated the motion and voted in favour of adopting a ranked ballot system on June 11, 2013. This motion passed 26 to 15 votes.

The motion clearly states that city council requests the Ontario government to amend the Municipal Elections Act to authorize and establish the framework of ranked choice voting to permit Toronto city council to use ranked ballots and instant runoff voting in municipal elections.

This is not only something the city of Toronto needs but it is also specifically requested by the city council. The passage of this bill is a simple measure that we can take, not only to improve local democracy, but also to foster a better working relationship with this province’s largest municipality.

This issue has been championed by Dave Meslin and the Ranked Ballot Initiative of Toronto, who have joined us here today. I see them filling in the public galleries and the members’ galleries. I really appreciate their attendance here today. Thank you to all of the volunteers, the thousands of you, who have supported and sustained this bill over the years. And thank you, Dave, for your leadership on this issue.

I would also like to thank my staff, who have worked tirelessly on this bill: Jessica Behnke, my legislative intern; Damien O’Brien, my executive assistant; and Dayani Ravichadran, my special assistant.

Finally, this bill is one that is important to me personally. It hails back to the time that I was co-chair of the Emerging Leaders Network. In 2009, we held a studio event, gathering our rising leaders in this city to talk about what initiatives and projects matter to them. This summit gave rise to many of the projects that are being spearheaded by the ELN today. One of our projects was Better Ballots, which sought to improve voter turnout and reflect Toronto’s diversity through our voting system.

I attended a town hall meeting, one of four which was held in Toronto that year, at the Scarborough Civic Centre in April 2010. Following the four consultations, it was agreed that ranked balloting, or instant runoff voting, was the best choice to meet the needs of Toronto’s vibrant, diverse and growing population.

Many critics argue that a proportional election system would be preferred to a ranked ballot and more conducive to fairly representing Toronto council; however, city officials have asked us to provide the ability to do a

ranked ballot system. I do believe that a ranked ballot would be the best effective system for electing our mayor and our city councillors.

Cities that have already adopted a ranked ballot system include San Francisco, Minneapolis, Berkeley, the state of North Carolina, and London, England.

Furthermore, all Canadian political parties and all political parties in Ontario have adopted runoff voting to improve democracy.

By introducing Bill 166, I am seeking to strengthen our local democracy here in the city of Toronto. Speaker, Toronto is a diverse city, and that should be reflected in the way that we elect officials who represent us at city hall. Under the current system, vote splitting along ideological lines is far too prevalent. The implementation of a ranked ballot system would completely eliminate vote splitting and allow voters to rank all candidates who fall within their ideological beliefs, rather than choosing one over the other. Candidates who ideologically align would also not be forced to drop off the ballot in order to avoid vote splitting, again giving Torontonians more choice in whom we choose to represent us in council.

1540

With a ranked ballot, there would be no wasted votes. Under the system that is currently being used, voters choose one candidate, and if that candidate does not win, then their voice is unheard. Under a ranked ballot system, voters will be able to rank their choices. Once the first choices are counted up, if a candidate has 50% plus 1 of the vote, they will be declared the winner. However, if no one has achieved 50% plus 1, the candidate with the least amount of votes drops off the ballot. The voters who had their candidate ranked first will have their vote transferred to their second choice on their ballots during the second round of voting. This would continue, in instant runoff fashion, until a candidate receives 50% plus 1 of the vote.

The current system of first-past-the-post also encourages negative campaigning. I believe that the tone of our elections here in Toronto needs to change. Negative campaigning is an aspect of politics that has reduced election cycles to personal attacks on someone's character rather than the merits or shortfalls of a candidate. It has also taken away from informed, positive discussion of the issues at hand.

Under a ranked ballot system, opposing candidates can always hope for a second- or third-place ranking, and that would force them to have to appeal to a larger base of supporters through their election campaign. It would be ill-advised for candidates who have aligned ideologically to attack each other and risk alienating voters. The tone of our local elections here in Toronto would significantly improve.

Importantly, a ranked ballot system encourages more people to seek elected office. Women, younger voters, visible minorities, people who make up a huge part of this city, yet are under-represented at city council, would be empowered to run for elected office. This would provide voters with more options when going to the polls on election day.

Voters would no longer be required to compromise their personal preferences to select a candidate they don't entirely support. As Dave Meslin would say, you would be able to vote with your heart. In the same vein, candidates with low support would not be forced to drop off the ballot early, and potential candidates would not be discouraged from running based on polling numbers early in the race.

It has not been very long since I introduced this bill, and yet I have seen overwhelming support from my constituents in Scarborough–Guildwood. I have been approached by residents in the riding, and my constituency office has received countless calls and emails of support for Bill 166. This past week, I was at the opening of a restaurant called the Spice Shack in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood. One of the organizers of the event was a University of Toronto Scarborough campus student, and she was so excited about this bill, because it was discussed as part of her class.

Should this bill pass, it would be a welcome change. It would not take effect until the 2018 municipal election cycle. This would allow ample time for public consultations—a key component of this bill—an education campaign and a second vote by Toronto city council to move the vote through a bylaw. This is a bill that, if passed, will allow the city of Toronto to adopt measures that will improve local democracy for millions of residents in this city while giving Toronto city council something they clearly have prioritized and asked for.

A ranked ballot election system would eliminate vote splitting and prevent candidates from dropping off the ballot due to poor polling numbers or to promote strategic voting. A ranked ballot would deter negative campaigning, fostering a more positive tone for elections in Toronto. Finally, a ranked ballot election system would encourage more people to run, giving the people of Toronto more choice when it comes to electing their city officials.

This bill is something the city of Toronto needs; it is what they have asked for. I hope I can count on all members of this House to support this bill so that it becomes law.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to rise today and add my voice on Bill 166, the Toronto Ranked Ballot Elections Act.

I believe, as I always have from my earliest days, in the importance of defending democracy, defending the power of the people to directly elect their leaders and to understand that every vote counts. I think that those of us who have engaged in the public electoral process often meet people who say, "My vote doesn't count. I'm only one." I think that history certainly demonstrates that one vote does matter, and it matters as much today as it did then.

But I have some concerns about what we are discussing today, because one of the things that certainly comes to mind with this is that if a ranked ballot system was to

be used, it also adds another layer of complexity here. This means if I vote for candidate A as my first choice and B as my second choice, and someone else votes C for their first choice and B for their second choice, then B ends up as the winner, although neither of us chose candidate B as our first choice. The problem here is that this bill would allow an election that declares a winner of someone who actually didn't win by the numbers. This is the candidate who was not elected as the first choice by most people.

I think that one of the issues related to this—as I said, “one person, one vote” has been the goal and the cornerstone of our democratic process, and it has certainly been something that, for many generations in the evolution of our parliamentary system, was held out. If you go back and you look in time, in the 19th century you had to meet requirements of a financial level, or you had to own land or you had to be male. When we get into the 20th century, it's citizenship and obviously not a question of women unable to vote.

That then becomes something that, around the world, frankly, people are dying to have. I think that we need to understand that, first of all, as Winston Churchill said, nothing's perfect. No government is a perfect system, but this one works. Any night you want to turn on the TV, you can see in many areas of the world that this is something that people want to have. They're fearful to go to vote, or they're simply unable. There's violence preventing them from doing this.

One person, one vote, I think, is something to be treasured and respected. But it's not just that. It carries with it the fundamental strength of the democratic system, which is choice and civic responsibility. It implies an equality; it implies a sense of power that we all have.

It's a complex thing that reduces the value of the ballot, to rejig the outcome. In fact, it creates a barrier between the voter and his choice.

What I think we need to keep in mind is that elections are not a feel-good exercise. There is no prize for second or third. This is a harsh reality that winners and losers must continue to learn. The winner must work with his or her previous opponents and try to represent their concerns and, in turn, the loser must work with the winner toward broader goals. We don't need to have a handicap in the race.

1550

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

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm really happy for the chance to speak today to Bill 166, the Toronto Ranked Ballot Elections Act. I want to thank the member from Scarborough–Guildwood for bringing this bill forward. The bill we're debating here today, as you know, is a response to a request that was made by the majority of Toronto city councillors, who asked for the legislative tools from the province to allow them to move forward to explore alternative voting options; specifically, this issue of ranked ballot voting.

I also want to thank people who have come into the galleries today for being here. It might not seem like it's

very full, but there are in fact more people here today than there usually are in the galleries, and I think that's a good thing. By a show of hands—of course, through the Speaker—I'd like to know how many people are here for the first time today. That's awesome. That's fantastic. Again, through the Speaker, I would like to welcome you and thank you for being here today. I think that's great.

As we know, proponents of electoral reform have identified that there are real problems in our city and in politics in our city, and they suggest that a ranked ballot voting system could change how we elect our representatives and begin to transform the political culture in Toronto, which I believe is important. Proponents say that ranked choice runoff ballots could help eliminate vote splitting and reduce strategic voting. It would ensure majority support for winning candidates, it would discourage negative campaigning and it would provide more choices for voters. All of these are important objectives, and they're goals I agree with, because it's clear to me that we see increased cynicism about politics, not just in Toronto but in Ontario and right across the country, and that's something we need to address.

I think people are cynical for a good reason. I think people see that the system is not working very well for them. They see scandal after scandal. They see too many politicians who put their own interests first. They see a system that's broken, that's been underfunded, that's been privatized and that continues to put profit before people. They see a system that delivers only for the most privileged. It delivers for those who are well connected. Well-connected insiders come first, while too many people are left outside in the cold. People feel too often that politics happens to them. It happens somewhere else—somebody else is involved—but it doesn't happen with you, and that's a problem.

But I think there are hopeful signs. I know that down the street at Toronto city hall, many people—some of the same people who are here today in the gallery—have been working to change the political culture in our city. I know that municipal politics often feel closer to the ground and closer to the people, and I know from experience that Toronto city council—Toronto city hall—does feel more open and more accessible to people. Too often this place, which was named for the Queen, feels more like a castle. We forget that this is our building. It belongs to the people of this province. It's intimidating to enter—you might have found that when you came here today—and it's difficult to participate here. You probably noticed that you weren't allowed to bring your telephone in and you're not even allowed to write notes here in the gallery. I think all of that is problematic.

But it's different at Toronto city hall. People are more engaged, I believe, and they are connecting with their politicians in different ways. They've asked them to examine new ways to run elections in Toronto. That's why in June 2013, a majority of city councillors voted to ask the province for the tools to reform their electoral system. That motion was supported by city councillors from right across the political spectrum. It was supported

by New Democrats like Mike Layton and Gord Perks, in the west end of Toronto; by Davenport Liberals like Anna Băilao and Cesar Palacio; by Conservatives like Karen Stintz and Gary Crawford. People from across the spectrum supported this motion, and I hope that all parties here today and all members will also support the bill that's been raised today.

I've heard from many residents in my community, my riding of Davenport, people who have been inspired by the RaBIT campaign and who have asked for change and who want change. That's why, on February 25, I introduced a private member's bill that would allow Toronto to proceed with electoral reform.

Applause.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Thank you. It's why I'm happy to stand here today on behalf of residents of my riding of Davenport to support Bill 166, because residents of Toronto have the right to have this discussion, to have this debate and to make a decision; because we need people in this city to know that their voice matters. We need people in this city and across Ontario to remember that politics matter, that they deserve real choices, that they deserve to have their voice and their vote count, and that they deserve to have a politics that really does put people first.

