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(Hansard)**

Thursday 20 March 2014

Jeudi 20 mars 2014

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 20 March 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 20 mars 2014

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO IMMIGRATION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'IMMIGRATION
EN ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 4, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 161, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 161, Loi portant sur l'immigration en Ontario et apportant une modification connexe à la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Je veux juste souhaiter à tout le monde une belle Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

To the member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Merci, monsieur le Président. It's a pleasure to stand here today and to address Bill 161, the Ontario Immigration Act, as it's known. I, like my colleagues, am willing to support this bill because I believe that there is merit in what's trying to be accomplished. I do not believe, though, that we can in good conscience push through this new legislation while at the same time ignoring the source of the problem here in Ontario. If we want to increase immigration to Ontario, then we must improve the opportunities that are available here to new immigrants. The truth is that over the past 10 years, this McGuinty-Wynne Liberal government has done an excellent job at driving investment, talent and good jobs out of our province.

Before this Liberal government took office, Ontario was the number one destination for newcomers to come to Canada. This can be seen when you look at Toronto and the GTA, where over half of all residents were born outside of our borders. When these individuals moved to Ontario, it was the land of opportunity. The unskilled workers flocked here from all corners of the globe to find

good jobs, start families and live the kinds of lives they've always dreamed of. Today, potential immigrants look at Ontario, and they see a poor economic climate created by the McGuinty-Wynne government. They see the high debt, with the deficit growing larger by the hour, the high taxes, the exorbitant cost of electricity, and they say, "No, thanks." Instead, they move to Saskatchewan, or Alberta or Manitoba, where the economic climate is friendlier and they can see themselves obtaining a good job and creating the kind of life they want for themselves and their families.

We hear stories every day about our born-and-raised Ontarians, people that grew up here, were educated here, and are now finally at the age where they can work. These talented young individuals are heading for the border, because they can't find any opportunities to pursue what they love to do here at home.

I've listened to the stories of young teachers from my riding being forced to find jobs abroad, in Asia, Europe or Australia, so they can finally teach and find fulfilment doing the work they love. I've heard the stories of some of our province's brightest young engineering students being wooed by the overwhelming opportunities available to them working for American technology companies in Silicon Valley or in New York City. If we can't even hold on to the skilled workers we have at home, individuals who have built lives and relationships in the communities where they were raised, then how can we possibly expect the economic environment to be inviting or attractive to newcomers?

It's not only our economic climate that acts as a deterrent to immigrants. If they take one brief look at our education system here in Ontario, they will see the McGuinty-Wynne system that has produced steadily declining math scores over the past 10 years, a system that has allowed the tension over the demands of union bosses to take priority over the development and progress of our students.

This Liberal government is pumping \$8 billion more a year into education while we have 300,000 fewer students enrolled, and yet we are constantly seeing worsening results. Even our post-secondary schools are struggling, as seen by the recent announcement of campus closures at the University of Guelph. Clearly, something is wrong here, and any immigrant raising a family, or looking to raise a family, would be able to deduce that, and it would certainly cause them to think twice before deciding to relocate here.

Every day, here in Ontario, we're spending \$1.8 billion an hour more than we take in as revenue. The debt incurred here by the McGuinty-Wynne government is

monumental, and the most troubling part of all is the utter lack of results yielded from a more than \$264-billion debt.

Our education system has produced declining test scores. Our health care system is underperforming and, quite frankly, unprepared to handle the influx of medicinal needs required by the aging baby boomer population. Our infrastructure and highway systems in Toronto and the GTA are completely antiquated, face constant gridlock and are producing a \$6-billion loss to productivity annually.

Wynne's Liberal government is happy to rack up billions of dollars in debt through the creation of useless bureaucracy while allowing our public assets to fall into disrepair. This government's reckless use of taxpayers' money is simply unacceptable. Until the day that the Liberals finally decide to rein in their spending and shift focus to reduce the deficit and balance the budget, we're never going to be able to effectively advertise ourselves as a desirable location for newcomers to Canada.

After this week's realization that this government is not telling the public the whole truth when it comes to the state of our province's provincial finances, knowing full well that they are nowhere near on track to balancing the budget by 2018, it's clear that they're sending the province down the wrong path and have no intention of a course correction. A lack of confidence in our economy—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask you to withdraw, because you can't use that language.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

The lack of confidence in our economy is evidenced through the federal government's low allocation of spots dedicated to Ontario in the provincial nominee program. Only 2,500 positions are allocated to Ontario—half of what Saskatchewan, Alberta and Manitoba get.

The Liberals' refusal to focus on jobs and the economy is causing us to lose access to a large number of skilled workers who could fill existing jobs in our province, jobs that cannot be filled from within. Statistics Canada predicts that by as early as 2020, which is really just around the corner, we could be facing a situation where we see more deaths than births within our communities.

Ontario's aging baby boomer population, coupled with a rapidly declining birth rate, makes it a fact that future population growth must be driven by immigration. Despite this fact, the Liberal government has sat on the sidelines doing nothing while watching our national share of immigrants slip rapidly. In fact, last year, Ontario managed to reach its second-lowest level of immigration in recorded history.

The McGuinty-Wynne government has mismanaged immigration policy for over a decade, when they could have been making strides and working with the federal government to ensure Ontario's economic needs would be met. The only reason Premier Wynne's government has decided to focus on immigration now with Bill 161 is

because the federal government has forced their hand with the introduction of the 2015 expression-of-interest policy. The federal government is strongly encouraging provinces to develop a system that will allow them to participate in this program come 2015.

0910

Unlike the Liberals, my colleagues and I in the PC caucus understand that immigrants act as the much-needed fuel for our provincial economy and, as such, we've ensured that a successful immigration policy plays a critical role in our jobs plan. We want to work aggressively with the federal government to take full advantage of their programs for immigrants with strong skills. The federal government's low allotment of slots for Ontario through the provincial nominee program is not the only challenge we face, but also this government's inability to properly allocate these jobs to fit within our province's needs. This means that after a few years these new members of our communities head for our province's borders in search of work that's more meaningful to them, work that is not accessible to them here in Ontario.

The McGuinty-Wynne government has a proven track record of extremely poor retention when it comes to keeping our new residents in Ontario. My colleagues and I in the PC caucus realize that we must pay attention to not only what will attract new immigrants to Ontario, but also to what will help to keep them here.

My colleague Todd Smith from—I forget Todd's riding—

Mr. Ted Arnott: Prince Edward-Hastings.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Prince Edward-Hastings—in case you got up, Mr. Speaker—has spoken of stories told to him by doctors who came to Ontario and felt instantly as if they had become a zero. We've all heard these stories, individuals reaching our province full of hope and potential, only to have their expectations crushed by our lack of foreign credential recognition for training gained abroad.

It is well known that here in Ontario we are in need of more skilled labour: doctors, nurses, engineers and architects. Yet, this Liberal government has imposed artificial barriers, which will prevent these skilled professionals from using their skills.

New immigrants are smart people and they put a lot of research into a place before they decide to move. When they look at Ontario, they see a region that is facing the highest unemployment rate in Canada. How can we expect these educated individuals to willingly choose to move to a region where over one million people are waking up every day without a job? This is why I and my colleagues are hesitant when we see this bill. It effectively ignores the largest problem plaguing Ontario today. Without first developing and instituting a jobs plan, this bill will never have its desired effect. My caucus knows this and the federal government knows this, as seen through their low allotment of spots for Ontario within the provincial nominee program. The only ones who have yet to grasp this concept is Premier Wynne's Liberal government. It is as if the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals don't

even realize how desperate a situation they've gotten this province into.

We must first create an environment where businesses want to invest in our province and create new jobs. A successful business sector is essential in attracting newcomers who want to build their lives here and will never be able to attract new businesses and investors unless Premier Wynne opens her eyes and realizes that drastic measures are needed to get Ontario's financial situation under control.

The PC caucus has constantly pushed the importance of a jobs plan for Ontario. In December, thanks to our programming motion, we saw the swift passage of several social-type bills that the government and, in fact, all parties were willing to agree to. My intent in moving the motion was to shift the focus of the Legislature on to the economy, creating space for a jobs plan to emerge. It's now nearing the end of March, and we have yet to see an economic plan from this government.

Now, this week, we come to find out that the Liberals and NDP have put their own political interests first yet again by pushing off the budget date. It shows yet again that they care more about keeping their jobs than creating new ones for the million people in Ontario who are out of work. Municipalities, universities, schools and hospitals can't plan their budgets until the province has put forward its own. This weakens public services and ultimately puts everyone at risk. This is why it has been a long-standing practice of this government, up until last year, to table a provincial budget before the end of the fiscal year.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd kindly ask the member opposite to stick to Bill 161.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): If the member would refer to the bill.

Mr. Jim Wilson: If you had a bloody jobs plan, maybe Bill 161 would be a more effective piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask you to withdraw.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker. I must have touched a nerve over there.

So the Ontario PC caucus is willing to put the people of Ontario first. We're willing to put our own jobs on the line and face the electorate in order to get a jobs plan on the table for Ontario's unemployed youth, women and men. And you'll see that on Monday when we debate our opposition day motion, which calls on the government to bring forward a jobs plan or adopt our leader's, Tim Hudak's, million-jobs plan or bring forward your budget and show us that it is truly a jobs plan by March 31, as you know you should. Now we hear they're going to push it back to May. I guess they want to put off that debate as long as possible. The debate is about jobs, and I don't care what piece of legislation you bring forward here; it's about jobs, jobs, jobs.

So again, if the Liberals don't have a plan of their own, they shouldn't be in government and they should face the electorate and they should put a confidence vote to this House. Yesterday, we tabled a motion that would, as I mentioned, force the government to table their budget by March 31. I suspect the NDP will once again prop up—

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

Hon. Michael Coteau: For the last minute, all I've heard is, "The budget, the budget, the budget." I think he needs to focus on Bill 161. We're talking about the Ontario Immigration Act. I'd ask the Speaker to gently remind the member opposite to stick to that topic.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you; I've been listening very carefully. The member for Simcoe-Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm glad you're on my side.

My whole theme, I say to the Minister of Immigration—I'm sorry, I have a bad cold this morning, so maybe it's not coming across clearly enough. You can have all the immigration law you want, but newcomers don't want to come here because you've created such a crappy environment. Okay, do you understand it? The budget has an awful lot to do with that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would the member speak to the Chair, please?

Mr. Jim Wilson: There are five main elements to our million-jobs plan, which would help attract immigration to the province and create jobs. First, the bill will produce more jobs and increase take-home pay through lower taxes and less debt. It's common sense: Well-run businesses invest in well-run provinces. Immigrants will want to come to well-run provinces and help us with our skills shortage. Our plan is to balance the budget quickly, using tools like an across-the-board government wage freeze that would save \$2 billion per year and reduce taxes on employers so they can start to hire again.

Second, our plan will ensure affordable energy that will create jobs, not eliminate them, ending the chaos in Ontario's energy sector and returning to reliable and affordable energy rates that businesses can depend on. We aim to provide cost-efficient and reliable energy. Our plan will end expensive subsidies for wind and solar power projects that drive up costs and punish both manufacturers and Ontario families with high electricity bills. I mean, who wants to come to a province when we now have the highest electricity rates in almost all of North America and certainly in all of Canada? I remind you, those rates—in 2003, it was 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour. That was the average daily electricity rate in the province for consumers. Today it's as high as 12.4 cents per kilowatt hour. It's shocking, and it's something that's at the heart of this issue, and that's jobs for new Canadians and new Ontarians.

Third, the Million Jobs Act will train more skilled workers to meet the huge demand in trades and help young people find good jobs. Colleges Ontario estimates

there are 46% fewer tradespeople per capita in Ontario compared to the rest of the Canada. That's a problem. So we will change the apprentice-to-journeyman ratio to 1 to 1 and abolish the job-killing College of Trades and the trades tax, which is nothing but a tax on workers and a costly bureaucracy that gets in the way of new job opportunities.