I believe that we can have a positive politics in this city and right across the province of Ontario. I believe that we can have political representatives who strive to represent the complexities of the communities that they serve; and that we can have a political system where politicians earn their mandate and are supported by a majority of the electorate. We can do better, and I believe we deserve the chance to do better. That's why I'll be supporting Bill 166 today.

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me start off by congratulating the member from Scarborough–Guildwood for an excellent presentation on something that I feel very strongly about. I've been in favour of some form of proportional representation for the last 30 or 40 years and was very actively involved in the 2007 effort to actually make it happen.

Mr. Michael Prue: What about Kawartha Lakes?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Give me a chance, okay? Give me a chance.

What I can't understand—I'm a very practical individual. I've been involved in and out of politics for the last 40 years. What I can't understand is that if we basically use that system within each and every one of our political parties to come up with our leaders—we have a ranked ballot system, basically—why can't we do it for the general public? If there are two things that I don't like about this bill, it's that (1), you didn't talk about all of Ontario; and (2), you're not implementing it this year, quite frankly.

It's as simple as that. Who is against this notion? Incumbents. What do you like as an incumbent? To have as many folks run against you as possible, because the

incumbent is usually better known and, therefore, usually ends up winning. Well, that's not very democratic. I can remember that when I was first appointed as Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing—and certainly the member from East York will remember it well—there was the newly amalgamated city of Kawartha Lakes. I'm not going to talk about the de-amalgamation issue. What I'm going to talk about is this: It is my understanding that there were seven very good people in that community who wanted to be mayor—seven very good people. I'm not here to attack anybody. One was in favour of the amalgamation; six were against the amalgamation. Who got elected, with about 20% of the vote? The person who was in favour of the amalgamation.

All I'm saying by that—and they're all good people; I'm not here to attack anybody personally. But the reality is that no one should hold office with the potential of having only about 20% or 25% of the people supporting them. I think that this is a very reasonable way, a very straightforward way in which we can at least be assured—whether we're talking about our local communities, whether we're talking about provincial representation or federal representation—that the person we send to any of these places has the majority support in that community. It may not be the first support that they give to somebody, but at least, at the end of the day, that person will have the support, at some level, of 50% or more of the people.

I think this is a very good way of doing it. I think, for many of the reasons that the member has mentioned as well, that it will cause much less—particularly with people who are ideologically aligned—controversy or attacks between one another. I think it is high time that we brought our system, the democratic system that we're all so proud of, into the 21st century. This kind of initiative should not only be adopted locally here in Toronto and throughout Ontario but also at the provincial and federal level. The sooner it happens, the better the kind of discussions that we're going to have on an ongoing basis in places like this, which, quite frankly, on most days, is lacking. I think we can all agree with that.

I'll tell you, I've been a municipal politician, and the kind of debates that we had municipally, at most times, were at a much higher level than anything I've heard here or, indeed, in the Parliament in Ottawa as well. So let's support this bill, and let's make it happen as soon as possible, hopefully even this year.

1600

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I first want to congratulate the member from Scarborough–Guildwood and certainly the people in the gallery who are interested in this issue. It's an interesting debate this afternoon, and I would say that it is important. Democracy is sacred, actually. In the very limited time I have, I want to provide a little optional view of the world.

The history is that in 2007 there was a referendum on this issue. It was defeated. In fact, the city of Toronto

voted against it. It has recently had a review, the referendum, if you may recall. Maybe you weren't aware of it, but those are the facts. It's important that it has been discussed a number of times.

I will say this, too: The member from Scarborough–Guildwood was recently in a by-election. Now, in that by-election, if you know how this ranked-order ballot works—she only won by a few votes. Our member, I think, was Ken Kirupa. If there was a ranked-order ballot, and there were three candidates, and the third person dropped off, and their votes were for our member, that member would have won.

Hon. John Gerretsen: No, she would have won.

Mr. John O'Toole: No. Actually, if you look at the numbers, the same thing—the Attorney General just said here that he supports this thing. Well, Kathleen Wynne was not elected to be Premier by the people of Ontario. In fact, she was not elected by the people of Ontario. This is the unusual and arcane thing that happens in a democracy.

I think there are a couple of other members who should be able to look at the history here. I know the leader of the Green Party, Mike Schreiner, is here, or was here. These people want a voice, and they should be able to work within the system today. I'm not confident that this government listens.

Now, it doesn't matter who gets there, but Premier Wynne thinks—between her and the NDP right now, we have a coalition government in Ontario. They don't have a majority; they have a minority.

Mr. Jonah Schein: John, speak to the bill.

Mr. John O'Toole: That's very relevant, Mr. Schein. It's very relevant to this, because when you look at trying to change the rules, you're ignoring the history of the debate. There have been several large discussions and referendums on it across Canada, and they simply don't get it. I understand that the minority parties want to change the rules because they never form government.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I had the opportunity several years ago to travel with other members of this Legislature across Canada and, indeed, into Europe to look at the mixed member proportional system and how to bring proportional representation to Ontario. We looked at many ballot systems, including the ranked-ballot system. In its wisdom, the community and groups of Ontarians who got together to look at it rejected this system in favour of something that is used in New Zealand and Germany called mixed member proportional.

But I am still mindful of the ranked-ballot system and where it's in place, in places like Australia. To me, it is not the perfect system. But I want to tell everybody here, if you're worried at this point, that I am going to vote for this. I am going to vote for this because it is a better system than what we have today. Is it the best system? No. But it is a better system. It's a better system because it can be modified to work for the city of Toronto and, indeed, almost every single municipality across this province.

When I looked at the member from Scarborough's bill, Bill 166, I also looked at Bill 163, from my colleague Jonah Schein. I liked his bill a little bit better, not just because he's a New Democrat but because it allowed other options for the city of Toronto to explore. I'm hoping that this bill will allow those same other options.

It is important that this bill pass here today. It is important that this bill be sent to committee. It is important that certain amendments be made. Most importantly, it has to go on to the city of Toronto for a real discussion, not only amongst the council but possibly including a referendum of the people. This needs to be seized upon. People have to agree to do it, and I'm hopeful that one day they will.

One of the reasons I support this bill is because, with just a little tinkering, it can change very rapidly from a system of ranked ballot to one of multiple member constituency with a ranked ballot. That is the system that they use in Ireland. It means that you have four or five or six positions within a larger constituency. When you do the ranked ballot, you actually get proportional representation. That is what we need to look for because when you get proportional representation, like in Ireland, it gives opportunities to people of colour, women and others who are not ordinarily elected to find themselves on the top of the ballot. The ranked ballot does not always succeed in that. Look at Australia for that.

But I'm hopeful, always, that we can take a system that is being proposed, we can modify it, we can improve it, and people of good conscience can make it work.

The ranked ballot initiative is a good one. It will, in the end, result in fairer elections, less confrontation, a potential council that works together, and a mayor and council which we all share. Everyone in this room, including some of my Tory friends, need to support this initiative for the sake of democracy.

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

Mr. Steven Del Duca: This is another great opportunity for me to stand in my place here in this chamber this afternoon to speak regarding the item that's been brought forward by my colleague the member from Scarborough–Guildwood. I'm very happy to have this opportunity, as I always am, to stand and speak about a matter that's being deliberated on by those of us who are privileged to serve in this House.

In the time I have, I want to spend just a moment, Speaker, if I could, talking about the individual who has brought this bill forward, because this initiative, this bill speaks to the level of leadership that she has brought to this chamber and to the governing caucus since first being elected just last August, I believe it was, August 2013, and the work that she's undertaken. You see evidence of that—we all see evidence of that—in this particular piece of legislation that's being introduced in the House today that speaks to the history that she's had working very hard both in the community of Scarborough–Guildwood but also across the broader community of the GTA and beyond to demonstrate leadership

and to demonstrate how important it is for all of us to be involved in our communities, to better our communities and to find creative and innovative ways to make those improvements that will have lasting impacts.

Many of the other speakers who've come before me today, Speaker, including the Attorney General and the member from Beaches–East York, have spoken very eloquently about the need for moving forward with this. Of course, I also strongly support passage of this particular bill here at second reading. It's important for it to get to committee. It's important for the members of the committee to which, hopefully, it will be referred to have a chance to take a look at the bill, to examine and analyze the implications of the bill. It's important as well to send a message to those who are not only here today in the galleries but also watching at home to understand that we are a government that has a history of working hard to empower municipalities to make the choices that make the most sense for them.

I know this is an issue, as the Attorney General mentioned, that from time to time elicits a wide variety of reaction in some people who are nervous about changes, especially fundamental changes, to a system, but I think we see very clear evidence that the time has come for this Legislature to empower the province's largest municipality to give the people who are represented at that council the opportunity to take a look at this.

The member from Beaches–East York did reference that perhaps this is also the kind of measure that would require—not require, but perhaps this is the kind of measure that could also be put to the people directly by way of a referendum. I think there is a wide variety, a whole host of potential roots for this particular measure, this concept or idea to take upon receiving support here at second reading and upon going to committee, being considered by committee and reporting out of committee.

It's really important that everybody, even those who have concerns, including the member from the Conservative caucus who spoke just a second ago who has concerns—I think it's important for all of us to keep an open mind. This is about forward progression. It's about an evolution. It's about improving and enhancing our democracy in the way in which we elect people, and as the member from Scarborough–Guildwood mentioned, it's also about doing what we can to take some of that inadvertent tension in the system sometimes—it's an adversarial system. There's no doubt about that. I enjoy the partisanship just as much as the next person, sometimes perhaps more than the average person, but from time to time, when we're dealing with such important matters as electing our leaders municipally and beyond, we have to do what we can to make sure the system is as strong, as fair and as effective as it can possibly be.

With that, I will say once again how proud I am to serve alongside the member from Scarborough–Guildwood. She is already working very, very hard to leave a lasting and positive impact on this place. I want to echo the comments of the Attorney General and some of the other members who have spoken: I encourage all members of this House to join with us to support this

measure, to get it through second reading, to get it to committee and to empower the city of Toronto to make a decision.

1610

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I rise to speak on Bill 166, introduced by the member from Scarborough–Guildwood. While the member may have good intentions to introduce such measures, I have concerns with the proposed legislation to give the city of Toronto the option of adopting a ranked ballot system to conduct its municipal elections as early as 2018.

In my riding of Thornhill, the city of Vaughan portion elects three regional councillors based on the top vote-getters, while the city of Markham side elects four regional members, also on a city-wide vote.

Last night, actually, I spent some time discussing this with my 21-year-old son, Josh. He actually made a chart for me that I'm happy to share with people—I can email it to you—that in this ranked ballot system, the more candidates that we have in the pool, the less fair it becomes. His chart actually shows that a candidate—if there are eight candidates, for example, which is what he did—we had eight candidates and I think about 15 voters—the candidate that got the most first votes and the most second did not win. That's a problem for me, and I think that that's not what people expect to see happen when they go and vote on election day.

How does this improve democracy? I'm using the candidate from Scarborough–Guildwood's own words that this would improve democracy. After all, we have a Premier right now who was not elected by the people of Ontario. She was elected at a Liberal Party convention at a time when, like now, the Liberal Party was in a minority government position. To me, that's a democratic problem.

The voters understand the first-past-the-post system. If they understand the system, they're more likely to go out on election day and actually vote. They vote for the candidate of their choice, and they want to see that candidate elected in what they perceive as a fair system. The candidate who wins the most votes should be elected to that position, just as I was on February 13 last month.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I will be supporting Bill 166. I want to congratulate the activists from the Ranked Ballot Initiative, many of whom are here, and the supporters who took the time to come and listen to the debate. As my friend from Davenport said, it doesn't happen all too often that we get so many people in the Legislature, so it's a very good thing.

The member from Scarborough–Guildwood made some good arguments, obviously, and there's no point in repeating them. My friend from Davenport introduced a bill and made very strong arguments that I strongly support, so I won't be repeating the arguments, other than to say that I support their views.

I want to make reference to the columnist from the Toronto Star, Regg Cohn, who talked about, “Ad-

mittedly, it's never easy to achieve democratic reforms." Then he argues, "People don't like change."

He's right. People do not like change in general, and it's difficult to achieve it. I recall, when we have the debate around mixed member proportional a couple of elections ago, that New Democrats were strongly supportive. I was looking forward to the Premier, who said that we put it out for the vote in the debate, and he didn't comment on it once. I don't remember too many Liberals talking about it either; God bless. The Tories, of course, were clearly opposed. But New Democrats supported a change of a system that said that people have a right to be able to vote for who they want and know that their vote will not be wasted. That was the point of the mixed member proportional system. I still support it very strongly.

At the municipal level, we don't have a party system, so you couldn't, in my view, have a mixed member proportional system because it doesn't work as well, except to say that the member from Beaches–East York pointed out how the system could work and how you could make it better. The point of his remarks is that we have a number of different views, and that's good. Debate is very good. We need to allow the city to have the debate and the province here, when we have hearings. We should never be afraid of the debate. That's why it's a good thing that this is before us.

I will be supporting the bill, clearly, when it's sent to hearings, so we can hear from any of the people who are here and others who have views about how we improve our electoral system.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: First, I want to join in thanking my friend and former CEO of a not-for-profit in this field, CivicAction. We missed each other when I was the president of the Canadian Urban Institute. Thank you for this. It's nice to see that, when people come here with clear eyes on the democratic experience, they don't lose that. This is a really important piece of legislation.

I'm sure my friend Dave Meslin is somewhere in the House. I was searching for him and couldn't find him.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: He's here. He's downstairs. He's watching.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: He's watching. Okay. Dave, I want to thank you. I've often said that the civility of our society is dependent on the quality of our citizenship. There are very few people that can actually claim title to the word "citizen" like my friend Dave Meslin, because he's someone who gets up every day, with many of the other folks who are here who I am enormously indebted to, and actually thinks about the conditions of the people in their neighbourhood and their lives, the quality of their democracy. They look at how they can make a difference. They live not in the middle of their own lives but in the middle of other people's lives and try to see the world through different perspectives, to live outside their comfort zone and to live with people who may have different perspectives. God knows, in our houses of democracy, we could use a lot more of that.

This is an interesting piece of legislation. When I first ran for city council, I got 36% of the vote. My other two opponents got 28% and 27%. It was kind of touchy in the 1980s in the prairies to run as an openly gay man, so I've always been curious: If we had had ranked ballots, what would have happened? So in supporting this, there's not much self-interest. By the time I got elected as a councillor, and they had two or three years of me, they kind of liked me, because I got 83% of the vote. That was pretty intimidating to anyone who was going to run against me. I don't think, after I was an incumbent, I ever got less than 80% of the vote. I wouldn't run against someone who was getting 80% of the vote, so it's not a very democratic process, and this is the best and fairest reform I've seen.

I'm very proud that I represent, I think, one of the three constituencies that nearly got us mixed proportional representation here, which I still believe in. I'd also like us to do more things here—

Mr. Michael Prue: Mine, too.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Mine, too.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yeah, Parkdale and—the waterfront family here, we saw the light where others didn't. But I believe that that reform, had it passed, would have made this a healthier and more democratic place. I'm hoping this is the start of more things.

When I ran for mayor of Winnipeg, a city of 700,000 people, I could only spend \$150,000. The other great egregious offence to our democracy is the lack of spending control, which would eviscerate this if we didn't have very significant spending caps. We have five former mayors over here, recovering mayors: Mayor Gerretsen of Kingston, former Mayor Chiarelli of Ottawa, Mayor Crack of North Glengarry, myself and my friend Ted McMeekin, the former mayor of Waterdown. We will all tell you that we lived in simpler times with spending caps, and none of us needed the kind of money to do that. I think that's the other piece, that this is important.

I have to just deal with the Conservatives. I'm disappointed that there isn't more support over there. It does not surprise me. This is the party that downloaded health, social services and highways on to municipalities. That is the party that forced amalgamation. My city is an enormous city of 2.7 million people—unwillingly forced upon it by the party opposite when it was in power. They stripped our school boards of local democracy, and our school trustees have no authority. So it does not surprise me that the skunk at the garden party again is the party opposite.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Scarborough–Guildwood.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Speaker, I want to utilize the one minute—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

1620

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday: Well, you know, this is an interesting afternoon. We've got a province that's \$280

billion in debt. They've got an annual deficit of almost \$11 billion, and here they are discussing changing the voting system of the city of Toronto, and the other matter they wanted to bring forward is to try to pry some more money out of the federal government.

What is wrong with you people? Why aren't we dealing with the big problems that we have, that are going to help improve the quality of life for the people who live in the province of Ontario? That's the motion that I put forward, and I have a feeling that people here could care less. If we're going to care about some things, let's get important things on the table. This is not one of them.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. Further debate? Further debate? Last call for further debate.

The member for Scarborough–Guildwood, you have two minutes.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Speaker. I believe I have one minute on my original—

Interjection: Two

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Two?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): That's not allowed.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: All right. I want to thank all the members who have spoken to this bill. I want to say that this is about local democracy, and we see that in action in this room today, in this chamber today, with all of the people who have come forward who have worked for years on this motion at city council and now this bill that is before you today. I want to thank them for their leadership and for their engagement on this issue.

I understand, Speaker, that over 8,000 people have already signed an online petition in support of Bill 166, and there is more to come.

I want to thank the member from York–Simcoe, who talked about choice and civic responsibility, because that's what this bill is all about; the member from Davenport—I really appreciate your support for this bill, and I know that you have also been engaging on this issue as well with your community; the member from Kingston—I have so much respect for the AG and for the experience and the history that he brings and really looking at how we can broaden this for all of Ontario; the member from Durham, who really—you talked about the discussion and the consultation and that is embedded in this bill; the member from Beaches–East York, who talked about fairer elections and the importance of democracy, and I think that's what we're aiming for here today; the member from Thornhill—you are a new member and we welcome your ideas; the member from Trinity–Spadina, supporting democratic reform and how difficult change is, and that's why we're elected by the people, to really lead that change; the member from Toronto Centre, I want to thank you for your ongoing support and for your leadership.

Today is Toronto's 180th birthday and I think this would be a great bill to support.

As always, my colleague and seatmate, the member from Vaughan, thank you for your support.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

FEDERAL TRANSFER PAYMENTS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 76, standing in the name of Mr. Dickson.

Mr. Dickson has moved private members' notice of motion 62.

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

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. We'll take the vote at the end of the next two.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA RESPONSABILITÉ FINANCIÈRE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Holyday moved second reading of Bill 160, An Act to amend the Financial Accountability Officer Act, 2013 with respect to reports concerning alternative service delivery of public services.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a bunch of noes.

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Tough call. We'll take the vote at the end.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I need a noise meter in here.

TORONTO RANKED BALLOT ELECTIONS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR UN MODE DE SCRUTIN PRÉFÉRENTIEL POUR TORONTO

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Hunter has moved second reading of Bill 166, An Act to amend the City of Toronto Act, 2006 to allow the City of Toronto to pass a ranked ballot by-law for city council elections. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon):

Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is referred to— the member from Scarborough–Guildwood?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: The committee on social policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to social policy. Agreed? Agreed.

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

The division bells rang from 1626 to 1631.

FEDERAL TRANSFER PAYMENTS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Dickson has moved private members' notice of motion number 62. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Dickson, Joe	Marchese, Rosario
Armstrong, Teresa J.	DiNovo, Cheri	McMeekin, Ted
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Fife, Catherine	Milloy, John
Bisson, Gilles	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Murray, Glen R.
Cansfield, Donna H.	Hatfield, Percy	Prue, Michael
Chan, Michael	Hoskins, Eric	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	Hunter, Mitzie	Schein, Jonah
Coteau, Michael	Jaczek, Helena	Singh, Jagmeet
Crack, Grant	Jeffrey, Linda	Tabuns, Peter
Damerla, Dipika	Kwinter, Monte	Taylor, Monique
Del Duca, Steven	MacCharles, Tracy	Vanthof, John
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Wong, Soo
Dhillon, Vic	Mantha, Michael	Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please stand and remain standing.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Nicholls, Rick
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	O'Toole, John
Clark, Steve	MacLaren, Jack	Pettapiece, Randy
Fedeli, Victor	MacLeod, Lisa	Scott, Laurie
Hardeman, Ernie	Martow, Gila	Smith, Todd
Harris, Michael	Milligan, Rob E.	Walker, Bill
Holyday, Douglas C.	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 42; the nays are 21.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Open the doors. Let the members in.

FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY
ACT, 2014LOI DE 2014 SUR
LA RESPONSABILITÉ FINANCIÈRE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Holyday has moved second reading of Bill 160, An Act to amend the Financial Accountability Officer Act, 2013 with respect to reports concerning alternative service delivery of public services.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Nicholls, Rick
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	O'Toole, John
Clark, Steve	MacLaren, Jack	Pettapiece, Randy
Fedeli, Victor	MacLeod, Lisa	Scott, Laurie
Hardeman, Ernie	Martow, Gila	Smith, Todd
Harris, Michael	Milligan, Rob E.	Walker, Bill
Holyday, Douglas C.	Munro, Julia	Wilson, Jim

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Dickson, Joe	Marchese, Rosario
Armstrong, Teresa J.	DiNovo, Cheri	McMeekin, Ted
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Fife, Catherine	Milloy, John
Bisson, Gilles	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Moridi, Reza
Bradley, James J.	Gerretsen, John	Murray, Glen R.
Cansfield, Donna H.	Hatfield, Percy	Prue, Michael
Chan, Michael	Hoskins, Eric	Qaadri, Shafiq
Colle, Mike	Hunter, Mitzie	Schein, Jonah
Coteau, Michael	Jaczek, Helena	Singh, Jagmeet
Crack, Grant	Jeffrey, Linda	Tabuns, Peter
Damerla, Dipika	Kwinter, Monte	Taylor, Monique
Del Duca, Steven	MacCharles, Tracy	Vanthof, John
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Wong, Soo
Dhillon, Vic	Mantha, Michael	Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 21; the nays are 42.

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

Second reading negatived.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECTION OF PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION ACT, 2014LOI DE 2014 SUR LA PROTECTION
DU DROIT À LA PARTICIPATION
AUX AFFAIRES PUBLIQUES

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 18, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 83, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest / Projet de loi 83, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires, la Loi sur la diffamation et la Loi sur l'exercice des compétences légales afin de protéger l'expression sur les affaires d'intérêt public.

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

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll just wait 30 seconds to let the room clear.