Fourth, we will increase trade with our neighbours. It will put more made-in-Ontario products on more shelves. As some of you may know, internal trade barriers cost the Canadian economy \$50 billion a year. We want to make sure the things Ontario workers make can reach as many customers as possible and, again, create jobs for those people that would want to come to Ontario and live a good life. Our plan also requires that the government of Ontario begin negotiations to join the economic partnership of British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan.

0920

Finally, fifth, we want to end the bureaucratic run-around that inhibits jobs creation. We will lift the heavy hand of government and reduce the 300,000 regulations in Ontario that bog businesses in paperwork. According to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, complying with Ontario's regulatory requirements costs businesses approximately \$11 billion a year. And it wipes out opportunities for people who want to come to Ontario, and for those who were born and raised in Ontario, to have a good life and a good job. We aim to reduce the regulatory burden in Ontario by a minimum of one third for three years. Now, doesn't that sound like a more conducive environment that people would want to come to, a place where a newcomer to our country would have a chance at a good job and a good life?

For a decade, this government has been driving up debt with billion-dollar scandals and multi-billion-dollar deficits year after year, working to drive out all investment and job opportunity within this great province. We saw it with Heinz in Leamington; with GM in Windsor, Oshawa and St. Catharines; with ExxonMobil Chemical Films in Belleville; with Saputo Dairy in Brampton; and with Alcoa in Collingwood. The list goes on and on. These companies have left—they've closed their doors—and we've lost the opportunity for employment in those locations.

Ontario's unemployment rate has been stubbornly high, above the national average, for far too long; I think it's 84 months now that we've been above the national average. We used to be the economic engine that drove this country; now we're the caboose. That high unemployment rate serves as a constant reminder that this Liberal government is doing something seriously wrong. We need to create an environment where investors want to create jobs, not one that makes them want to close up shop, as thousands of individuals who were put out of work by factory closings across Ontario know all too well.

The foundation of this great country was built off the hard work of immigrants from all corners of the world. It's the fuel for our economy, and the future of our prov-

ince certainly rests on our ability to continue to attract these individuals in years to come. The history of our country and this province, no matter how long ago you came here—I know my family came here over 250 years ago. We were actually pre-potato-famine Irish immigrants. A whole pile of cousins more came over when they couldn't eat anything in Ireland, too, but we've been here a long time and I still consider us to be immigrants. We still consider ourselves—our family does—and we often talk about it.

We've been privileged: Many of my siblings, brothers and sisters, have married into families that have come from all over the globe. I have relatives from five nationalities different from my own. I have relatives through marriage, in-laws. What a beautiful place Ontario has been, and what a great place it could be in the future if only the government would concentrate more on creating jobs and opportunities for families so that newcomers would want to come here.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's once again an honour to be able to rise in this House and speak in response to the member from Simcoe-Grey, but more importantly, to speak about the bill, which is all about immigration.

As the son of immigrants, as many of us are—I'm happily married to someone who emigrated from Holland almost 30 years ago—immigrants have made a huge difference in this province, and they can continue to make a huge difference in this province. They come here, and they want to come here because, as our forefathers did, they want to improve their lives. And because they want to improve their lives, they also improve our province, because they work hard.

They want to build a heritage, they want to build a future for their children and they want to help build Ontario. I think that one of the most important discussions we can have in this House is how to help them integrate and how to make it easier for them to come to Ontario. Yes, Ontario is experiencing some big problems; I think that's one of the things we have to discuss here. But specifically in my region, the people who have come to my region recently are calling for us to take some measures—do something—to allow more people to come to the north. The north offers huge opportunities for people not only from Ontario but from other places.

I get calls very regularly from people who have come to northern Ontario lately with suggestions about how to make it easier for their friends and family to come, because they have things to contribute to this province. I think this discussion and this bill are at least a start on how we can start that process to bring more people to Ontario and let them contribute, as have immigrants in waves past.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Citizenship and Immigration.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I take great pride to speak to Bill 161 and respond to the member from Simcoe-Grey. He said a lot of things, and he made many points. Out of

all of those points, I probably agree with one point he made, and that was that we all have an immigrant past here in the province of Ontario, outside of our aboriginal population.

There's a different voice that I hear when I'm out of this building, in comparison to what I hear on that side of the House. The Conservative Party of Ontario continuously puts Ontario down. I think the member from Simcoe–Grey said Ontario was once beautiful. He says that Ontario is no longer the number one destination for newcomers.

The fact is that Ontario is a beautiful province, and it's the most beautiful province in this country, number one. Number two, the province remains the number one choice of destination for newcomers in the country of Canada. If you take all of the provinces west of Ontario and you combine the immigration for all of those provinces—Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia—Ontario attracts more people than all of those provinces combined.

Interjection.

Hon. Michael Coteau: We are the greatest province in Canada, and I'm glad that one of the members opposite still believes that Ontario is the greatest place to be in Canada.

Let's stand up for Ontario once in a while. Let's not take a negative tone when we speak about Ontario. Immigrants continue to come to this province because it is a wonderful place and there are great opportunities.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order.

Hon. Michael Coteau: In fact, Mr. Speaker, we heard reference that Ontario is no longer the economic engine of this country. I believe it is—what is it?—40% of the GDP of this country, and in fact the GTA is 22% of the entire economic engine of the country.

Stop putting Ontario down. Stand up for Ontario. We want a Progressive Conservative Party that believes in this province, and if you don't believe in it, well, go west.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order. The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I came here this morning in quite a good mood. I came specifically to hear the member from Simcoe–Grey, and I think he summarized the bill. He started by saying, "We support the bill." Then he went on to explain the risk to the future of Ontario because of no jobs plan. They aren't presenting a budget.

He said in one passionate statement—and I'm sure he's settled down now, but it did upset the minister—"Jobs, jobs, jobs." Really, what new Canadians would want is a job and an opportunity, as we all would for our children as well as everyone in the province.

There has been quite a change with the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration this morning, if I could. I say this with the deepest regard and respect. The minister, this morning, in his very fancy limousine, pulled up

beside me on University Avenue—this morning—and kindly stopped and said, "Mr. O'Toole, get in the car." I thought it was the police. Anyway, I thank him for that publicly. That was a very kind gesture.

I don't know what has changed since then. Then he went on this tirade this morning. I would encourage you to keep that positive attitude you had when you stopped in a kind gesture this morning and picked me up on University Avenue. I do mean that quite sincerely, because he is kind-hearted, and I think that shows up in the bill here.

But in fairness, the member from Simcoe–Grey was passionately making the point that Ontario is the largest province. It used to be the leader in Canada; now we're not.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: No. We have the largest economy because we have the largest population: 13 million people.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Transportation, come to order, please.

Mr. John O'Toole: I would say this to you: You have provinces like Alberta, provinces like Saskatchewan, that are one tenth of the size of Ontario and are more prosperous economies that are driving Canada.

There's a lot to be said about immigration, but jobs is an important part of it.

0930

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I will add my voice to Bill 161, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991. I want to give the example of Dr. Carolina Bohrer. Carolina is a 32-year-old critical care pediatrician. She's a newcomer to my riding. Dr. Bohrer lives in Azilda, in Nickel Belt. She is from Brazil. She trained in Brazil but did her residency in Alberta, in Canada. She wrote and passed all of her exams. She has now paid close to \$10,000 to make sure that she had passed all of the Canadian exams, and she passed all of them with flying colours.

She has been approached by people at SickKids in order to get a fellowship, because her skills are so needed in Ontario, but right now, she can't even get an academic licence. The chief of pediatrics at Health Sciences North, the hospital in Sudbury, Dr. Murray, can't wait to add her to the team of pediatricians who offer services to the children of the northeast, but he can't.

She started this process of being recognized as a pediatrician here in Ontario a year and a half ago. Actually, in May, it will be two years ago that she started this process. She has done her elective in Canada. She has passed every exam that you put in front of her, with flying colours. People in Canada know her, want her. The kids in Sudbury need her skills. But the process is so slow that she is still not allowed to practise.

I support the part of the bill that says we will require that a college of a health profession make registration

decisions within a reasonable time period. Two years is too long.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: I thank those members who responded to my comments.

The point I was trying to make, and I think I did make quite clearly on many occasions, because it got under the skin of the party opposite, the Liberals, is that you can have all the new immigration law you want, but if Ontario isn't the leader once again at creating jobs and making sure they're good jobs, not only for people who were born and raised here and have roots in our communities but for those who want to come and grow roots in our communities—I would think that the provincial nominee program itself, and the allocation of only 25,000 slots this year, and the fact that last year, Ontario had the second-lowest immigration in recorded history, is an indication, or should be an indication, I say to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, that something's terribly wrong, that something's going wrong.

I didn't make those facts up, and I don't think any politician in Ottawa or here made them up. I think they're just facts that come from Stats Canada, and I don't think Stats Canada has been overly politicized by any party over the last few decades, so I trust them. I trust your own statistics here in the province of Ontario, accumulated by the bureaucrats.

But I appreciate your comments. And, yes, we all want to brag about Ontario, and we certainly do that when we talk to people. But inside this place, we need to get our facts straight, and we need to work every day to create the opportunities for new Canadians and those who are here and raised here.

The fact of the matter is, I do want to say to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, because we all agree that he's a good guy, that if you're going to continue to kidnap the member from Durham just to try and get him on your side of the House—naughty, naughty, naughty, and don't do it again.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It is a pleasure to rise this morning in this House, as MPP for London West, to offer some comments on Bill 161, the Ontario Immigration Act.

This legislation is a high priority for me personally, as a former policy researcher who led several research studies on post-secondary bridging programs for internationally educated health professions.

It's also a priority for the people I represent in London West, many of whom face barriers when they arrive in London as immigrants or refugees.

Finally, it is a huge priority for my community because of recent data from the 2011 National Household Survey showing that London is less diverse than the rest of Ontario, with an immigrant population of only 19% compared to a provincial average of almost 29%. We need and want to do more to welcome immigrants. But as a municipality, we are limited in the tools available to us without provincial leadership.

The proportion of immigrants to Canada who come to Ontario is declining, from 60% in 2001 to 40% in 2011, which is Ontario's lowest share in at least 30 years. In my community of London, Ontario, this trend is even more pronounced. So this bill is a welcome and long-overdue initiative. It's a step in the right direction, offering the promise of significant progress on some important issues, which is why New Democrats are pleased to support it.

Unfortunately, however, it does not do much more than offer the promise of change. Because it relies on the approval of the federal government, the bill would not necessarily be successful in achieving some of its most important goals, such as increasing the number of new immigrants to Ontario; for example, to increase our provincial nominee program to 5,000 in 2014. Most of all, the bill does not address some of the real and fundamental challenges facing newcomers to our province. It does not address the long-standing problems of ensuring that highly trained immigrants are able to work in their professional fields and that they are able to get employment that matches their experience and earn incomes that are in line with those of other Ontarians. It does not deal with settlement issues, broadly defined, which include housing, education, health care and a myriad of other issues. It does not address issues that affect non-economic-class immigrants, including their entry into the labour force. While the bill recognizes municipalities and employers as important partners, it is silent on the role of the community-based non-profit immigrant and refugee-serving sector, which, as we know, makes a huge contribution to the settlement of immigrants in our communities.

So what are the main provisions of the bill? First, it provides authority for Ontario to establish and govern immigrant selection programs for both temporary and permanent immigrants. It also allows the government to set immigration targets designed to help the province meet economic and labour market needs for the number of immigrants allowed into the province by Ontario's selection programs. We know, from demographic analysis, that we need to more than double the proportion of immigrants we are bringing in just to offset the decline in our labour market as a result of population aging. Over the same period, the profile of the immigrants who are arriving is also changing. We've seen a decline in the proportion of economic-class immigrants, from 64% in 2001 to 52% in 2011, which is lower than any other province and much lower than the provincial average of 71% of immigrants. Bill 161 is specifically intended to increase the class of economic immigrants; that is, those highly educated newcomers who were often professionals in their countries of origin. But there is a catch, and it's a big one. Because any new programs would have to be approved by the federal government and there is no guarantee that this will happen, there is no assurance that the federal government will agree with this legislation.