The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to stand in this place today and to speak on Bill 83, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expressions on matters of public interest. Basic-

ally, what we're talking about here is SLAPP suits. That's a strategic lawsuit against public participation.

This isn't a new issue. In fact, our leader, Andrea Horwath, brought this issue to the forefront in 2008 when she introduced the Protection of Public Participation Act to encourage more participation in public debate without fear of legal repercussions. Although there was a Liberal majority at that time—and right now they seem very in a hurry to pass this—that bill didn't pass.

Despite what the Liberals are saying, the government has only allowed five days of debate since June 2013. For the people at home, the government controls the agenda. It's not the other side; it's the government that controls the agenda. If they wanted to push a bill through—certainly a bill like this—they could do a better job than what they're doing now. They're basically out of control of their own agenda.

I specifically want to speak to this bill, because in my riding, many of my residents and myself personally have had experience with SLAPP suits. I'd like to recount one experience that many members in my riding have had and that I was also involved in. If you want a detailed description of what happened with the Adams mine in our riding, you should read the book that won the Speaker's Book Award last night, *Unlikely Radicals*, by Charlie Angus. It will tell you the whole 15-, 20-year story of Adams mine, but I'm going to do a short version of what happened with the SLAPP suit.

1640

Adams mine was destined to be a garbage dump for the city of Toronto. It went through the environmental assessment, a scoping environmental assessment, and it was given a licence by the Ministry of the Environment.

I was president of the Timiskaming Federation of Agriculture. We had been involved for years with this project, starting when I was on the public liaison committee struck by the city of Toronto, Metro Toronto, and I represented agriculture. I had been involved with this project for years.

After the project had gotten its licence, new information became available to us that cast some doubt on whether the conditions under which that licence was granted were actually accurate.

We wrote a letter to the Ministry of the Environment, alerting them to those conditions. We were rebuffed. At that point, the federation of agriculture, with myself as president, held a press conference in the media studio here. It was organized by my colleague from Timmins—James Bay, who, at that time, wasn't my colleague but he was a friend of mine. At that time, we alerted the government—at that time, it was Premier Eves—that we had discovered new information and that we were going to ask that the licence be retracted, at which time the proponents of the project launched legal action against me personally and against the federation of agriculture.

Under this legislation, the way I see it, that legal action would have come quickly to a judge, and because the site was licensed, I think the judge would have said—and I'm not going to presuppose a judge, but I think the

judge would have said, "This legal action should be able to go ahead," because we didn't have the proof yet; we'd made an allegation, and the company sued us. I think it should have gone ahead, which it did. We were sued for \$10 million. I was sued personally, and if my friends and neighbours hadn't come forward to help me plant my crops and pay for my inputs, I would have gone bankrupt.

A little while later, we came forward with the report by Dr. Ken Howard, who is now head of geology for the University of Toronto. He's one of the most respected hydrogeologists in this country. He came forward with a report saying that he couldn't prove that our allegations were correct, but that neither could the MOE; they should not have approved the site based on the information in front of them.

At that point, there was an election, and the McGuinty Liberal government was elected. All of a sudden, we went from being rebuffed by the MOE to the MOE calling the federation of agriculture, asking what our opinion was. It was totally different.

Right after the government was elected, the Adams Mine Lake Act was proclaimed, saying that, basically, no garbage could ever be put in Adams mine.

So everyone was happy, except the federation of agriculture and myself, as president. I spoke against it when the committee came. I forget what hotel it was, but the committee came, and I was one of few people who spoke against the Adams Mine Lake Act, not because I wanted Adams mine to be a dump but because they'd never come to find out why it was approved in the first place.

At that point, the lawsuit against me continued. The Adams Mine Lake Act proclaimed that it was never going to be a garbage dump, but the lawsuit against me, that stopped me from getting bank loans, that basically was crushing my business, continued and there was no way for me to get that lawsuit out from over top of my business, Speaker.

If this bill had been there then, at that point, I could have applied, as president of the federation, and said, "Okay, wait a second. At this point, this legal action has no validity. I am not harming their business, because they don't have a business." At that point, this bill could have kicked in and could have saved me two or three years of grief.

Interestingly enough, the only way I got out of this lawsuit is that I had to run for provincial Parliament in 2007, and a week before the writ was dropped, the lawsuit was dropped, because I would have been able to go out all over the country. Oh fine, the Liberals stopped the Adams mine, but they didn't stop people from being sued. They just walked away and let myself and members of the federation of agriculture—they just let us be broken.

Under the Adams Mine Lake Act, all the investors were fully paid, and I don't have a problem with that. They got a licence, and their licence was taken away. They were fully paid. But there was nothing in the Adams Mine Lake Act to stop that legal action that was crushing the federation of agriculture members. As far as

I know, until this act was brought forward, there was nothing to change that. So on behalf of people like us who had to fight issues like this—and it has happened later in my riding with two other issues—this is a good start.

I've been contacted specifically by the forestry sector, and I think they have legitimate concerns. They're worried that they will be attacked and have no recourse. But I truly believe, like I said at the start, that when we first made that allegation and didn't have the proof, that legal action should have continued.

In our party, we don't believe that Bill 83 should render people—that they can say whatever they want and be free from harm. That's certainly not our view of what anti-SLAPP legislation should be. Anti-SLAPP should protect the public if they believe they are making valid concerns, and if those valid concerns can't be substantiated, then the litigation could continue. But if those valid concerns can be substantiated, it should be brought to a court much quicker. What happens, really, with these lawsuits is that they sue you for incredible amounts of money and grind it out in court, because they know that the legal costs will force you to throw up your hands whether you're right or whether you're not.

I was very fortunate that in my community, the businesses and the farms, went door to door and collected thousands and thousands of dollars to pay our legal bills, because they believed. But if it hadn't been for that, there's a good chance that the new information would never have been brought to light. That's something we have to keep in mind.

This legislation is very important. It should be brought forward. It might have to be amended to make it stronger in certain areas and to protect all parties, because you know what? Corporations aren't evil. Everyone has a different—but corporations aren't evil. Some of the things they do aren't always welcome. But this bill should go forward to committee, and we should go from there.

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, it is very interesting to listen to the member opposite about his own personal experiences in this regard, and I guess he has underscored the reason for having this kind of legislation more so than any other.

I've heard from a lot of individuals on both sides of the issue over the last two to three months. Just today, I received a letter from the Ontario Bar Association. They speak on behalf of 15,000 practising lawyers who are members of the Ontario Bar Association. They say, categorically, "I respectfully urge you at this time to allow the bill to proceed to committee for further review." They want this bill.

Speaker, I've heard from people on the other side as well. I've made it quite clear to them that what's intended with the bill is quite simply this: If someone feels that an action has been brought against them just for making a public expression on an issue of public interest, then they

can apply to a judge who will make a determination within 60 days, by reviewing the case, as to whether or not it is brought for that purpose and that purpose alone. If a judge is convinced that it's not just brought for the purpose of making a public expression, then he will allow the case to go on.

There has been an awful lot of misunderstanding about the purpose of the bill. The purpose of the bill is quite simply that within a very short period of time an adjudication can be made as to whether or not the person is being sued just for having the right to express their opinion in public about a particular issue.

1650

Once again, I urge everyone here—the Conservatives are in favour of the bill, too; at least they were the last time they spoke about it—to let the bill go to committee. We've had five or six days of debate on it now. Surely to goodness, on a bill that we can all agree on, if we want to move it forward, let's take it to committee so that they can further study the matter and make the necessary amendments to make the bill even stronger. I think all of us can agree on that. Let us make it happen here today.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I thank the member from Timiskaming—Cochrane. It sounded very much like the circumstance today, and I've made a point with the Minister of the Environment—we had a meeting in the press gallery representing my constituents, who are opposed to a mega transformer station being built on the Oak Ridges moraine, which constitutes a risk to the environment. It's on top of the Oak Ridges moraine. It's five large transformers, each about 400,000 pounds, 45 feet high and right on top of the Oak Ridges moraine—five of them. They had a video of a recent transformer explosion.

These young people—they're not connected to me except they happen to be my constituents—came to me, and I've written to the Minister of the Environment and the Environmental Commissioner and all that stuff. I put on the record that Hydro One just bullied them; they had the public meeting and all that stuff, but they're just going ahead with it. They called it a minor project; it's the largest one in Canada. Hydro One has a presumptive attitude that they're going to score the puck and ignore us. These people got the brush-off.

They went to a professor, Professor John Cherry from Guelph university, the same as the NDP member from Timiskaming—Cochrane who just spoke, and that expert—they paid him; nothing to do with me. I did ask the minister for funding for them, but they never got it. He said—this is Professor John Cherry from Guelph university—that insufficient study had been done to protect the aquifer. They're going ahead with it. The minister, in the silence of Christmas and New Year's and people not paying attention, approved it.

All they were asking for was a full environmental assessment, a bump up to part II. The minister, I put on the record today, ignored them. He gave them the brush-off. They had a press thing today and I am fortunate that

our environmental critic showed up, and a few other people.

I'm saying here, without any bias at all, that this is another example of a process, in this case the government with its bully pulpit, using the SLAPP method to put voices down.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to congratulate the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane for his personal story. It was very, very convincing and courageous. It speaks to what citizens do when they believe strongly in something and it speaks to the incredibly, powerful interest groups that will prevent any member, any citizen from disagreeing with them. And it's a good story to be told over and over again. There are powerful interest groups in this society that are generally connected to the Conservative Party and often connected to the Liberal Party as well. God bless.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I know that the Tories are for the little guy. I know that. It's beautiful to listen to you guys. Every day these days I hear an agenda of the Conservative Party in defence of the little guy—beautiful—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask the member to speak to the bill.

Mr. Rosario Marchese:—while all along you are the party of the powerful interest groups.

I think this bill is a good thing that we should be passing right away. It reflects the concerns raised by our leader in 2008 when she introduced the Protection of Public Participation Act to encourage more participation in public debate without fear of legal repercussion, and so it's moving in that direction many, many years later.

I remind the government that you control the agenda. If you want this bill to pass, make it so. Make it happen. Don't blame the other political parties for not advancing an agenda or passing a bill that you put forward. You control the agenda. Move it along, without saying it's the other folks who are stalling this. It's you that are stalling it. Move it along.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I think we've heard from all three parties this afternoon on Bill 83. I agree with the previous speaker that this is something that should move along. If we were able to have a vote and move it along right now, that certainly would suit this side of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane, you have two minutes.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to be able to stand here and respond to the Attorney General, the member from Durham, the member from Trinity–Spadina and the member from Oakville.

As I was sitting here listening to the responses, I think this is the first time it hit me: that we have an incredible

privilege standing in this House, because we can say things without fear of recrimination. We can say things that we believe and that can be proved without recrimination, but without this bill, that's not possible for the people outside these walls. That's one of the reasons that this bill should proceed to committee and should be further discussed, because I know that, as we speak, there are cases where people's lives are being destroyed for doing what they believe is the right thing.

In echo of the Attorney General, this bill hopefully, if it goes through committee, when it goes, shouldn't be designed to quash legal action. This bill should be designed to bring a case forward much more quickly so it can be decided whether the case should proceed, because that's what SLAPP suits are designed to do: They're designed to get a case into the court and grind it through the courts forever, and you cannot afford the legal costs to protect yourself.