Second, the bill enables the minister to conduct research, organize educational and training programs and

appoint committees on immigration-related issues. This is a vital aspect of the bill because we need to understand what programs are working, how they are working and how we can improve.

Third, the bill allows the minister to establish registries for both employers and recruiters who are interested in participating in Ontario selection programs under the act.

Fourth, the bill sets out a number of provisions related to process, including processes to monitor and detect possible contraventions of the act in order to prevent immigration fraud and protect program integrity, and permitting the minister to collect, use and disclose personal information in order to carry out these functions.

The bill aligns requirements under the Regulated Health Professions Act with those in the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act in terms of timelines in decision-making and access to records, which was a direction from the Office of the Fairness Commissioner.

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It creates a compliance and enforcement regime, including inspection, investigation powers, offences, and penalties for both individuals and organizations. It permits applicants to request an internal review regarding a decision made, and it allows for regulation-making authority in areas such as program administration, program eligibility, compliance, internal review and the payment of fines.

Finally, the bill allows the minister to enter into agreements with the federal government, other provinces and municipalities.

I now want to move to talk a bit about the implications of this bill for my community of London, Ontario, as well as share with this House some of the findings from the research I was involved in.

I mentioned earlier that London has a lower proportion of immigrants than many other large Ontario cities, but it is often a first destination for newcomers from Latin America because of our large and established Spanish-speaking community. We are also a key secondary settlement location, and we are the number one destination for refugee claimants in Ontario.

One of the issues we are facing in attracting newcomers to our community is the struggling economy in southwestern Ontario, and persistently high unemployment that causes many immigrants to leave because they cannot find work.

The 2011 census showed that about 12,000 immigrants reported moving to the London area between 2006 and 2011, but almost exactly the same number moved out, so the net change between 2006 and 2011 was only 235 immigrants.

It's hard to attract skilled newcomers when all you can offer are opportunities to clean houses or drive taxis or deliver pizza; when their only option is to work survival jobs that put them further behind as they lose their skills and are unable to afford either the time or the money to go to school for bridge training. It becomes a vicious

circle. In many ways, it is unconscionable, what we do to newcomers when we allow them in but deny them opportunities to work.

In my previous life as a policy researcher, before I was elected, I conducted surveys, focus groups and interviews with internationally educated health professionals who had arrived in this province with finely-honed professional skills developed through education and training in their countries of origin, and often with many years of professional experience as practitioners.

Too many times, they discovered after arrival that they would have to go through a complicated and costly series of steps in order to work in their profession. For example, the credential process for an internationally educated physiotherapist can take up to a year or more, at a cost of \$4,000 for credential review, prior learning assessment, and the written component of the Physiotherapy Competency Exam.

We know that internationally educated health professionals play an increasingly important role in addressing health human resource pressures, and are also vital in providing culturally competent care to Canada's diverse population.

But there are significant challenges that IEHPs—internationally educated health professions—face in transitioning to Canadian practice, including the validation of education credentials, achieving language fluency, obtaining clinical experience, passing certification exams, and learning the culture of the Canadian health care system.

Despite a number of recent projects undertaken by federal and provincial governments, the failure rate of internationally educated health professionals on national exams in many professions is significantly higher than the Canadian average, and obtaining clinical experience that will be recognized by regulatory bodies and employers remains a barrier.

The research project I was involved in made some important recommendations, including the need for sustained funding for flexible, affordable and accessible bridging and employment integration programs and, in particular, more and better pre-immigration information about the process to become licensed to practise and to register in their professions.

During the by-election last summer, I spent considerable time talking to internationally educated professionals in my riding. Many were living in low-income housing, either unemployed or working in precarious survival jobs to support their families while waiting for their credentials to be recognized. Some were trying to gather the financial resources necessary and arrange child care so that they could enrol in a bridging program to address gaps that were preventing them from entering professional practice.

Just a few months ago, in December, I attended an immigration round table for professionals that was organized by the London Multicultural Club. Unfortunately, the minister was invited but was unable to attend that event. If he had, he would have heard first-hand some of

the challenges and barriers faced by internationally educated newcomers in my community. I want to share with this House some of those stories that were told to us at that round table, and other stories that I've heard from my constituents in London West.

First, I want to read from a letter I received from an internationally trained physician in my riding which captures directly the frustration and the anxiety experienced by skilled newcomers:

"I am an internationally trained physician from Iraq and I have been living in London, Ontario, as a landed immigrant since 2009. Since my arrival I have completed my Licentiate of the Medical Council of Canada exams and earned my LMCC certificate with excellent scores.... I have also [been] volunteering and doing observerships in multiple places to build up my CV, but unfortunately, after all the hard work, I was never offered a job in the field of health care, let alone medicine. Now, after all this time and hard work, I feel that I am back to square one with no job.... Why is an enthusiastic, passionate ... and someone who has completed all the requirements of the Licentiate being shunned from the system? When I arrived to Canada I was 26 and now I am 31, and I don't feel that I can live on with uncertainty for eternity."

Another doctor, a foreign-trained ob-gyn, came to my office and questioned why CIC would credit perspective immigrants with points scoring them higher for immigration when they can't find work in their respective fields. This doctor also obtained her Licentiate of the Medical Council of Canada. She passed the national exam as well as the membership exam with the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists. But while looking to work in her field, she was continually told that she needed to complete a Canadian residency, which she said she would do, but she cannot get into a medical school because of the limited spaces for huge numbers of applicants. She is understandably upset and emotional because she wants to practise her specialty and had expectations that she would be able to do that when she came to Canada. She feels she was misinformed and that our system makes it very difficult to get accurate information. At this point, she is telling others considering immigrating not to come because they will not be able to work in their chosen profession.

We need to do a better job of informing people before they come to Canada of what exactly will be required of them in order for them to practise their profession. We have people landing here thinking that they will walk into a job because they have scored high in points. There's a big disconnect between what immigrants are told pre-arrival and the reality they experience when they arrive. It can be very expensive and confusing for immigrants, and stressful and destabilizing for the whole settlement process.

Another issue—a painful issue for MPPs to deal with—are cases of neonatal mothers without status in Canada and no access to health care. In my office, I talked with a Canadian man whose partner had come to Canada with a working holiday visa that gave her health

care benefits. It was limited to a one-year term that was neither extendable nor renewable. She became pregnant but her health benefits ran out when her visa expired, which made her a person without status in Canada. One month after the birth of her baby, the child died. Although the baby was covered by OHIP as a Canadian citizen, the mother was not, and the cost of the birth and the funeral was \$30,000.

The second case was a woman whose visa had expired in mid-September but she was expecting in October. After a difficult birth, she needed hospitalization for four days, and ended up with a bill of \$15,000.

We are not taking good care of young Ontarians when we don't take good care of their mothers. We are not helping their families get off to a good start in life when we saddle their parents with tens of thousands of dollars in medical bills.

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I have to say that it is indeed heartening to finally see some action being taken on immigration issues by this Liberal government after more than a decade in office, including, I might add, three majority governments when they would have been in a position to move forward and show leadership on the issues identified in Bill 161.

These issues did not just appear this year or last year. These are issues that we have been hearing about for many, many years in our communities. By refusing to take action, by not addressing these issues until the waning days of a minority government—think of the consequences to Ontario, not just the economic costs of having highly qualified professionals unable to utilize their skills and contribute to our economy, and not just the loss of talent in our workforce in the face of widespread skill shortages, but the human costs, the anguish and loss of dignity and purpose experienced by people who are no longer able to practise their career and are made to feel like an underclass when they arrive in Ontario, and the social loss to our communities without the rich diversity of ideas, culture and experience that newcomers bring.

The Liberal government has no excuse for not acting sooner. After more than 10 years in power, it is shameful that this is the first piece of legislation that is concerned with immigration.

In his leadoff speech, my colleague the member for Beaches–East York shared with us a troubling tale of the years of missed opportunities for this province to follow the lead of Quebec and create our own immigration system. These doors are now closed, and this is no longer a possibility. Ontario no longer has room to fashion our own immigration policies that meet our needs as a province. We must take direction from the federal government.

In closing, I say again that we are pleased to see this legislation come forward. We are prepared to support this legislation. But we also want to see some action taken on so many other issues related to the arrival of newcomers in our community.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise in support of Bill 161. I want to begin my remarks about some of the data that I want to make sure—the opposition, especially the opposition party, commented earlier, from the member from Simcoe–Grey.

In 2010, 93% of those immigrants who landed in Ontario in the past five years, meaning from 2006 to 2010, remained in Ontario. That's 93%, Mr. Speaker. Another 89% of those landing between 2001 and 2005 were also still in Ontario. These are the highest immigration retention rates among all the provinces. The next-highest retention rate was in Alberta, with 92% retention rates from 2006 to 2010. The lowest retention rate was in PEI, with only a 37% retention rate. I want to make sure that the opposition hears these facts.

I'm very pleased to hear the comments made by my colleague from London West about the plight of the refugees. I totally hear that. As a former public health nurse, I saw them every day when I visited their homes, and when I was a trustee for the Toronto District School Board. Their needs are unique—and especially that Ontario is a welcoming and diverse and respectful province.

The other piece is, the proposed Bill 161 is the beginning, not the end. It is also the first step for Ontario so that we can chart our own course when it comes to attracting skilled immigrants.

I hear the concerns from my colleague from Nickel Belt and, as I said earlier, the member from London West. The challenge for new Canadians is not just the weather; we just experienced that. Certainly, new Canadians need to feel warm, respected and valued. Sometimes we hear the opposition talk down about our great province, and that's not what Ontarians are all about. We're a great province. We should be proud of everything we do.

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

M. Jerry J. Ouellette: L'histoire de ma famille remonte aussi loin que le deuxième bateau venu de France en 1604.

Quite frankly, that is that the family first came across in 1604. If you look at my mother's side, my mother's mother was Ukrainian and my mother's father was Polish. On my father's side, not only was there French but a First Nation. As well, his grandparents on his mother's side were Irish and Scottish.

But I have concerns. I see that we're talking about Bill 161. When you look and see that the Ontario Federation of Labour president backs Putin against the Ukrainians, and he calls the Ukrainians fighting against the Russians "thugs, fascists and anti-Semites," how is that going to attract the quality individuals that we need in the province of Ontario when we're talking about immigration?

Mr. John O'Toole: That's the head of the federation of labour?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Yes, that is correct. That is the Ontario Federation of Labour president, when he states that the Ukrainians fighting against the Russians are thugs, fascists and anti-Semites. Not only that, but this same individual stands up and goes against Israel.

How can we attract quality individuals into the province of Ontario when we have the president of the Ontario Federation of Labour standing up and making statements like this? It only takes away from Canadians. It only takes away from the great province that we have.

My grandmother, my bab,a came in 1927 and landed in Nova Scotia with a single bag; nothing else. She came to make a difference, landing, eventually, here in Oshawa, as did so many other Ukrainians and other individuals from all around the world. We have a great province here, Mr. Speaker. We need to ensure that these individuals who come here to make a difference, to stand up for Canada as a whole, realize that when individuals like the Ontario Federation of Labour president stand up and say the Ukrainians are nothing but thugs, fascists and anti-Semites, it's not what we all represent. We're all-inclusive and we want to make sure Ontario remains that way.

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

M. Michael Mantha: Aujourd'hui est le temps de célébrer la francophonie de l'Ontario. Ça me fait plaisir de donner mes petits mots en regard du projet de loi 161, la Loi portant sur l'immigration en Ontario et apportant une modification connexe à la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées. Ma collègue de London-Ouest a apporté un bon aperçu du projet de loi.

Mais aujourd'hui, en célébrant la francophonie, je veux vraiment donner de bons commentaires au ministre de l'Immigration en regard du contenu qui va être rajouté. C'est 5 % envers le projet, et puis l'idée d'apporter plus de francophones à la province—je pense que les gens de la communauté francophone et la francophonie apportent un gros plus à la diversité qu'on a dans notre province. C'est vraiment une bonne étape qu'on va prendre pour inviter plus de gens pour ce faire et donner un aperçu de l'Ontario qu'on accueille tous à notre province. Puis, avec des nouveaux, une diversité—ça va vraiment améliorer les services qu'on a ici dans la province, et puis les beaux sourires qu'on a tout le temps des gens francophones.

I also wanted to comment a little bit about this. Last week, when I was on my constituency week, particularly in the community of White River—I'm purposely making this indication so you can hear that—there is a huge demand for work there. Good things are happening up in White River. There's employment—there is a new mill that has opened up—but there is a huge shortage in manpower up there. There are local businesses that are struggling to find man- and womanpower to work in complementary, supporting roles in their economy.

I look forward to seeing the discussions that we're going to have with this bill and I look forward to sharing more comments that I'm going to have on this.

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

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member for London West for her comments.

This bill is a step in the right direction for the province of Ontario. It's about charting our own course here. In

fact, I had the opportunity to meet with many of my counterparts, different ministers responsible for immigration across the country, including the federal minister, and I got some good responses with regard to this piece of legislation. In fact, other ministers were asking how they could copy such a piece of legislation to help chart their courses in their provinces, because we know there's a new system coming into place. It's called the expression-of-interest model. It's going to directly link employment with immigration, and we believe it will account for about 50% of all immigration here in Canada.

We, as a Legislature, have to put in place a system that will allow us to work with business and to work with newcomers to ensure that we, as a province, continue to grow and prosper. It is an economic imperative that we get this file right, and I think now is the time that we have to invest in this legislation.

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If you compare our record on this side of the House to the former Conservative government and former NDP government, you'll see that this is a government that's very different than the two previous governments. We've made some drastic improvements in settlement services. I don't even think that when the Conservatives were in power, immigration was on their radar. In fact, I don't think I've had a question on immigration from the Conservatives since I've been the minister. I think one came from one member about the provincial nominee program. But it's not even on their radar. If Bill 161 wasn't brought forward, I don't think the Conservatives would even be talking about immigration. They wouldn't even be talking about immigration.

I'm happy that finally a government has come forward to move some great legislation so Ontario can continue to chart its course and be the number one destination for all immigrants and newcomers here in Canada.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from London West, you have two minutes for a response.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough—Agincourt, the member from Oshawa, the member from Algoma—Manitoulin and the Minister of Immigration and Citizenship for their comments.

I wanted to respond to some of the remarks that were made, particularly around the issue of the retention of immigrants. Speaking as the member for London West and given the realities of the experience in my community, I know that we are not retaining immigrants. Many who arrive are leaving, and retention is a big issue for us. We want to do more to enable people who arrive to transition into the workplace and to use the skills that they bring, which are often exceptional skills that they have been trained for in their countries of origin.

In response to the member from Oshawa, I think the most important thing that we can do to attract immigrants is to ensure that we have smooth credential recognition processes and accessible bridging processes to enable them to become licensed and enter the professions for which they were trained.

I agree with the member from Algoma—Manitoulin about the importance of setting a target for francophone immigrants, because we want to be welcoming to the diversity of people across the world and, of course, we want to engage francophone newcomers and all the skills that they bring to our economy and, as the member pointed out, for our labour force.

Finally, to the Minister of Immigration and Citizenship, I would say yes, I agree; this is a step in the right direction. It's important, and I'm glad to hear about the conversations you've been having with the federal government and your counterparts in other provinces.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Et des affaires francophones. Alors, je voudrais souhaiter à tous les Ontariens aujourd'hui, tous les francophones et francophiles de l'Ontario, une bonne journée de la Francophonie.

Sur ce, monsieur le Président, ça me fait plaisir de parler aujourd'hui sur notre projet de loi sur l'immigration. Premièrement, je voudrais féliciter le ministre de l'Immigration pour cette belle initiative. Dans ce projet de loi, il y a—pour la première fois, on veut encourager l'immigration francophone ici en Ontario. On est le premier gouvernement qui se donne une cible pour encourager l'immigration francophone en Ontario. Alors, je voudrais féliciter le ministre qui a pensé à cette belle initiative fort bien acceptée par la communauté francophone.

Ce projet de loi est important. Il est important pour nous tous parce que les Ontariens, on vient tous d'ailleurs. On est une terre d'accueil. On a accueilli des gens d'à peu près tous les pays au monde. Puis, les gens se sentent bien ici.

On sait qu'il y a certaines provinces qui, oui, se disent qu'elles veulent bien accueillir des immigrants mais qui mettent toutes sortes d'embûches, toutes sortes de politiques en place qui font que les immigrants qui viennent ici ne se sentent pas toujours bien accueillis.

Mais en Ontario, on doit se féliciter tous et toutes parce qu'on a toujours été une communauté ouverte. On aime accueillir des immigrants de tous les pays, et ça fait que l'Ontario—moi, je pense à tout ce que les autres communautés immigrantes, lorsqu'elles sont arrivées ici, ont apporté à l'Ontario, ce qui fait qu'on est une province où la plupart des immigrants veulent venir, qu'ils viennent ici à travers d'autres provinces. Finalement, même les francophones veulent venir ici en Ontario parce qu'ils savent qu'ils vont être bien accueillis.

Alors, oui, il y a des lacunes encore. On entendait tantôt parler des professionnels qui viennent d'ailleurs et qui doivent attendre pour pouvoir exercer leur profession. Mais ceci dit, on a fait beaucoup d'avancées là-dessus. On a maintenant un commissaire qui revoit les plaintes de ces gens-là qui sont des professionnels—et des associations professionnelles, des corps professionnels ne sont peut-être pas pleinement ouverts à l'accueil des immigrants. Alors, le ministre, bien sûr, a voulu mettre en

place des mesures—le ministre présent et les ministres passés—mais sous notre gouvernement, on a fait beaucoup d'avancées sur ce côté-là.

Comme je vous dis, je suis issue d'une famille immigrante qui est venue ici au 17^e siècle de France—la famille de mon père et la famille de ma mère. Alors, je n'ai pas de mère d'origine irlandaise et de père d'origine française; les deux venaient de France, de Normandie. Ils se sont établis au Québec, et je suis la première de ma famille d'avoir déménagé ici en Ontario. Je suis venue ici parce que je voulais apprendre l'anglais, parce que je viens d'une communauté que je dis toujours est 125 % francophone.

Pour une de mes collègues qui disait la semaine dernière que je ne connais pas le côté agricole parce que je représente Ottawa-Vanier, je voudrais la corriger, parce que je viens d'un petit village d'à peu près 350 de population. C'est un village agricole dans les Laurentides. Alors, je connais très bien le côté agricole.

Oui, ce projet de loi-là va mettre en place des balises et des outils qui vont assurer de plus en plus que les francophones peuvent venir ici en Ontario et être bien accueillis et connaître aussi les services qui leur sont offerts.

Du côté des affaires francophones, on travaille avec des associations communautaires pour que nos immigrants francophones—moi, je suis toujours surprise quand j'entends qu'il y a des immigrants francophones qui ne connaissent pas tous les services qu'on offre ici en Ontario. Alors, ça me dit qu'il faut avoir de meilleures communications pour que ces gens-là, lorsqu'ils arrivent, sachent qu'on a un bon système d'éducation en français ici en Ontario et que leurs enfants peuvent s'inscrire, ou les parents peuvent inscrire les enfants, dans des écoles francophones; aussi, qu'on a deux collèges francophones et des universités bilingues ici en Ontario, alors, leurs enfants peuvent continuer à poursuivre leurs études en français.

De plus, ils doivent aussi savoir que, même ici à Toronto, on peut offrir des services de santé en français et que si les enfants veulent poursuivre des professions, ils peuvent, pour la plupart, étudier des professions en français, soit à l'Université Laurentienne à Sudbury, soit à l'Université de Hearst, soit à l'Université d'Ottawa, soit à l'Université St-Paul, soit au Collège universitaire dominicain. Alors, ce sont des institutions postsecondaires francophones ici en Ontario, en plus du Collège Boréal et de La Cité collégiale.

On doit s'assurer que les gens connaissent ces services, et aussi, s'ils ont des problèmes, qu'ils puissent avoir recours à des services qui peuvent les aider, soit à continuer de poursuivre leurs études, soit à pouvoir exercer leur profession ici en Ontario. Ils peuvent avoir recours à des services de mise à niveau. Certaines universités et certains collèges vont aussi leur permettre, surtout, de faire évaluer leurs acquis, et, s'ils n'ont pas tous les acquis dont on a besoin pour pratiquer ici, ils peuvent poursuivre leurs études pour, justement, avoir tous les critères et qualifications dont ils ont besoin pour pouvoir exercer leur profession ici en Ontario.

Je mets l'accent sur l'accueil des immigrants parce que, mieux les immigrants sont accueillis, meilleures seront leurs chances de succès—en fait, leurs chances de succès pour qu'ils soient bien intégrés et aussi leurs chances de succès économique. Lorsque tous ces critères-là sont alignés, on est tous gagnants ici en Ontario.

Alors, je voudrais m'assurer que les gens ici en Chambre appuient ce projet de loi-là, et, en terminant, je voudrais, une dernière fois, féliciter le ministre de l'Immigration pour cette belle initiative. On sait que notre ministre de l'Immigration est un immigrant ici en Ontario, et nous sommes très chanceux d'avoir une personne ayant ses qualités et ses talents à la tête. Il comprend bien les défis d'une personne qui arrive ici au pays et, surtout, en Ontario. En Ontario, on veut être—on est—une province où les immigrants sont bien accueillis, et on veut continuer sur cette voie-là.

Monsieur le Président, je vous remercie de votre attention.

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 1012 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Today Samantha Unger is the page captain; she's from York Centre, and I'm delighted to welcome her parents, Jill Unger, and Mitch Unger, and her brother, Spencer. Welcome.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize Rob Black from the Rural Ontario Institute, and a number of beef farmers who are here today to participate in the Rural Ontario Institute's Build program. In the gallery are Doug Helm, Rob Thompson, Rachel Bulmer, Karen Mansfield, David Noorloos, Mike Edwards, Dave Cavanagh, Bill Herron, Michael Hargrave, Betty-Jo Almond and Sandi Brock. I would like to welcome them all to Queen's Park. I look forward to meeting with them this afternoon.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm delighted today to have David MacAlpine and Frank Tall in the gallery: a retired mathematician and a retired statistician.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise to welcome my friend Mike Yen, a resident of Trinity-Spadina—welcome, Mike—as well as two classes of grade 10 students from Dr. Norman Bethune. They are here with their teachers, Derrick Wong and Caralin Fleet. Welcome to Queen's Park—I think they are just coming in.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to introduce Mary Novak, who's a regional councillor for Durham—as well as her friend, a political activist, Gail Elizabeth Dowsett. They purchased lunch with me for supporting the Bethesda women's shelter in Clarington. Thanks for coming today.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Je veux juste souhaiter une belle Journée internationale de la Francophonie à tous mes collègues à l'Assemblée, et à vous aussi, monsieur le Président. Bonne journée de la Francophonie.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

The member from Huron–Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to join our critic for agriculture to introduce two people from my riding. I'd like to introduce wonderful ambassadors of Ontario's beef industry: Doug Helm, who hails from outside of Lucknow, in Huron county, and Rob Thompson, who is proud to call Ripley and Bruce county home.