When it happened to me, I was given 30 days to recant, and then they would drop the suit, and when I didn't recant, they sued me personally for \$10 million. I don't have \$10 million; I still don't have \$10 million. But you have to be able to defend yourself, so please pass this bill.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: I am very pleased to rise in this House this afternoon, Thursday afternoon at about 5 o'clock, to speak to second reading of Bill 83, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest, standing in the name of the Attorney General. I want to compliment him for being present in the House this afternoon to hear the debate, to listen to the members of the opposition, as well as the government members, offer their opinions. In fact, he and I arrived at Queen's Park at the same time this morning. It was good to see him walking over to the Legislature—no entourage; no car and driver; just walking over like a regular person. To see the Attorney General coming to Queen's Park like that—I was really impressed.

I must say to the Attorney General that it has been a pleasure to work with him over the last number of years. I guess he was first elected in 1995, if I'm not mistaken.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Yes, that's right.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Yes. He has been here for a long time and he has made a significant contribution. I know that he has expressed to his constituents his desire to move on to another phase of his life, but he has served here with distinction, and he deserves enormous credit for that.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you; thank you. Let the bill pass.

Mr. Ted Arnott: However, Bill 83: a different matter.

I know that our caucus has participated in this debate, and we have a number of members who wish to continue debating this bill over the course of second reading, and that's our right, of course. We have an obligation to bring

forward our views and the views of our constituents, and in opposition, of course, to a large degree, expressing the concerns that we do here about government legislation. But, at the same time, I think there's some level of agreement that what the government is doing is indeed responding to a serious problem.

Our caucus has said that we believe that the rights of individuals to express their opinions must be upheld, especially on matters of public interest, and we've said that we agree that SLAPPs, as they are known—SLAPPs being strategic lawsuits against public participation—while they are relatively rare, when they do occur, they can, in fact, ruin people's lives. We understand that, and we do not think it's appropriate for residents to fear having a voice in the growth of their communities—to have that voice silenced.

We also believe that SLAPPs are, by definition, unfounded and stand little chance for succeeding, so they can needlessly bog down Ontario's court system. As such, we see Bill 83, on the surface at least, appearing to be an effort on the part of the government to address the issue. However, as the Attorney General has pointed out, there will be opportunity for further discussion when this bill, most likely, goes to a standing committee of the Legislature. I would hope that, over the course of that process, there are extensive public hearings, assuming that there are groups and individuals that want to come forward and express their views. Those views might be supportive of the bill; they might be against the bill. Some of the expressions of interest might offer suggestions for improvements to strengthen the bill and make it more effective, make it work better. We recognize that that process is important, and we would obviously participate in it.

1700

I also think it's important to put on the record what this bill is intended to do, our understanding of it, and I would welcome a response from the government. As I understand it, Bill 83 amends the Courts of Justice Act to create a process to determine if a lawsuit is in fact a SLAPP, a strategic lawsuit against public participation, and if so, to dismiss it accordingly. We know that a SLAPP is a lawsuit that is pursued for the sole purpose of silencing or punishing those with an opposing viewpoint. This effect is also sometimes referred to as "litigation chill." Part of what defines a SLAPP is the fact that it is a meritless case, and it's intended more to intimidate or punish the defendant rather than to truly seek justice for a wrong suffered by a plaintiff. Typically, SLAPPs are withdrawn shortly before they go to trial; however, by this time, they have served their intended purpose by those who bring the lawsuit in that they force the defendant to go through an extended period of concern and duress and often at great cost financially to defend themselves in the courts.

Bill 83, as we are told, establishes a new legal procedure that can be used if someone is sued for voicing their opinion on matters of public interest. If enacted, Bill 83 would allow the defendant in this situation to move a

motion that would allow them the chance to prove to a judge that the legal proceeding brought against them arises from a communication they made regarding the public interest. If the judge was satisfied that this is the case, the legal proceeding would be dismissed, as it would in effect be determined to be a SLAPP. However, if the judge was not satisfied, the legal proceeding would proceed. The judge would also be able to reward compensation regarding costs on the motion if they deemed it was appropriate. If the judge dismisses the legal proceeding due to the motion and finds that the suing party brought the proceeding in bad faith, the judge may award the defendant damages as the judge considers appropriate.

If the suing party has proceedings before a tribunal, the defendant who has moved a motion under Bill 83 may also supply a copy of the motion that was filed with the court to the tribunal, and the tribunal proceeding shall be stayed until the motion is dealt with in court. Bill 83 also places, as the Attorney General said, a 60-day timeline on the hearing of the motion so that the matter would be dealt with in a timely manner. This is a key factor in eliminating SLAPPs' negative effect on the court system, and it's also important for countering the effect of potentially having tribunal proceedings stayed while the motion is before the courts.

We're told that the bill also amends the Libel and Slander Act to establish that the current privileges regarding oral or written communications possessed by individuals who have a direct interest in a matter of public interest are also extended to media representations or communications of said individuals' oral or written communication. Basically, right now, if someone has a direct interest in a matter of public interest, they can discuss it and be fairly protected from legal action. However, if a reporter or someone else were to write about what that person said or publish it, then they would be susceptible to legal action, because they could be seen as not having a direct interest in the matter. Bill 83 extends protections to include individuals and reporters recounting or repeating any discussions on the matter. The bill also amends the Statutory Powers Procedure Act to provide that submissions for costs shall be made in writing.

We also know, and I think the Attorney General pointed this out when he led off the debate at second reading, that this bill is a reaction and a response on the part of the government to the report from 2010, now four years ago, to the Attorney General, or, I guess, his predecessor, from the Anti-SLAPP Advisory Panel. This panel was chaired by Dean Mayo Moran of the faculty of law, University of Toronto, and was composed of Peter Downard, who is, I understand, a partner at Fasken Martineau's law firm, and Brian MacLeod Rogers, who is a Toronto media lawyer.

The panel was established by the Attorney General to seek advice on how the Ontario justice system could be revised to prevent the misuse of the courts and other agencies by SLAPP cases while at the same time preserving the appropriate recourse for those who are caused harm by the expressions of another.

Bill 83 is based on a substantial number of the recommendations of the 2010 report, I understand. The only aspect of the report that was apparently not included in the bill is a section of the report which recommends automatic cost awards and payments upon resolution of a motion under the bill. Ministry officials apparently stated to our caucus during a technical briefing that stakeholders were hesitant to include this section, as it tampered with already-established costing and payment methods within the legal system.

We know, Mr. Speaker, that SLAPPs are relatively rare. They are not something that is common in the justice system, as far as we know, but there have been a number of very high-profile SLAPP cases that have garnered significant media attention. Three of those examples, I'm told, are the Big Bay Point development; the Aurora mayor apparently suing opponents three weeks before election day; and the East Gwillimbury mayor suing critics. The Big Bay Point case, in particular, was cited as a driving force behind the anti-SLAPP efforts.

In summary, this bill, the government tells us, is intended to combat SLAPPS in Ontario. It establishes a formal legal process for assessing suits to determine if they are SLAPPS and for disposing with them if so.

Bill 83, if enacted, the government tells us, would help better define what SLAPPS are by building judicial precedent via the new legal process. The bill would also assist minimally with court backlogs, as it would ensure that meritless SLAPP cases are not using scarce court resources, and these cases would be dismissed.

That concludes the time that I have, but I certainly look forward to this debate as members continue to put their comments on the record, and we look forward to seeing this bill in committee and hearing from the public to ensure that Bill 83 is strengthened.

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

Mr. Jonah Schein: Mr. Speaker, in the interests of moving this forward, I'm going to just let this pass for now. Thank you.

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

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It was a pleasure to hear from the member for Wellington-Halton Hills.

We've had over eight hours of debate now in this Legislature over this bill, Bill 83. It's time to send it to committee, where the real work is done, where we can hear from deputants, do clause-by-clause amendments, if there are any, and then bring it back here for discussion again. I just want to emphasize that it's time to get this bill moving forward.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I do appreciate the comments and the civility of the member from Waterloo-Wellington. There is great respect whenever he stands in the House to bring some sensible comments with respect to a bill.

Now, this bill is important. It represents the rights of people to have a dissenting voice—not frivolous and

vexatious voices, but voices that have some substantive concerns. I think that's our position.

What we are concerned about is that we have very little trust, unfortunately, in the Wynne government. We could not get any of the information on the Ornge helicopters or the gas plant cancellations. They are not very transparent, so I think I have cautious notes on this. This government has been a bully. That's really my experience, and I hate to say it: first-hand experience—

Interjections.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Point of order.

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: Did he say that the government's been a bully—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I can't hear you.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you for your point of order. I would ask the member to carry on, but please, let's have some civility in the House. I would rather you not attack your friends in the House.

1710

Mr. John O'Toole: But it clearly demonstrates how the little person is actually manipulated, in this case, by the Attorney General, perhaps the most powerful civil servant—

Hon. John Gerretsen: I've been called a lot of things in my life, but never a bully.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask you to withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: I withdraw that term. Thank you, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Carry on.

Mr. John O'Toole: But in this case here, there is a clear demonstration of the small person's voice being subordinated to the stronger figure. That's what this SLAPP designation is about, a strategic lawsuit against public participation. In the tone of it all, I fully support the sentiment of it; it's the abuse of it that I'm most concerned about.

To put on the record today, I had the Enniskillen Environmental Association pleading with the Minister of the Environment to listen to their concerns—their scientific concerns—and their worry about the contamination of water on the Oak Ridges moraine as a result of a government project, and the minister will not listen to them. I'm asking him to listen.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: I am pleased to follow the member from Durham. What we just saw here in the Legislature, as he pointed out, is a perfect example of a powerful authority figure quashing legitimate debate. Here, the member only had one minute to respond, and the Attorney General, one of the most powerful people in the

province of Ontario, stood up on a point of order so that he would shut down the member from Durham and didn't even allow him to make the point that he did. How can we trust this government to live up to the spirit of the law that is before us?

That's why we have some questions about it, and come the committee hearings, we will be challenging the Attorney General. This moment that he gave us in this House is a perfect example of how the overwhelming authority of this government, and a person, the Attorney General, a powerful figure, would take on a backbencher, someone as humble a servant as John O'Toole, who stands up for his people every chance he gets. I would just ask the Attorney General to stand in his place, do the right thing and apologize to the member.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order, the member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No. Are we done?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Wellington–Halton Hills, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to express my appreciation to the member for Scarborough–South West, the member for Durham and the member for Newmarket–Aurora, who theoretically responded to my speech. Then, unfortunately, it went a little sideways and there were responses to the responses.

But the fact is, again, this is an important piece of legislation, and I think it's also important to point out again that the opposition reserves the right—it's a parliamentary responsibility we have and, I would say, a constitutional responsibility—to thoroughly debate legislation. I know it sometimes frustrates the government that we're standing here—perhaps that we're even in here—debating legislation, bringing forward the views of our constituents and our own views as to what ought to be done. We would like to see this bill go to committee, too, but at the same time, I think we have an obligation to thoroughly debate the legislation at second reading, and then, when the bill comes back, presumably to continue the debate at third reading just to make sure we get it right. I think that's most important and something that all of us as members, especially those who have served on both sides of the House—some of us have had the privilege to serve in opposition, as well as government.