Mr. Bill Walker: Similar to my colleague from Huron–Bruce, I would like to introduce Bill Herron and Michael Hargrave from the Beef Farmers of Ontario, from the beef capital of Canada, Bruce and Grey counties.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my great pleasure to welcome one of the great beef farmers from Lambton county, Dave Noorloos, here with us today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. Well, Premier, you got caught red-handed again. You were told about the precarious state of Ontario's finances on one day, and went out the next and told the bonding agencies the complete opposite. In fact, you and your finance minister told the entire Legislature the complete opposite of what you knew to be the facts, and now you're trying to block the release of public documents that you know show the real you.

This is not the old Liberals doing this; this is you, Premier. You preach openness and transparency, but as soon as we published public documents you tried every trick in the book to block us. Premier, exactly what is it that you don't want Ontarians to see?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. I'm already beginning to hear things that I don't like, and I'll stop it.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the government House leader is going to want to speak to the specifics of the documentation that the member opposite is referring to. But I just want to make a general statement, and that is that, since I have been in this office, I have done everything in my power to provide information and answers to questions, whether it's questions on the relocation of gas plants—we opened up the process around the gas plants. We provided tens of thousands of documents to the committee. I've appeared before the committee twice.

In terms of our fiscal situation, the information that is provided in the fall economic statement speaks to the exact situation that we are in in Ontario. We were very open about the realities of our situation, including the revenue shortfall of \$5 billion. I hope that the member opposite has had a chance to read the fall economic statement.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, your government got caught again, so out come the Liberal buzzwords. The budget was re-calibrated. No one in accounting even knows what that means. Nonetheless, we're talking about a fixed point in time last spring. You and your cabinet were told the cold, hard facts, and you turned around and told the bonding agencies the complete opposite. Now they say the budget will be aspirational. They aspire to have better numbers. I'm sorry, Premier, but the financial world doesn't want your aspirations; they want the real numbers.

You're doing everything in your power, Premier—everything in your power—to block the facts from getting out. Why do you continue to say one thing and do the opposite?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's talk about some numbers, because the member opposite has stated he's interested in some numbers. So let's talk about some reality here, what we're dealing with. We exceeded our fiscal targets four years in a row. We're the leanest government in Canada. If you look at the cost of programs, we're the leanest government in Canada. We have created more than 446,000 net new jobs since the recessionary low. Employment rose in Ontario by 95,700 jobs in 2013. We've created 9,000 youth job placements through the youth employment fund since September.

Those are the facts. That is what is happening. The advice that we have gotten from officials is advice that we have acted on when we released the fall economic statement. Those numbers and that advice were reflected in the fall economic statement.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, let's look at the secret documents you tried to have quashed today. Let's see what you didn't want the public to see. You have a fiscal gap. First it was \$3.5 billion. Two days later, you were told, "Your plans fall short of managing within allocations." So you bumped up the gap to \$3.6 billion, with no plan on how to pay for it. Then you went to a caucus retreat to take decisive action on reducing this massive hole. Sadly, you spent a further \$900 million that day, bringing the hole in your budget to \$4.5 billion. That's just the extra. That does not take into account the \$10.1-billion deficit and the \$7.2-billion deficit you're already forecasting. Premier, I can see why you want these documents to be kept from the public. What else are you hiding from us?

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government house leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm a little bit disappointed in the honourable member across the way. I think he would realize above anyone, as someone who has served on a number of committees that have had access to certain government information, that there's a balance in this

Legislature. We've discussed this before in the House. Where committees have the right to information, that information is provided to them, but there are also moments when there are commercial confidences, when there are private matters, when there are third party issues, when there are documents that are of such a sensitive nature that the public versions are redacted.

I quote from 2002. The Minister of Energy of the day, Mr. Wilson, in regard to confidential information on a lease agreement between the Ontario Power Generation and British Energy, acknowledged at that time that disclosure of financial and commercial information from Ontario Power "may prejudice significantly"—

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

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FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: To the Premier: If anyone should be standing up and bringing a point of privilege, it should be us against every minister who attended the cabinet retreat where it was disclosed you have a \$4.5-billion budget gap and then stood in this House and told the rest of us, "We're on track to balance the budget."

Premier, you knew that what you were telling this Legislature, the financial community and the public was the exact opposite from the real financial picture. When we presented these public documents, your first reaction was to attack me personally and accuse me of releasing confidential documents, even though you know those documents were supplied by the Clerk and are public documents.

Premier, last September, you stood and said, "I don't believe ... undermining people's credibility or attempting to do that is necessary." When did you change your tactics, or was that always your MO?

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: First of all, Mr. Speaker, let me continue the quote. In 2002, the Minister of Energy of the day, Minister Wilson, in regard to confidential information on a lease agreement between the Ontario Power Generation and British Energy, acknowledged at that time that disclosure of financial and commercial information from Ontario Power—and I'll use his words—"may prejudice significantly the competitive position of the corporation or result in undue loss of gain to parties other than the corporation."

Mr. Speaker, that's just one example, when they were in power, of how efforts were made to make sure that there was a balance between the committee's right to see documents and the fact of the matter that certain documents are of a sensitive nature.

Those documents were provided to the committee, but there was also an urging of the committee, which the

committee accepted, to hold those documents in confidence without the express permission of the committee itself.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: To the Premier: I realize you're talking about 20-year-old documents, but why don't we look at a very recent one and see what you didn't want disclosed to the people of Ontario?

The gravity of the situation in Ontario comes to light in a note from your financial officials. They tell you that because you haven't implemented any changes in your spending habits, you now have to cut \$6.9 billion. They say, "Changes since 2012 budget show a deterioration in the fiscal outlook beyond 2013-14."

Premier, you want to keep this information from being made public, but you can't. These are public documents that you want quashed. This tells me we've only scratched the surface. These are the ones that are already disclosed. There's something else in those files you don't want us to see.

So I ask my fellow MPPs: Lend us your staff to scour through these thousands of documents and discover what Kathleen Wynne does not want us to see.

Interjections.

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

I will remind the member, and all members, again that we use titles or ridings.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I'm trying to get this clear. The honourable member is standing up and quoting from documents that were provided by the Ministry of Finance to the committee, which are in the public domain, which are in the possession of all the members of the committee, and he's standing here in the Legislature and asking why we do not give them the documents. Mr. Speaker, we gave—

Interjections.

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

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the best estimate we have is that there have been over 2.6 million documents provided to various committees by this government. The fishing expeditions of the opposition have cost tens of thousands of dollars in staff time and have tied up the bureaucracy. But we recognize their right for those documents, and we have provided them.

Mr. Speaker, they—

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

Interjection.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes, we have the documents, and you're trying to stop us from releasing them. I'll tell you what's in another one of them. You continue to use the buzzword "aspirational." Let's see what the secretary of cabinet told you in one of these documents. "The plan to

continue reducing spending beyond 2015-16 is largely aspirational in nature rather than backed up by detailed plans and measures to get us there.” So now we know what “aspirational” means: “We’d love this to happen. We just have absolutely no idea how to get there.”

Premier, is this your idea of governing: You get caught, and you attempt to drag me through the mud to distract from the fact that you have no plan for the 600,000 men and women who woke up this morning without a job? This is the latest example of the Liberals putting their priorities ahead of the needs of the people of Ontario.

Hon. John Milloy: The member should know that the Oscar season was a few weeks ago. The fact of the matter is that we have provided thousands and thousands of pages of documents to that committee. Those documents have been made public. They are available for discussion and debate here in the Legislature. At the time—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That’s enough. Yes, I did; I caught you. You can look away all you want.

Hon. John Milloy: At that time, the committee, on which the opposition has a majority, decided that certain parts of documents which are of a sensitive nature should remain confidential unless the committee itself decided otherwise. That was the committee’s decision. The documents that he has received, that he’s talking about today, are in the public domain. The other documents that will be part of a point of privilege, Mr. Speaker, as I’m sure you would agree, will be dealt with later in today’s session.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Over the last few weeks, we’ve been putting forward positive plans to clean up the mess in our electricity system to help small business and job creators. Yesterday, the Premier wouldn’t even confirm what current government policy is when it comes to her planned tax cuts for the wealthy. Why can’t the Premier answer basic questions about her fiscal plan?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the leader of the third party for the question. What I said yesterday was that we will be bringing our budget forward. There will be information, obviously, laid out about how we are going to move forward to make sure that we meet the needs of the people in the province. Part of that is taking costs out of the electricity system, and we have a long-term energy plan that speaks to just that. It speaks to having a reliable energy plan in the province, something which we have not heard come forward from the NDP. In fact, all we’ve heard from the NDP on energy is that they don’t agree with any of the initiatives that we’ve taken. They don’t agree with nuclear; they don’t agree with green energy; they don’t agree with any of it. But what they would do, we have absolutely no idea. So we have a long-term energy plan. We will be bringing the budget forward. In the meantime, I look forward to any conversation that the leader would like to have.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberal plan seems to be changing day by day. The party that brought us the HST and sky-high hydro rates is suddenly concerned about the middle-class squeeze.

Interjections.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier, who said she had no choice but to ask families to shoulder new taxes, tolls and fees, is suddenly scrambling to back away from her own ideas.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Training, Colleges and Universities, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Would the Premier agree with the following statement: Liberals have very strong principles, and if you don’t like them, they can change?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I don’t have the Marx Brothers response to that. I believe it was one of the Marx Brothers who—that’s a paraphrase.

We know, and have known all along, that the middle class is the backbone of the economy. We know that. That’s why we put the 30%-off-tuition grant in place. That’s why we’ve been working so hard to make sure that costs like electricity are managed and that there are plans in place to help people and programs in place to help people deal with those costs.

What I said last week about the decisions around how we will raise revenue for the transit fund—I simply took some options off the table. We will still bring forward a transit plan, Mr. Speaker. There will be a transparent fund that will provide for the building of transit into the future.

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What’s the leader of the third party is not saying is that she does not support and has not put forward any ideas about how we would actually build transit into the future. We’re committed to doing that. We will bring forward our plan in the budget. I think it would be consistent with the history of the NDP if they actually supported the building of transit and transportation in this province.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, families feeling squeezed in tough times are looking for a government to focus on creating jobs, making life more affordable and to respect the money that they send to Queen’s Park. Instead, they see a Liberal government scrambling to distance themselves from their own policy while this same old status quo rolls on. Does the Premier really think that is good enough?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I really think that it’s a bit rich for the leader of the third party to talk to me about distancing myself from policies when unrecognizable across the floor is anything that would resemble the NDP that I have known in the past.

We are committed to making the investments that are necessary to move this province forward, Mr. Speaker,

and one of those is investing in transit and in an integrated transportation system. We know, for example, that in the north, roads and bridges are what are necessary if we're going to have solid transportation planning. That's why we have a \$100-million roads and bridges fund. I'd ask the leader of the third party: Does she support that if she doesn't support transit building?

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier, although I find it ironic that this is the government that cancelled the ONTC. Nonetheless, New Democrats have been putting forward some achievable, affordable, concrete plans to make life better for people and to create jobs. For example, a job creation tax credit is a simple way we can reward the companies that are putting people to work, not the ones that are shipping jobs away. It's working in other jurisdictions, and the Obama administration thinks it's going to work too.

Why is the government more interested in defending the status quo than trying to create new jobs with something new?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I am absolutely not in favour of the status quo. In fact, I'm very impatient about our future, which is why I want to move on making the investments that are necessary. I am looking, and we are working with groups of people around the province, and we are putting forward ideas that are going to make life better, including integrated transportation planning.

The leader of the third party neglected to mention that on the ONTC, we have put together a group. We are working to make sure that there is a plan other than clear divestiture, and I think the leader of the third party knows that.