I know the Attorney General was in opposition for a number of years. He was one of the most passionate debaters in opposition, and he participated fully. In many cases, the government was compelled to bring in time allocation because the Liberal Party—some of the Liberal members maybe don't know this because they didn't have the opportunity to serve in opposition—was very, very forceful in opposition in bringing forward their views and making sure that the views of people who, quite frankly, had concerns about some of the government legislation that was being brought forward at that time, were heard in this Legislature. Certainly, they made use of the committees, as well, to discuss bills thoroughly. I wouldn't question their right to do it, nor their sincere interest in improving legislation.

That's why we thoroughly debate legislation here, Mr. Speaker, including Bill 83, and I look forward to continued debate and hearing from my colleagues as this debate continues this afternoon.

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

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm going to keep my remarks short. I won't be using my full time, because I really encourage that we send this bill to committee.

But I'm happy to rise and just say a few words on behalf of my constituents in Davenport, and as the environment critic for the Ontario NDP, to speak to Bill 83, the Protection of Public Participation Act.

The NDP has advocated for anti-SLAPP legislation for many, many years. It was way back in 2008 that our leader, Andrea Horwath, first introduced an anti-SLAPP bill—it was also called the Protection of Public Participation Act, but that was back, as I said, in 2008—that would have protected participation in public debate without fear of legal repercussion.

It's unfortunate that the government didn't move to support our anti-SLAPP bill back then, and it's a shame that it has taken this government so long to move this piece of important legislation forward.

Bill 83 is a bill, clearly, that we support, and it's an important bill. The people of this province have waited long enough for this type of legislation to be passed. The protection of individual free speech should be a priority for this government. It should be a priority for every government that claims to be democratic.

People in Ontario have a right to weigh in on environmental issues that matter to them. They have a right to report environmental violations; to file complaints with government agencies; to contact the media; and to speak at public meetings without fear. They should have the right to engage in public campaigns without fear of being targeted or punished for their actions.

Instead, we continue to see the rights of the most powerful corporations trump the rights of people and the environment in Ontario. As a result, people continue to lose faith in our democratic process and the ability of our governments to protect our rights and to protect our environment.

As a politician, one of my most ambitious goals, I believe, since being elected is to try to help restore people's hope in politics and to engage people in the political process in this province, to make sure that we have a politics that puts the public interest first, a politics that protects the commons—our soil and our water—and a politics that encourages people to be active and to be engaged in determining our future together.

Bill 83 is an important step forward towards fostering and protecting a democracy that reflects these values. That's why I'm happy to support this bill.

As I said, I don't have further comments. I do appreciate the chance to speak here today. I would strongly encourage the government, after hours of debate and years in the making, to ask for this to be voted on as soon as possible and to move this into committee.

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

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I think Bill 83 has been spoken to quite a bit. Let's get this into committee and move it forward, for many of the reasons cited, to help Ontarians.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I commend the member from Davenport. I respect the fact that you want to be on the record, making certain comments.

Why this is so important is, we need to have clarity on the government's full intention. When you hear members on the other side—they are the government. They have the numbers. They can call this question. They have full control. You have the right to do that. The Attorney General and the House leader was here, and there are other ministers in the House as well.

But the voices that put to it this afternoon—I know there are other speakers who are very anxious to represent their constituents. To suggest in this chamber that those members should be denied the opportunity to put the voices of their constituents on the record is simply not acceptable.

On a Thursday afternoon, just before the March break, this government calls a bill, knowing there are speakers on it. If they want this anti-SLAPP bill to pass, they have the authority. I have confidence that the NDP will be supporting them. In fact, I have every confidence that the NDP will be supporting their budget. There's a coalition here.

We're the only real voice protecting the small people in Ontario, the people like my constituents in the riding of Durham who came here today.

The Minister of the Environment approved, without any consultation with my constituents, a transformer, five school buses in size, on top of the Oak Ridges moraine. They were—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask the member to please turn his questions and comments to the bill that's in front of us.

1720

Mr. John O'Toole: I understand that, Speaker, and respectfully, the application of the strategic lawsuit is no different than a minister placing an order on a person to expropriate their land. Unless they have fair representation and fair voice, then they're not being listened to, and the government is bullying them.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I endorse the comments made by my friend and colleague from Davenport. I urge the new Progressive Conservative Party, which expresses so much support for the little guy—in fact, professes a great deal to be on the side of the little guy—to move this bill along so that we can hear from the new Progressive Conservatives in committee with all of the concerns you're raising, so that we could move this along.

I urge my fine Liberal friends who control the Legislative Assembly, and control the agenda of the assembly, to move this issue along, if you can.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, there are two parties that want to move this forward and bring the public in at committee. There's one party that appears to want to keep the public excluded, and I think that's too bad.

It's time to move ahead on this. Everything's been said.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Davenport, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr. Jonah Schein: I will just finish by saying that this is an inherently good piece of legislation that will protect the democratic rights of people in this province, and I see no reason for the government not to move this bill forward into committee. I encourage them to do that today.

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

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's great to be here on a Thursday afternoon talking about Bill 83 and the importance of the ability in one's self to express your opinions openly, not just here in the House—and I'm going to get to that in a moment, Mr. Speaker—but out in public.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Without fear of being bullied.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Without fear of being bullied, absolutely.

Mr. Speaker, we've all agreed in this House on other pieces of legislation that bullying is obviously wrong. We acknowledge that. This is what we instill in our children, that that's not the kind of behaviour that we condone.

I do want to talk to the bill directly. It says here, in the process of dismissal of proceeding that limits debate, 137.1, section 1(a), "to encourage individuals to express themselves on matters of public interest;

"(b) to promote broad participation in debates on matters of public interest."

Well, Mr. Speaker, that's exactly what we do here in the House. To the member from Durham's concerns, and other members here, for the government to actually say that we don't have the democratic right to stand up and view the opinions of our constituents, of the individuals who we represent—this is the kind of thing that we're actually trying to pass legislation—and to get to committee too. So I find it rather ironic that the third party and the governing Liberal Party want to rush this to committee without any kind of checks or balances in the process.

Being Canadian—and I say this sincerely—all of us here agree that we have the fundamental values that individuals can speak and express their own opinions without being persecuted for those, aside from anything that's hateful or disrespectful in that kind of manner or tone. This is what many of our grandfathers and our fathers fought for in the Second World War. We have troops abroad today who sacrifice their lives and their families out there, who have given the ultimate sacrifice to enable us to stand here today, the fine men and women

who represent their ridings, and express our opinions, our thoughts—the thoughts and opinions not only of ourselves, but the thoughts and opinions of our constituents, in the honour of respecting those who have come before us, whether they were fortunate enough to actually sit here in this hallowed chamber or have given up the ultimate sacrifice to fight against oppressive and tyrannous regimes that try to bully or suppress that.

On that note, there are events currently going on, as you well know, globally, around the world. I might point to the situation in Ukraine right now. What ends up happening is we have this bill before us, Bill 83, which discourages this type of thing.

I want to speak to the bill directly once again, when it refers on page 3 here to damages:

“(9) If, in dismissing a proceeding under this section, the judge finds that the responding party brought the proceedings in bad faith or for an improper purpose, the judge may award the moving party such damages as the judge considers appropriate.”

Again, when I read and review bills that I debate in the House here, I do look at language, and when the bill does get to committee, this is an area that I think we need to address: the language “moving party such damages as the judge considers appropriate.”

We have to be very careful, as legislators, to ensure that the intent of bills—and one thing I have come to realize is that all bills, pretty much all bills that come to the floor here, are not perfect. They are microcosms of one’s self, you could almost say.

There have to be amendments made. There have to be little antidotes that we read into it, and look at the legislation to ensure that it’s not perceived to be interpreted in the wrong sense. This is where, if we give leeway to judges to consider appropriate damages or fines, we have to maybe draw some parameters or give some kind of framework to ensure that judges have a clear understanding of what their duty and role is pertaining to this particular bill. Otherwise, judges are only human, the court system is only human, and how are judges, without being given a clear and concise directive from the legislative body here, going to give interpretation on their own reconnaissance?

The other thing that I would like to mention here is this:

“Motion to be heard within 60 days

“(2) A motion under section 137.1 shall be heard no later than 60 days after notice of the motion is filed with the court.”

I have two uncles who are former Metro police officers; one actually dealt with the court system here in Toronto. It’s my understanding and appreciation that our court system is already backed up to such an extent that we have actual cases where individuals who have committed severe crimes to the public are being released or relinquished because there’s due process and that time frame allowed. There have been rulings where these individuals are released because they were not brought

forward in a timely manner. So I have some serious concerns.

1730

Again, once we get this to committee, this is something that perhaps we could look at and make an amendment to, because 60 days, two months—if you’ve had any experiences, or if you go and talk to many of the criminal offence lawyers who deal day-to-day with these types of activities, they will say to you, “Sixty days? Two months? It will be remanded again and remanded again.” That costs the taxpayers of this province millions of dollars annually in remands and shuffling and refiguring dates.

This is where I have some serious concern with Bill 83. I think, as stated by many of the members here this afternoon, there are good intentions here. I think that once we get it to committee, we can work with the government to make those amendments and solidify some of the issues that I’ve brought up here this afternoon.

I just want to touch quickly on what the member from Davenport said. He made some good points about protecting soil and water, and his whole approach to saving the environment. This is all fantastic, but to the member from Davenport, you’re supporting a Liberal government that actually takes regulations and ignores their own regulations to put industrial wind turbines on the Oak Ridges moraine, which is protected land.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It’s very clear to me, Speaker, that the member from Northumberland–Quinte West doesn’t want to move this bill along. It’s quite clear to me that the defenders of the so-called Conservative Party who support the little guy don’t want to move this bill along. We need to look to the Liberals to be leaders and move this along.

It’s obvious to me. These guys are going to talk forever, because they don’t want to send it to committee. Given that you Liberals have the power to move this along, I’m expecting one of you to say soon, “We’re going to deal with this and we’re going to get it going.” That’s what I want to hear from a Liberal, some Liberals, a minister, some ministers, and see whether we can get this done.

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me deal with the last member first. He knows the rules of the House extremely well. The rules simply state that every member can speak on a bill for 10 minutes, 20 minutes; whatever it may be. The only other way to do this is to bring a closure motion. We, as the government, can do that, but in order to get that closure motion actually passed, we need the support of the third party to do that. You have never supported closure in your entire life—and I respect you for that. You know the game as well as I do. If you support closure, we will move closure.

Let’s just deal with the other member. We are talking about civil court cases here. We’re not talking about

criminal cases here. These are cases where actions are being brought by different interests against somebody for expressing their view. This has got nothing to do with criminal court. In civil cases, in most court jurisdictions in this province, there are motions heard at least once a week in smaller court locations, and almost daily in the larger court locations. That's when a motion like this will be heard.

This has nothing to do with the way criminal courts are clogged up. It's in a totally different system. We're talking about a civil court system here, where civil actions are tried. This is not in criminal court.

Please, members opposite: We've got four eloquent members of the Conservative Party that are in the House right now. There are four great members here. Do the right thing. Your leadership is gone. You're in charge. Allow this bill to pass today so we can take it to committee. These are very good members that are here, and I think they will do the right thing—

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Independent-thinking members.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Independent-thinking members; they sure are. They will allow this bill to pass, since we all agree, so it can go to committee. Do the right thing: Show some independent spirit.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Northumberland–Quinte West has my deepest respect. The way you framed it, I think, is most revealing of your belief in the system and the fairness of the system itself, the right to dissent, the right to have a voice and the right to be heard in the Legislature. I commend you for your remarks.

But I'm most surprised by the call to arms by the Attorney General. I think this should be on the record clearly: He has called on his brothers—and sisters, of course—to join him in moving this motion along. He talked about a closure motion, asking, in this public forum, for the NDP to vote against their own conscience. In fact, you could suggest he's bullying the NDP into voting with them on a closure motion.

What this motion is about is Bill 83, which is really about the right to speak. "SLAPP" means strategic lawsuit against public participation. The real conundrum here or the problem here is, we have the spokesperson for justice in Ontario encouraging the NDP to break with their traditional values, however we might agree or disagree with them, to join them in a coalition this afternoon. I'm surprised.

If you didn't listen to the remarks from the member from Northumberland–Quinte West, you've missed the entire point. We, the Conservatives on this side, if we could trust the government, a government that in my riding alone has had two issues where they've ignored—on Bill 150, the Green Energy Act, they denied—the Minister of Municipal Affairs is here—the voice of municipalities to speak against and have a fair hearing on renewable energy. That was done by this—

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

Mr. John O'Toole: The other one is—

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

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Mr. Speaker, I need to remind the House—sometimes over these debates, we forget some of the things that have transpired in the past. Some of the members and the minister would certainly remember, although one member from the third party would recall. But it seemed to be a member from their party who spoke for two years, Ms. Pupatello—I think I can use her name now that she's not part of the House—in committee and shut down complete debate and ended the debate for two years.

Interjections.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Yes, the entire time.

Hon. John Gerretsen: A year, I believe.

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: No, she spoke for two years straight and every time in order to stop—if you would recall, the legislation at the time was recall legislation. She did not like that, or whatever the case may be. She exercised her parliamentary right to speak for that entire time. Every time the debate came up in committee, it did not end.

As a result of that, there were changes brought in this Legislature that brought forward what the Attorney General mentioned about the ability to speak for an hour, for 20 minutes and 10 minutes. That was the compromise to ensure that those sort of things don't happen in the future.

But there's a number of questions, and I do hope to get to talk on this because I have a couple of questions. There are some concerns. Some of the organizations have stressed the concerns. For example, in the forestry sector, some have stood up on this particular issue, where the issue is that it could be utilized to stop their process from taking place. What happens in Ontario in the forestry sector is, for example, there are certain periods of time that you can get your wood out. It's called winter wood. Everything's frozen, and you're allowed to get in, do your cuts and bring the stuff out. A 60-day time frame would eliminate that process if that process is shut down. We just want to make sure that these things are not part of what's taking place here and be sure that all aspects of whatever takes place in this allows the businesses to continue on.

Not only that, I hope to talk about a couple of other areas that need to be addressed as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Northumberland–Quinte West, you have two minutes.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I want to thank the members for their comments. I do truly appreciate the wisdom and experience that some members like the Attorney General bring to this chamber and the member from Oshawa, my very good friend Jerry Ouellette, and of course the member from Durham, Mr. O'Toole, is an institution unto himself when it comes to the memory and the knowledge base that he brings forward. I just want to acknowledge that, Mr. Speaker.

1740

I do want to thank the Attorney General for pointing out, and correctly so, the difference between criminal cases and civil cases. I just have one question. I'm not a lawyer. I'm actually thankful that I'm not a lawyer. I don't know what the backlog in civil case law is, but I'm sure it's probably extensive, given the fact that we know what our legal system is. I would like to, perhaps, get some research done on the backlog in our civil court system and what that does.

I also do want to point out that here we have the ability to express our opinions, our thoughts, and this is what Bill 83 is all about. The member from Oshawa pointed out that because of other members going on for two years—I can't even fathom what you could talk to a bill for two years about. I thought maybe a one-hour lead might be overstretching for some, but—

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: It's a pleasure to rise and speak about this bill in front of us, the so-called SLAPP bill.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane and I have some things in common. We both come from an agriculture background. Also, we volunteered, like all members of the Legislature, for our communities. We did things that we weren't paid for because we wanted to improve our communities and maybe improve the industries that we're involved with.

The member from Timiskaming–Cochrane was president of the OFA—certainly a great organization in the province of Ontario. I belonged to a service club. We built things. We put money towards things. But I have never had the experience of being involved, like he was, in a SLAPP suit. It scares the devil out of me, because I can think back to some things that we were involved with in my community. It's a little town called Monkton, which is just north of Stratford, about half an hour. I think back to some lands that we were trying to acquire—I'm sorry; we weren't trying to acquire. There was a company trying to acquire them, and there were some significant woodlots involved.

I'm not going to pick sides here, because I can see both sides of the equation. But I can imagine, if this had happened to those people who had opposed the removing of some of these trees, and a company as large as the one that was involved decided to use a technique such as this to get them to back off—it's quite scary.

We just heard about the member over here not being able to borrow from his bank to put his crops in. It's incredible just what can happen with these things.

He told us of his experience—and certainly the author of that book last night deserved it when he won that award on fighting the big guys. When they have a tool such as this that they can use to in fact muzzle you so that you can't do anything, it scares the daylights out of you. Certainly, the amounts of money that can be sued for—no normal person can afford that type of thing. Unless

you have a lot of backing behind you, you almost have to back off on these things.

This bill is a bill that is designed to combat SLAPPs in Ontario. It establishes a formal legal process for assessing suits to determine if they are SLAPPs and disposing of them, if so. That's a great part of this bill. I think that's what has to be done. I really didn't know a lot about this issue until I studied it a little bit and what it could do, but I can understand why we need to do that.

Also, Bill 83, if it's enacted, would help better define what SLAPPs are by building judicial precedent via the new legal process. It would also assist minimally with court backlogs, as it would ensure meritless SLAPP cases are not using scarce court resources. These cases would be dismissed. That's another part of the bill that I think has quite a bit of merit to it because it does cost a lot of money to go to court: in fees and paying our judges whatever and the staff who work there. If they have the ability to tie up our court system with issues such as this, especially if they are frivolous and not warranted, the money spent can be quite substantial.

I also read that, in essence, Bill 83 establishes a framework that allows an individual to determine if a lawsuit brought against them is a SLAPP or not within a 60-day time frame. I can understand that there may be some issues with this, especially with remote areas of our province where time is an issue; logging, as stated, might be an example. It is done in the wintertime, and you have so much time to do these things before spring thaw comes along and leaves logging roads inaccessible.

Also, there has been an example even in municipal politics where a SLAPP suit was brought by a municipality because a mayor did not like what the press was saying about him. To me, that is going way over the top.

We need to address these issues and get them looked after because it is only fair. It's something that different people are looking at, and it certainly has to be done right for it to work.

I think, too, back to my days in municipal politics. We had a good relationship with the press. I know it's something that we all have to deal with down here in a bigger scope. Certainly, I found that most of the time, whenever I said something either in council or directly to the press, it was reported impartially, and that's what I appreciated about it. I also knew that I had to be honest with the press and that if I said something wrong or something that I didn't want to appear in the press but I said it anyway, it was going to get put there, but I shouldn't have the right to shut that down.

I look around the world at some of the things that are going on, where people are denied their right to do things, and we say that shouldn't be allowed in those countries. We're fortunate that we live in this country where we have freedom of speech and freedom to do a lot of other things. However, this seems to me to be a technique that is probably being used somewhat wrongly and needs to be adjusted to make sure that people use it properly and also that people aren't afraid to do things in their communities for fear of being sued.

We've had a number of developers in our area—I can think of some people—who want to install gravel pits in our area. They should have the right to do that. They should have the right to explore whether it is viable, and they should have a right to go through all the permitting process that is legal.

1750

However, some of the contractors that are doing these types of things, there are some smaller ones, and I can see how this type of legislation could maybe scare some of them off. Everybody should have the right to speak about things that are going on in their communities. I could understand why some businesses may be a little afraid to tackle some things, especially if they have heard of this type of thing, and maybe there will be a time when it could be used against them.

It's my opinion that it is a bill that needs to go to committee. Maybe I'm going to hear suggestions that, "Well, why don't you sit down and let it go to committee?" However, I have always been told since I've been here, and on my council days, that I have a right to stand up and speak, and I'm taking the time to do that. That's why we're here, and that's why we like to speak on behalf of our constituents. We try to do as good a job as we can.

Speaker, I only have a couple seconds left—if I can get rid of this tickle in my throat, I've got a couple seconds left. Anyway, I think that we need to get it past this second reading into committee, get it looked at and, if it needs to be amended in certain parts, get that amending done and get this bill done.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Barrie on a point of order.

Mr. Rod Jackson: If it pleases the Speaker, I'd like to just take a quick moment to thank all of the pages for their hard work and dedication. I know the Speaker did it earlier today, but I really do want them all to know how much we appreciate all the hard work that they do here. Certainly, for the past few weeks, it's very much appreciated.

It has also allowed me to spend the past three weeks with my daughter, Abbey. It means a lot to me, and I know it means a lot to you guys, and you'll never forget it. I just want to thank you very much for all of that.

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

Another point of order, the member for Barrie.

Mr. Rod Jackson: I appreciate your indulgence, Speaker. In the last hours of this House before we go away for one more week, I hope that we can have unanimous consent to have a moment of silence in solidarity of those who have lost their lives in Ukraine in the defence of democracy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Barrie has asked for unanimous consent for a moment of silence for those in Ukraine. Agreed? Agreed.

The House observed a moment's silence.

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

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Getting back to Bill 83, I have been told that we've had nine hours of debate. I get it: Everyone has an opportunity to debate it if they wish. But I'm hearing also a desire to get it to committee, so let's do that. It's time to get this bill to committee.

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

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I appreciate again the opportunity because I don't believe I'm going to get a chance to talk about it, but there are a couple of things.

I would just remind the members that at one point I brought in a bill to effectively do this very thing, except with municipal councils and with school boards: to give them the immunity in those boards to be able to say what they want to say in the same fashion that we have here, for their protection and to give them the ability to speak their minds a certain way. I have tried to move similar legislation forward through this chamber to try and assist those individuals.

But there are a number of questions that need to be answered in regard to this. One would be there are other facets or ways that individuals have the opportunity to make presentations, and, quite frankly, I want to protect those individuals. I just want to make sure it's not abused.

For example, I know the ministers here would probably be overwhelmed with an issue in their constituency offices right now regarding one of the decisions that the government made on the spring bear hunt and what's taking place there. There are thousands of emails being issued in that regard to try and delay or stop what's taking place on that decision that they have made. The concern there is that there is an EBR posting that allowed for public input on that, and if individuals who are not supportive of that in giving, quite frankly, northern Ontario the ability to make decisions as they see fit in a part of their communities, because the bear issue in the north is substantially different than it is in southern Ontario, is that allowance to be posted there one way that these individuals have that opportunity? So other individuals who may not be supportive of it and are flooding everybody's inboxes with these emails—I can tell you that on one day I think we got 3,000 on this issue, on both sides of it—is it another forum that they can utilize to their advantage to delay that process with the decisions the government has made?

Hopefully, the Attorney General will be able to give us some insight as to whether this is going to be one of the impacts of this legislation, or have they looked at that aspect at all? I'm not quite sure yet, but I hope to hear the answer.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to speak on Bill 83 and respond to the member from Perth-Wellington. I would just like it to be on the record that I

find the member for Perth–Wellington always speaks from the heart, and I appreciate that.