We are going to work with ideas that are feasible, but I would ask the leader of the third party: What would be the cost of the credit that she's putting forward? Is it for every job in the province? I think she hasn't done her homework on that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, I'm going to try again with another one of our plans. Our broken electricity system is driving up bills, and it's driving businesses out of Ontario. In fact, American cities are trying to entice Ontario businesses with cheaper electricity, and the worst part is, it's our electricity. The people of Ontario subsidize electricity exports to the US, and the US uses those discount prices to lure our jobs away.

We've put forward a concrete plan to stop exporting hydro at a discount rate. Why is the government more interested in defending the status quo than trying something new to create jobs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will speak to the specifics of the energy issue, but I just want to point out that, as the NDP leader has done for a number of weeks now, she is pulling individual issues out of the air. We are working to address the concerns of the people of the province of Ontario in context, in a coherent way. Having a long-

term energy plan is that kind of coherence. You can't just deal with issues on the one-off. Supporting business, making sure the people have jobs—those have to have coherent plans.

In fact, this NDP plan—which isn't a plan; it's just a single initiative—would actually drive electricity bills up. What the NDP wants to do is end electricity exports that save ratepayers \$300 million a year. Well, we're not going to do that. But if you want to bring forward a plan that's part of a broader, coherent strategy, we'd be happy to look at that.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People see Liberals scrambling to defend sky-high CEO salaries at bloated hydro agencies; selling discount electricity to the US and sticking families with the bill; opening loopholes for CEOs that can get the HST off their entertainment expenses; and scrambling to back away from some of their own plans.

What they don't see is a plan to put their priorities first and create and protect good jobs. Why is this government more interested in defending the status quo that's not working than in trying something new to create jobs?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: On all of those fronts, whether it's job creation or whether it's energy, we are putting in place, as I said, coherent plans that have a number of aspects to them.

If we talk about energy, in our long-term energy plan we talk about the generation of electricity over the next decades. We talk about taking costs out of the system so that, for example, we won't move ahead to build new nuclear, because that's \$15 billion that it's not necessary to spend.

On the job creation strategy, we need to make investments in training and skills. We need to make investments in infrastructure, including transit and transportation. We need to support businesses that are ready to expand or bring their business to Ontario.

We have to have that kind of coherent planning. They cannot be one-offs, as the NDP is proposing.

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Premier. A few moments ago, your government House leader threatened to censor, or try to censor, our finance critic for revealing in public documents that you have a \$4.5-billion hole in your so-called aspirational budget. That tactic, the one that you're trying to employ, closely resembles the one that Dalton McGuinty did over the two cancelled gas plants.

It's very difficult for Ontarians to trust you when you say one thing in the backrooms and another thing here in the assembly.

Premier, we want to know from you: What is it going to take for you to come clean on the state of Ontario's economy—a third OPP investigation?

Interjections.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: No wonder policing costs are going up in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Regrettably, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is warned.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: It's disappointing, but let's just go with the facts of what has happened here. A committee of the Legislature, as is its right, asked for documents—in this case, from the Ministry of Finance—and they were provided.

As I pointed out earlier, the committee itself, of which the opposition is the majority, decided that certain documents that were of a confidential nature, that had been identified by the Ministry of Finance, should remain confidential until the committee decided.

That is the issue. My understanding is that you will be hearing a point of privilege on this a little bit later, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, thousands and thousands of documents were provided to that committee as requested. They were the subject of discussion and debate—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Hon. John Milloy:—and over two million documents have been provided to the committee. That, Mr. Speaker, is the situation, and the aspersions that she has put forward—

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The facts are, my finance critic, Vic Fedeli, has the information. He found a \$4.5-billion hole. He has the documents, and you're trying to censor him. The public has these documents, and you're trying to censor a member of the opposition for exposing this government's \$4.5-billion hole. It is nothing different than the cancelled gas plants that we've seen so they could save seats.

1100

This Premier would cling to power in her office at any cost. All we are asking is: Will she come clean and tell the province exactly what the size of the hole in her budget is and what employment practices they are going to employ? We had a Premier in this nation who resigned last night over a \$45,000 expense scandal. Now she has a \$4.5-billion expense scandal. Will she pull the plug on her government?

Interjections.

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

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, the majority on that committee is the opposition, and that committee decided to keep certain documents confidential. There will be a moment later today when this matter can be looked at by privilege.

But it's a little rich, coming from that side of the House, when they want to talk about committees and gas plants. As my colleagues back here have reminded me, when are we going to see the Conservative candidates

come forward at the committee to talk about their promises during the last election to cancel the gas plants and talk about the funding analysis that they've done? If they want to talk about—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings is warned.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Aboriginal Affairs will come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, if there's any party that needs to talk about hiding things before committee, it's the PC Party across the way on what has happened in front of the justice committee.

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Less than two weeks ago, you stood in your government caucus room in a press conference saying that you represented change and that you were going to bring transparency and accountability to this province.

Applause.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You may not be applauding at the end of this question.

The next day, what do you do? You appoint Sandra Pupatello as the chair of hydro. Can you tell me how that is different from what has happened in the past and the cronyism that we saw from the McGuinty government before you?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Energy.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: That question has been asked on several occasions; that question has been raised. My answer is the same. We had two chairs of two of our agencies who had been in office for 10 years, and we decided we were going to replace two chairs.

With respect to the chair that has been referred to by the member of the third party, she has served as a public servant for 17 years in this House. She has served as a minister of three or four different portfolios in government. She has tremendous credibility. She understands the system. She understands budgeting. She understands sensitivity to the public. We could not have chosen a more excellent candidate for that position.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Listen, this is a simple question about Liberals appointing their friends to a political office in order to get money.

If it was just Sandra Pupatello, we would say, "Oh, well, it's a one-off." But take a look at who you've appointed. You've appointed Michael Bryant to a very nice board with a very nice salary, you've appointed Maria Van Bommel to another board with a very nice salary, and you've appointed your transition team leader, M^{me} Smith, to Washington—just to name a few.

So tell us: How is the Wynne government any different than any other Liberal administration when it comes to appointing their friends to high places on the taxpayers' dime?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to throw a few names out for the members here. Let's talk about Frances Lankin. Let's talk about Elmer Buchanan. Let's talk about Joe Pantalone. Let's talk about Bernard Lord, former Premier of New Brunswick, who was also appointed at the same time as the chair of Hydro One.

We have been meticulous about being across the board in terms of political appointments, and we have nothing to be embarrassed about.

IMMIGRANTS' SKILLS

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour le ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration, the Honourable Michael Coteau.

Speaker, as you'll appreciate, Ontario is still the number one destination in Canada for newcomers. This remains true despite representations otherwise from the party opposite. Newcomers to this province, by and large, have the post-secondary education, the on-the-job experience, the specialized skills and, most of all, the drive to succeed in their chosen careers, thus the creation of our immigration strategy in 2012 and why we have prioritized the licensure of internationally trained professionals. In this regard, the government has introduced the Ontario Immigration Act, an important piece of legislation.

My question, Speaker, is this: How will the Ontario Immigration Act, Bill 161, strengthen our efforts to ensure that highly skilled newcomers, such as physicians and engineers, can find positions in their fields?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member for the question. I'd also like to acknowledge that today is the beginning of Nowruz, so to anyone who is celebrating that wonderful, ancient celebration, all the best.

It gives me great pleasure to talk about Ontario's immigration act, Bill 161, and I'm encouraged by the positive feedback that I've heard in this Legislature in debate. This bill will do many great things for current and prospective newcomers to the province of Ontario. Like the member asking the question stated, helping newcomers find the right type of job that matches their skills is a priority of this government. If Bill 161 is passed, it will amend the Regulated Health Professions Act to provide timely decision-making regarding registration application and access to records by applicants in health care professions. These measures are in line with the recommendations that came from the Fairness Commissioner back in 2013.

I'd also like to highlight that our government will continue to invest into bridge training programs. We made a commitment of \$63 million over the next three years.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Nowruz Mubarak to you also, Minister, and thanks for the response of the various measures that you've outlined, which I know will be appreciated widely not only across Ontario, but in my own riding of Etobicoke North.

Ontario's provincial nominee program was designed to nominate workers who address skill gaps that employers have identified. Last year, 86% of businesses benefited from their nominees, including through increased revenues, new contracts and new customers. Recognizing this program's success, the feds recently increased our nomination target from 1,300 nominees to 2,500.

This, of course, is good news, but the changing federal immigration climate is precarious. Over the next few years, there will be the implementation of the expression-of-interest model, which will radically change Ontario immigration.

Speaker, my question is this: How will Bill 161 better configure our provincial nominee program so that we can bring in highly skilled newcomers?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member again for his excellent question.

The member is correct: Our provincial nominee program is making a difference for Ontario businesses that have highly specific skills to fill. The member is also correct in stating that the federal government intends to make massive changes to the immigration system here in the province of Ontario and throughout the country.

Ontario cannot afford to be left behind. We need to take steps to ensure that we chart our own course here in the province of Ontario. Bill 161, if passed, would position Ontario to be a full partner in immigration with the federal government, giving Ontario a framework in which to design, deliver and manage a larger selection of our programs with regard to immigration.

The legislation would allow Ontario to have similar powers to that of the federal government, helping protect our program against fraud and misuse. Ontario is committed to increasing economic immigration to meet the needs of our knowledge-based economy. This proposed legislation would ensure that Ontario has the structures and tools—

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

Hon. Michael Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

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

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. On March 3, in reference to funding for the cystic fibrosis drug Kalydeco for 12-year-old Madi Vanstone, you told this Legislature, "We are going to push to expedite the process" and you will "keep her and her family in the loop."

In fact, when you and your health minister met with Madi and her mom that morning, you promised that you would provide them with biweekly updates to advise them as to what was happening concerning negotiations with the company Vertex and the Pan-Canadian Pricing Alliance.

It has been over two and a half weeks now, Premier, and Madi and her mom have heard absolutely nothing from you or your government. In fact, they haven't even gotten a response to the many emails that they've sent to

you. Since you won't respond to her on your own, like you promised, let me ask you publicly: What have you done to "expedite the process"?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Health will answer to the specifics on the supplementary, but I want the member opposite to know that as recently as yesterday I asked my staff in my daily senior staff meeting whether the Vanstone family had been kept in the loop and wanted to make sure that that communication was happening. If it's not happening, then it will. But I just want the member opposite to know that I asked that question, and I am going to make sure that they get the information they need.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: I can assure you that Beth Vanstone, Madi's mother, tells us that that communication is not happening, Premier.

Premier, 15 countries, including England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Austria, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and the United States—and even Greece, which has a 28% unemployment rate—have all found the necessary resources to cover the cost of Kalydeco, and they have agreements in place with Vertex Pharmaceuticals, the company that makes the drug.

I ask you again: How long is your government willing to let Madi Vanstone and other children with cystic fibrosis suffer before you actually do something? How many more bake sales, dog walks and lemonade stands do the children of Beeton and Bradford have to do in order to keep their friend alive? Do we tell these children to continue, or can we finally say to them that your government values Madi's life and will help to save it?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm pleased to tell the member opposite that a member of my staff actually has already spoken with Madi's mom earlier today, so we are committed to having that ongoing communication.

I was interested to read an article written by André Picard in the Globe and Mail recently. He talked with some thoughtfulness about the process of negotiating prices with drug companies. I have to say, we are continuing that work. I've spoken to the Minister of Health in Alberta. We are asking Vertex, the manufacturer, based in the United States, to actually engage in negotiation with us. They have rejected proposals that are fair proposals. We will continue to fight.

But if the member opposite is suggesting that we pay whatever price those pharmaceutical companies ask us to pay, I have to say I completely disagree with him. Indeed, he disagrees with himself, because when he was health minister, he was in the very position that I am in now.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, according to data provided by MPAC on 240 houses in an area in and around Parkdale–High Park, property assessments for modest homes, where typical middle-class families live, are being over-assessed. For example, a house on Campbell Avenue sold for \$377,000—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay, member, that's enough.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: —while MPAC had assessed it for \$537,000. It was assessed at 42.9% over market value.

This is another example of how this government is hitting middle-class families with taxes and fees. We've seen evidence in Parkdale–High Park. I ask the minister: Is this the case throughout all of Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We are very cognizant of the requirement to support our middle class and ensure that people—especially those who are finding it tough to afford to do the things that matter for their families.

We also know that MPAC, which is an arm's-length organization that also includes working with the municipalities by way of making those assessments with regard to the mill rate, is affecting communities all over the province.

As a result of the good work by my parliamentary assistant, Steven Del Duca, we have reviewed MPAC and continue to do what's necessary to revise the processes, to ensure fairness across the system, and we'll do just that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Well, the simple fact is, it's not working. In just one small area of my riding, 20 modest homes were over-assessed, and at least 240 homes throughout the area generally. Why is the Liberal government hitting middle-class families with unfair over-assessments? It continues to go on now.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, it's not a fair comment, and I reject the premise, because there is an appeal process. The householders can go forward and try to find ways to revise their assessment. That occurs all the time, and the member opposite knows that full well, so stop playing politics and help your constituents with the appeal.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. Speaker, our government's economic plan has produced solid job numbers. In February alone, we gained 6,100 new jobs, building on the 6,000 gained the month before. Our jobs plan is working. Employment across the province is up by over 440,000 jobs from the recessionary low of 2009. Just last year, employment rose by 95,000 jobs.

Our government has made some tremendous strides throughout the province because of our successful re-

gional economic development funds. These investments have actually impacted my riding positively.

Yesterday, I had the privilege of hosting Glengarry–Prescott–Russell day here at Queen’s Park. My constituents and my community leaders who were here know that there’s a lot of economic growth happening across the province.

Speaker, I’m just going to ask the minister if he could update the House on how we’re creating jobs and partnering with businesses to grow the economy.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you to the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell for that great question. I enjoyed—as I know many of the members from both sides of the Legislature enjoyed—the Glengarry–Prescott–Russell day yesterday. Thank you to the member for helping to organize that with his community.

The member’s riding, like many ridings in eastern Ontario, has benefited significantly from our Eastern Ontario Development Fund. Just last week on Friday, I spent the whole day in the member’s riding, and it was a wonderful opportunity to meet with many members of the community, including the business community and business leaders. We announced three investments from the Eastern Ontario Development Fund: one in Moulure Alexandria Moulding, creating and retaining 353 jobs there; at Montebello Packaging as well, our investment there is helping the company create and retain 86 jobs; and at Skotidakis Goat Farm, we’ve partnered with this food processor to create and retain 110 jobs—great companies in a great riding in a great province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you, Minister, for your commitment on job creation across the province of Ontario.

I’m excited by the news of these significant investments in my riding, and I know that our government is working to spur growth through strategic partnerships with businesses.

In addition to regional economic development, I know that this government has partnered and invested in other major companies as part of our plan for long-term economic growth. I’m aware of the major Cisco investment that created and retained 3,700 jobs, which is also the single largest tech investment in our province’s history. We also had a significant investment in Ford Canada in Oakville and secured 2,800 jobs. This is great news for all Ontarians to take pride in, and our government has created the conditions for businesses to thrive and invest.

Last week, a significant announcement and investment was made in jobs and in the people of my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Minister, can you please provide this House with an update on that specific announcement?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Once again, thank you to the member for his question. Mr. Speaker, the Strategic Jobs and Investment Fund is specifically targeted to attract strategic investments in innovative projects that will create high-value-added jobs and support cluster development.

We announced one—an important one—last week in the member’s riding, at Ivaco Rolling Mills in L’Orignal. This investment will help the company modernize their facility. It’s part of the steel sector, and it will increase their capacity to produce high-quality steel products. It’s also going to make the plant much more energy-efficient and a more sustainable operation, as well as reducing emissions. This is all good news for the community and the region. Our investment helped to create and sustain 450 jobs at that important location.

The irony about this is that the official opposition, the party opposite, has not only opposed the southwestern and eastern development funds that result in good-paying jobs, but they continue to talk down business and investment in this great province.

WIND TURBINES

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, on Friday, March 7, it was announced that the Stoneboat Community Wind Farm would be withdrawing its proposal to engage in a renewable energy project in my riding.

While this developer made the right decision in withdrawing this project, I have been unable to get an answer from your ministry or the Ontario Power Authority about whether the FIT contract has also been cancelled. It’s like playing a game of whack-a-mole. Where will this show up again? It’s a moving target.

Since your ministry will not respond to questions from my office or requests from the community, I’m asking you directly today: Has this FIT project been cancelled by the Ministry of Energy?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member will know that our position is that we will not cancel existing contracts. That’s very, very clear.

The party opposite has flip-flopped on this. I think maybe somebody on that side should work in a shoe store, because they’re experts on flip-flops.

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The latest flip-flop is the Million Jobs Act, whereby they give the Minister of Energy the power to cancel existing contracts. That will expose us to litigation of \$20 billion.

With respect to this particular contract, and the other contracts in the area, the people who are proponents will have to meet all the conditions, including environmental conditions, and if they can’t, they will fall by the wayside. We have one that has fallen by the wayside, and we have to wait for the others to see whether they will be successful in the environmental assessment process.

You know that I met with the Buddhist proponents, and we are very, very—

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: Well, Minister, you did meet with them, and you said you wouldn’t make any approvals till you contact them, and then you made an approval

without letting them know in December, the last day of the Legislature.

You keep saying that it's going to be illegal to cancel feed-in contracts with wind power developers, but I know that on March 4, Wind Concerns Ontario released a letter to you referencing the decision in Trillium versus Ontario 2013, which clearly states that governments are free to alter policies in the public interest.

The \$40-million Cham Shan Temple Buddhist retreat near Bethany is in jeopardy because of the noise these wind turbines will produce. The Peterborough airport and its flight schools are worried about safety because of the siting of a turbine in a flight landing path.

The city of Peterborough, the county of Peterborough and the city of Kawartha Lakes have all said they don't want these wind turbines in their communities. Manvers Wind Concerns Kawartha and thousands of communities said that. You keep extending these contracts. You do have the out. Minister, why won't you listen to all these people in the public interest and cancel all those contracts—

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

Interjections.

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

Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Speaker, whenever there's a review of these, it's a very extensive review which is conducted. A number of ministries make comments to the Ministry of the Environment. The Ministry of the Environment has its officials conducting a review. There are onerous requirements to meet on the part of the proponent. There's even consultation, in some cases, where there's federal jurisdiction. We talk about NAV Canada as one of them. So there are all kinds of consultations that take place—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Rural Affairs, last time.

Hon. James J. Bradley: —these cases, when any individual or group is dissatisfied with the decision that is rendered, that decision can go to a review tribunal. Sometimes these even end up in court. But I want to assure the member that there's always a very extensive review of all of these—

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

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. During the recent by-election, the Premier announced in February that the Fort Erie Race Track would stay open. In the meantime, the racetrack submitted a detailed business plan to the government in February. The deadline to pay their lease is April 1, less than two weeks away, and the track has no details as to whether the festival idea has been approved. They've received no money and no response from this government.

Will the Premier keep her word and respond immediately to the Fort Erie business plan and ensure that the track has the funding they need to operate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the leader of the third party will be very pleased to know that there's a meeting happening next week to finalize an agreement to make sure that there's a robust season for Fort Erie. I know that she will pass that along to any of the people who are concerned.

We're committed to having that season at Fort Erie, and I'm glad the meeting is going to happen next week.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I'm talking about more than just a season. I'm talking about a future for the racetrack at Fort Erie.

For almost two years, this government flip-flopped on the Fort Erie Race Track. They don't seem to understand that businesses need stability to operate. Asking the track for a business plan and then not responding when the deadline to shut the doors is looming is just not acceptable. There are 1,000 jobs at stake in Fort Erie.

Will the Premier ensure that the Fort Erie Race Track stays open by providing the funding and long-term commitment they need for more than just one season and for a future of another 100 years at that track?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, I'm talking about a five-year plan. I'm talking about \$400 million that we are putting into the horse racing industry to make sure that we have those long-term plans, but the reality is that all of the tracks are going to have to work to make sure that there are business plans in place. These are businesses.

We took out an unaccountable, non-transparent program, and we are putting in place a transparent process. We're investing in the horse racing industry to make sure that the tracks around the province, including Fort Erie, can be sustainable.

I'm glad the meeting is happening next week. One of the issues has been whether there would be a 2014 season. There will be a 2014 season. My hope is that we'll be able to have that long-term plan, and I look forward to seeing the results of the discussion.

SPORTS FUNDING

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Minister, just last week, you made an important funding announcement with the Canadian Sport Institute Ontario, CSIO, and a couple of our wonderful Olympic athletes at the University of Toronto. This is great news for my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood, as the CSIO will be housed at the University of Toronto Scarborough campus.

As a legacy piece, the Pan Am aquatic centre and field house will be a beautiful facility that is going to be used by the community and by our athletes for decades to come, after the games are over.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please explain how the funding will benefit Ontario's athletes?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the member from Scarborough–Guildwood for the question.

The funding for CSIO is \$8 million over three years and will purchase specialized equipment, enhance and expand the current Ontario High Performance Sport Initiative, open the new facility and offer programs and services, and also increase base funding to support those operating and programming costs.

Our government recognizes the importance of supporting our high-performance athletes and coaches. The 2015 Pan/Parapan American Games only heighten our shared interest in that support. This is why we are committed to working closely with CSIO.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Minister, for that response. We can all agree that it's extremely important to support our high-performance athletes and the coaches and organizations that train them. I know this first-hand because my brother has benefited from a successful career in professional sports.

During your announcement, you also mentioned funding for two other programs from your ministry. One of them you mentioned a couple of weeks ago, Quest for Gold, which undoubtedly has proven successful, given the recent results from our amazing Ontarians competing at the Olympics in Sochi; the other being the sport hosting fund, which will help deliver great sporting events to our province, like the upcoming 2014 FIFA Under-20 Women's World Cup.

Mr. Speaker, again through you to the minister: Could he provide us with the details of this funding?

Hon. Michael Chan: Our government is proud to continue our commitment to our high-performance athletes and para-athletes. For 2013-14, my ministry is providing a whopping \$10 million from the Quest for Gold program for a number of them who just returned from Sochi.

In addition to that, the announcement last week also includes \$2 million for our sport hosting fund from Celebrate Ontario, which will help host events like the upcoming 2014 World Junior Girls' Golf Championship.

Since the 2006 launch of Ontario's international amateur sport hosting policy, our government has provided over \$8 million to support 34 events. These investments encourage athletes and national sport organizations to consider Ontario as the province of choice to train and compete.

INFRASTRUCTURE RENEWAL

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: To the Minister of Finance: Ontario's colleges find themselves waiting once again to hear when your government will address the serious backlog of deferred maintenance issues at the province's existing buildings. This is a serious issue for every one of the colleges throughout the province, and it is also a long-standing problem.

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In 2010, the Auditor General said the deferred maintenance backlog is in the range of half to three quarters of

a billion dollars. Most significantly, the Auditor General said that about \$70 million of these maintenance and repairs are in the critical category. Minister, this involves safety. Ontario's colleges need to ensure that students are learning in a safe and effective environment.

Can you assure us, Minister, that your 2014 budget will finally address this critical issue?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I've got to tell you, I am astounded by that question coming from the party opposite—a party that cut and slashed our colleges and universities through their entire time in office. We, on the other hand, in stark contrast to their approach, have put in place billions of dollars, record amounts of investment in capital projects for colleges and universities across this province. In the next two years alone, there's \$800 million to be spent in capital investments in our colleges and universities. That's record amounts of funding. Deferred maintenance is an issue, and we're working hard with the sector to address it, but coming from the party opposite, that question is almost laughable.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Back to the Minister of Finance.