I would also like to mention the member from Oshawa. He stood up a couple of times today, and he has brought up valid points, points that people in my riding are concerned about, people across the north, particularly forest areas, and I think we are all very cognizant that we don't want anyone to abuse the legal system. We want people to be able to speak freely, but we don't want it to be abused by any individual or group. Here in the NDP, we truly believe that, and we want to move this bill forward and make sure that we can recognize where this bill might be abused and hopefully amend it, if it needs to be, in ways to ensure that the law fairly protects everyone—individuals, groups and corporations.

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

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: Speaker, Bill 83, the Protection of Public Participation Act, has had, I think over nine hours of debate. We have had some constructive suggestions from the member from Oshawa. I think we should send this to committee.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Perth–Wellington, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I do appreciate the comments from the members from Timiskaming–Cochrane, Oshawa and the Minister of Community Safety.

As has been stated, changes to this law should not impede anyone from lawsuits or impede them from speaking their minds. I think that is the biggest thing here. We

need to let people be aware that they shouldn't be afraid of the law if they want to do something in their communities or wherever, because SLAPP means "strategic lawsuit against public participation." That's something that certainly has to be addressed. This will address that part of the law, and that's something that we all are looking for.

I look forward to this bill being passed and sent to committee and being brought back to the Legislature. The government knows they control this thing, so if it's that important, then they should get it through committee as fast as they can and get it back to the House, because that's the way things work around here.

Again, I feel that it's an important piece of legislation, and we need to address this as soon as we can. It's as important in the GTA as it is in the country, and so I think that constituents from all over Ontario should thank us for dealing with this in a speedy fashion.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, on a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the Attorney General.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I move unanimous consent that Bill 83—government order G83 be discharged at this point in time and be given second reading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Attorney General seeks unanimous consent. Agreed? I heard a no.

This House stands adjourned until Monday, March 17 at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough–Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Del Duca, Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Holyday, Douglas C. (PC)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment / Ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et de l'Emploi
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Hunter, Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Chair of Cabinet / Présidente du Conseil des ministres Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Rural Affairs / Ministre des Affaires rurales
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Steven Del Duca, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Rick Bartolucci
Laura Albanese, Rick Bartolucci
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Continued from back cover

Violence against women

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	5744
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	5744

Speaker's Book Award

Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	5744
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	5744

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS /
PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS**

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	5744
-------------------------	------

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS /
DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS**

Advanced Agricultural Leadership Program

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	5744
----------------------------	------

Northern Ontario Mining Supply Showcase

Mr. John Vanthof	5745
------------------------	------

Schomberg Farm Tour

Ms. Helena Jaczek.....	5745
------------------------	------

Disaster relief

Mr. Randy Pettapiece	5745
----------------------------	------

Norma Berti

Miss Monique Taylor.....	5746
--------------------------	------

Ranked balloting

Ms. Mitzie Hunter	5746
-------------------------	------

Local Food Fund

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	5746
--------------------------	------

Vaughan Film Festival

Mr. Steven Del Duca.....	5746
--------------------------	------

Transformer station

Mr. John O'Toole.....	5747
-----------------------	------

Visitors

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	5747
------------------------	------

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS
MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES**

**Canadian Agriculture Literacy Week / Semaine de
sensibilisation à l'agriculture canadienne**

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	5747
-----------------------------	------

International Women's Day

Hon. Teresa Piruzza	5748
---------------------------	------

Canadian Agriculture Literacy Week

Mr. Ernie Hardeman	5748
--------------------------	------

International Women's Day

Ms. Laurie Scott.....	5749
-----------------------	------

Canadian Agriculture Literacy Week

Mr. John Vanthof	5749
------------------------	------

International Women's Day

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	5750
-----------------------	------

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Ontario Drug Benefit Program

Mr. Rob E. Milligan.....	5750
--------------------------	------

Hydro rates

Ms. Sarah Campbell.....	5750
-------------------------	------

Children's aid societies

Ms. Soo Wong.....	5751
-------------------	------

Air quality

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette.....	5751
-----------------------------	------

Tenant protection

Ms. Catherine Fife.....	5751
-------------------------	------

Environmental protection

Mr. Joe Dickson	5751
-----------------------	------

Environmental protection

Mr. John O'Toole.....	5752
-----------------------	------

Dog ownership

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	5752
-----------------------	------

Ontario Drug Benefit Program

Mrs. Julia Munro.....	5752
-----------------------	------

Taxation

Ms. Sarah Campbell.....	5752
-------------------------	------

LCBO outlet

Mr. Joe Dickson	5753
-----------------------	------

Cystic fibrosis

Mr. Jim Wilson.....	5753
---------------------	------

All-terrain vehicles

Mr. Jim McDonell.....	5753
-----------------------	------

Government services

Ms. Sarah Campbell.....	5753
-------------------------	------

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS /
AFFAIRES D'INTÉRÊT PUBLIC
ÉMANANT DES DÉPUTÉS**

Federal transfer payments

Mr. Joe Dickson	5753
-----------------------	------

Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	5755
-----------------------------	------

Ms. Sarah Campbell.....	5756
-------------------------	------

Hon. Linda Jeffrey.....	5756
-------------------------	------

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	5757
------------------------	------

Mr. Rosario Marchese.....	5758
---------------------------	------

Mr. Steven Del Duca.....	5759
--------------------------	------

Mr. Rob E. Milligan.....	5760
--------------------------	------

Mr. Joe Dickson	5761
-----------------------	------

**Financial Accountability Act, 2014, Bill 160,
Mr. Holyday / Loi de 2014 sur la responsabilité
financière, projet de loi 160, M. Holyday**

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday	5761
Ms. Catherine Fife.....	5763
Mr. Monte McNaughton	5764
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	5765
Mr. Steven Del Duca.....	5765
Mr. Michael Harris.....	5767
Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	5768
Mr. Douglas C. Holyday	5768

Visitors

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	5769
------------------------	------

**Toronto Ranked Ballot Elections Act, 2014, Bill 166,
Ms. Hunter / Loi de 2014 sur un mode de scrutin
préférentiel pour Toronto, projet de loi 166,
Mme Hunter**

Ms. Mitzie Hunter	5769
Mrs. Julia Munro.....	5770
Mr. Jonah Schein.....	5771
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	5772
Mr. John O'Toole.....	5772
Mr. Michael Prue	5773
Mr. Steven Del Duca.....	5773
Mrs. Gila Martow.....	5774
Mr. Rosario Marchese.....	5774
Hon. Glen R. Murray	5775
Mr. Douglas C. Holyday	5775
Ms. Mitzie Hunter	5776

Federal transfer payments

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon).....	5776
--	------

**Financial Accountability Act, 2014, Bill 160,
Mr. Holyday / Loi de 2014 sur la responsabilité
financière, projet de loi 160, M. Holyday**

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon).....	5776
--	------

**Toronto Ranked Ballot Elections Act, 2014, Bill 166,
Ms. Hunter / Loi de 2014 sur un mode de scrutin
préférentiel pour Toronto, projet de loi 166,
Mme Hunter**

Second reading agreed to	5776
--------------------------------	------

Federal transfer payments

Motion agreed to	5777
------------------------	------

**Financial Accountability Act, 2014, Bill 160,
Mr. Holyday / Loi de 2014 sur la responsabilité
financière, projet de loi 160, M. Holyday**

Second reading negated.....	5777
-----------------------------	------

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

**Protection of Public Participation Act, 2014, Bill 83,
Mr. Gerretsen / Loi de 2014 sur la protection du
droit à la participation aux affaires publiques,
projet de loi 83, M. Gerretsen**

Mr. John Vanthof	5777
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	5779
Mr. John O'Toole.....	5779
Mr. Rosario Marchese	5780
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	5780
Mr. John Vanthof	5780
Mr. Ted Arnott	5780
Mr. Jonah Schein.....	5782
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti.....	5782
Mr. John O'Toole.....	5782
Mr. Frank Klees	5782
Mr. Ted Arnott	5783
Mr. Jonah Schein.....	5783
Mr. Shafiq Qaadri.....	5784
Mr. John O'Toole.....	5784
Mr. Rosario Marchese	5784
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	5784
Mr. Jonah Schein.....	5784
Mr. Rob E. Milligan	5784
Mr. Rosario Marchese	5785
Hon. John Gerretsen.....	5785
Mr. John O'Toole.....	5786
Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette.....	5786
Mr. Rob E. Milligan	5786
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	5787
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	5788
Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette.....	5788
Mr. John Vanthof	5788
Hon. Linda Jeffrey.....	5789
Mr. Randy Pettapiece	5789
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	5789

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Thursday 6 March 2014 / Jeudi 6 mars 2014

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety (Statute Law Amendment) Act, 2014, Bill 117, Ms. Matthews / Loi de 2014 modifiant des lois afin d'améliorer les soins aux malades et la sécurité des pharmacies, projet de loi 117, Mme Matthews	
Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	5723
Mr. John Vanthof.....	5726
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur.....	5726
Mr. John O'Toole.....	5726
Mme France Gélinas.....	5727
Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	5727
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	5727
Hon. Madeleine Meilleur.....	5730
Mrs. Julia Munro.....	5730
M. Michael Mantha.....	5730
Mr. Mike Colle.....	5731
Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	5731
Mrs. Jane McKenna.....	5731
Second reading debate deemed adjourned.....	5733

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mr. Rob E. Milligan.....	5733
M. Michael Mantha.....	5733
M. Grant Crack.....	5733
Mr. Victor Fedeli.....	5733
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	5733
Mrs. Amrit Mangat.....	5733
Mr. John O'Toole.....	5733
M. John Vanthof.....	5733
M. Mike Colle.....	5733
Ms. Soo Wong.....	5733
Mr. Garfield Dunlop.....	5733
Hon. Linda Jeffrey.....	5733
Mr. Norm Miller.....	5733
Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....	5733
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	5733
Legislative pages	
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	5734

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Automotive industry	
Mr. Tim Hudak.....	5734
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	5734

Manufacturing jobs

Mr. Tim Hudak.....	5735
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	5735

Energy policies

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	5736
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	5736
Hon. Bob Chiarelli.....	5737

Executive compensation

Mr. Gilles Bisson.....	5737
Hon. John Milloy.....	5737

Access to information

Mr. Douglas C. Holyday.....	5737
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	5738

Automotive industry

Mr. Percy Hatfield.....	5738
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	5738
Hon. Eric Hoskins.....	5738

Access to information

Mr. John Fraser.....	5739
Hon. John Milloy.....	5739

Government's record

Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....	5739
Hon. John Milloy.....	5740

Energy policies

Mr. Wayne Gates.....	5740
Hon. Eric Hoskins.....	5740
Hon. Bob Chiarelli.....	5740

Teachers' collective bargaining

Ms. Dipika Damerla.....	5741
Hon. Liz Sandals.....	5741

Wind turbines

Ms. Laurie Scott.....	5741
Hon. Bob Chiarelli.....	5741
Hon. James J. Bradley.....	5742

Hospital services

Mme France Gélinas.....	5742
Hon. Deborah Matthews.....	5742

Information technology

Ms. Mitzie Hunter.....	5742
Hon. Eric Hoskins.....	5743

Horse racing industry

Mr. Randy Pettapiece.....	5743
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	5743

Continued on inside back cover