Last time I checked, the Minister of Colleges and Universities doesn't know what's in the budget. Last time I checked, it's up to the Minister of Finance to do the budget in this province.

Aside from what he said, it was the Auditor General that I'm quoting in his report from 2010. The minister of the day agreed with the auditor. They agreed with the auditor, yet nothing has been done. Four years, and nothing has been done.

Minister, it isn't good enough to simply invest in new buildings. We must ensure that our existing colleges and their many campuses are effectively maintained, and our students deserve nothing less than to learn in a safe environment. You stand in your place today and give our colleges a commitment that your 2014 budget will finally and seriously address these much-needed repairs.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: We'll continue to address the capital challenges in our post-secondary sector, but let me tell you what our students deserve. They deserve, and they're getting, a government that stands up for them when it comes to affordability. Our 30% off tuition program is funding 230,000 low- and middle-income students. That's a program that your party wants to cut and eliminate; 230,000 low- and middle-income students would have to find more dollars, \$1,700 more a year, to be able to fund their education. We're going to keep standing up for students. We're going to keep investing in our post-secondary institutions, unlike you did. We'll never leave them in the lurch that you left them in 10 years ago.

CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Today I rise to echo—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry. Excuse me. Stop the clock. The member from Oakville will withdraw.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I withdraw, Speaker.

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

Carry on.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Today I rise to echo concerns of my constituents, as well as elected officials throughout the Niagara region. As the minister knows, conservation authorities have an important job preserving and protecting our land and waterways for Ontarians. Recently, the actions of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority have raised concerns. Their strategic plan shows a shift toward land acquisition disposal and development, and my constituents and elected officials are telling me that property development seems more important than conservation by the NPCA. Does the minister share the concerns of the people of Welland and Niagara about this direction?

Hon. David Oraziotti: I'm pleased to respond. I've received a letter today from the member from Welland, so I'm happy to review that and get back to the member, but with respect to conservation authorities, what I am pleased to report is that, since 2003, our government has provided over \$130 million to 36 different conservation authorities across the province. This year we're going to be providing \$12 million as well. With respect to the governance of conservation authorities, the Conservation Authorities Act, 1946, establishes these organizations, and the responsibility and makeup of conservation authorities, as the member knows, is directed largely by elected representatives of municipalities. In fact, the board of directors—they're responsible for making all staffing and hiring decisions with respect to the general manager and the chief administrative officer of the conservation authorities.

I'll have more to say in the supplementary, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I urge the minister to look into this matter. Just yesterday, the NPCA purchased a piece of land in Wainfleet with regional taxpayer dollars that was rejected and deemed unsuitable by the Niagara regional council in 2012. The purchase of that land was conditional on Wainfleet cutting a developer a break and waiving the township's 5%-in-lieu-of-parkland deal—thousands of dollars for that municipality, thousands of taxpayer dollars from the region.

Our conservation authority needs to be focused on keeping water clean, preventing floods and keeping our residents safe from natural hazards, not cutting deals for developers.

To the minister again: Is he prepared to conduct a review or an audit of the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority to ensure it is meeting its mandate?

Hon. David Oraziotti: To the member: With respect to the accountability of conservation authorities across the province, they are audited regularly, and they are accountable for the funding that we do provide. The large majority of members on conservation authority boards are elected representatives from municipalities. Perhaps some of these questions would be best directed to those municipalities in the regional area.

The reality is that those individuals who are on these boards are accountable to their municipal colleagues who are elected representatives as well.

I'm happy to review this, happy to look into this, but those are independent boards and agencies that are responsible for the decisions that they make and are accountable to their local electorate.

RELEASE OF DOCUMENTS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have received an appropriate point of privilege, and I'm prepared to hear that now. I will call upon the government House leader to make his presentation.

Hon. John Milloy: As you just noted, I rise on a point of privilege, which is in regard to question period on Tuesday, March 18, 2014. At that time, the member from Nipissing disclosed the contents of a confidential committee document.

This disclosure, I would submit, was a flagrant and intentional breach of a November 26, 2013, motion of the Standing Committee on Estimates which required that certain commercially sensitive and privileged documents be kept confidential. The release of confidential committee documents to the public without authorization from the committee I believe represents a serious breach and must attract strong sanction to deter future breaches.

To go through the facts, giving rise to contempt, I begin with the statement in question period by the member. He made the following statement in a question to the Minister of Finance: "We also saw that you blacked out many emails, labelling them 'commercially sensitive information.'

"Let's take a look at what you were covering over," and he quotes from the document: "'No funding for incremental compensation increases for new collective agreements; salaries for designated groups frozen until 2017-18.'"

This disclosure was done with full knowledge that the information was intended to remain confidential and despite the clear direction from the estimates committee that the information not be made public.

I'd like to spend a few minutes on the estimates committee and the direction they gave. First of all, the statement read by Mr. Fedeli was contained in a document that was disclosed by the Ministry of Finance in response to the following June 11, 2013, motion of the estimates committee: "I move that the Standing Committee on Estimates request from the Ministry of Finance, Cabinet Office and Office of the Budget and Treasury Board the following documentation: all fiscal journals produced for treasury board/Management Board of

Cabinet between April 1, 2013, and June 11, 2013; medium- and long-term expense outlooks containing fiscal years 2015-16, 2016-17 and 2017-18; any documents dated 2013 containing consideration of user fees and/or revenue-generating fees, taxes or tolls; all fiscal and economic update presentations and/or slide decks provided to cabinet.”

On October 15, 2013, the Ministry of Finance provided the committee with an unprecedented number of privileged and commercially sensitive documents that were responsive to this motion. In light of the sensitive nature of the disclosure, the ministry provided two sets of documents to the committee. One set was redacted for privileged and commercially sensitive information, and one set contained unredacted copies of the documents, which were not to be made public.

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On November 26, 2013, the committee passed a motion which required unredacted documents to be kept confidential and the committee to notify the Ministry of Finance in advance should the committee decide to make the unredacted documents public. I quote from the decision of the committee:

“Your subcommittee on committee business met on Tuesday, October 29, 2013, and Thursday, November 7, 2013, to consider the method of proceeding with the information received from the Ministry of Finance pursuant to the June 11, 2013, motion adopted in committee during the review of the 2013-14 estimates of the Ministry of Finance, and recommends the following:

“(1) That the committee accepts the information received from the Ministry of Finance that are responsive to parts 1, 2 and 4 of the motion.

“(2) That one electronic copy of all redacted and unredacted documents received be provided to each caucus and that the caucuses keep the unredacted documents confidential.

“(3) That the Ministry of Finance be notified in advance should the committee decide to make the unredacted information public.

“(4) That the redacted documents responsive to part 2 of the motion be made public.

“(5) That the subcommittee meet when the information responsive to part 3 of the motion is received by the committee.”

Mr. Speaker, disclosure of confidential committee information is a breach of privilege. On May 20, 2010, the Speaker commented on the nature of confidentiality in committee, stating:

“A parliamentary committee is a creature of this House, subservient to the instructions of this House and able to report only to this House.... An unauthorized or premature release of a committee report or in camera proceedings has indeed been found on certain occasions in this Legislature and others to be a prima facie breach of the privileges of the Legislature.”

Release of commercially sensitive information is serious. It puts negotiations at risk, it creates an unstable business environment and it undermines the trust of third parties whose records we disclose.

The question has been raised: Why are we raising that in the House and not the committee? As members may be aware, estimates committee is not currently sitting, pursuant to standing order 63(a) of the standing orders. The statement in question, I would also remind members, was made in the House and therefore, I contend, should be dealt with in the House.

There were questions raised in question period this morning of whether an unredacted version of this document exists and whether this is a cure for contempt. Although, as I say, that question may be out there, of whether there is an unredacted separate document, it is clear from the member’s own statement that he knew that the information was intended to be kept confidential. It was clearly redacted in the copy that the copy that the member read to us. It is clear that the information was intended to be confidential to the committee and that the member was aware.

The member from Nipissing, I remind you, specifically noted that the information he read had been blacked out. He specifically stated that information had been “blacked out” on the basis of “commercial sensitivity.” Before quoting directly from the redacted portion of the document, the member from Nipissing said, “Let’s take a look at what you were covering over.”

If there was any uncertainty about whether the information was confidential and how it should have been dealt with, I think the member should have taken the matter to the committee.

Now, due to the large number of documents disclosed, it is possible that human error may occur and information that was intended to be redacted is not in one or more documents. This was specifically noted by the Deputy Minister of Finance in his cover letter which accompanied the ministry’s production in response to this motion:

“Please note that every effort has been made, including the retention of an outside law firm specializing on document disclosure, to identify commercially sensitive information. However, given the volume and scope of material being included and the time period to produce these records, the ministry cannot guarantee that all commercially sensitive information has been redacted.”

Another point that has been raised is about the time of me raising this. I would argue that this issue was raised at the first opportunity. It did take a bit of time due to the voluminous number of records provided by the Ministry of Finance in response to the committee’s request for information. Time was needed to review the records and identify the information referred to by the member.

Mr. Speaker, I just want to summarize. We are a government which has prided itself on our openness. We have put forward millions of records across a number of committees—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. John Milloy: But what we are talking about today—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. John Milloy: —is that the member from Nipissing improperly released documents that the committee, including members from his own caucus, deemed to be commercially sensitive. The committee was—

Interjection.

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

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, the committee was unanimous in voting to keep—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And Stormont.

Hon. John Milloy: —the commercially sensitive documents confidential. They did this because releasing them could negatively impact our business environment and job creation or hurt taxpayers. We released thousands of documents, intending to make them public, but that doesn't apply to those documents that could hurt private commercial interests or taxpayers.

The fact of the matter is, if the honourable member had any questions about those documents, he had every right to go back to refer to the committee motion, which made it very clear that they should be kept confidential unless the committee decided otherwise.

So, Mr. Speaker, I therefore move that the matter of the Speaker's finding of a prima facie case of privilege with respect to the disclosure of confidential information by the member for Nipissing—that you hear the matter, and I will obviously—

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: Sorry. I won't go there, Mr. Speaker.

I ask, Mr. Speaker, for you to refer the matter and, of course, if you were to rule in the positive, I would be in a position to refer it to a specific committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I seek response, first of all, thank you for withdrawing that motion; it would not be appropriate. I thank the member for his submission.

I was going to say, right up until the last second, thank you to all of the members for their important and collegial response to this serious issue. I would expect it to continue; and for those that started, to stop.

So now I'm prepared to hear another point of order on the same issue from the opposition House leader.

Mr. Jim Wilson: First of all, I will be very brief because the honourable member for Nipissing, Mr. Fedeli, can certainly speak for himself on this matter.

Nothing has happened that is in any way a breach of the trust of the committee or the confidentiality of the committee. The documents, as you'll clearly see—and I have the CD here. The redacted documents that Mr. Fedeli made public were in the public domain. The honourable House leader for the government said that this morning in question period when he said, "Mr. Speaker, I'm trying to get this clear."

The honourable member is standing up and quoting from documents that were provided by the Ministry of Finance to the committee, which are in the public domain, which are in the possession of all members of the

committee. He's standing here in the Legislature and saying that we did not give them the documents.

Secondly, just because he has mentioned the point, this is all contained—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: —in our submission previously to you, Mr. Speaker, but we do question the fact that just because the estimates committee isn't sitting, they can't deal with this matter. They should be called back to deal with this matter, as per our standing orders. You tried this trick during gas plants and said the committee wasn't sitting right at the very beginning when we brought the contempt motion forward; that didn't hold water then, and it shouldn't hold water in this case.

Secondly, we do question—although it's a more minor point, I would agree with the honourable House leader—the timeliness of this. The beginning of this so-called incident began quite a few days ago, and it's only now that they're bringing it forward.

Having said that, it is clear to anyone that the documents that Mr. Fedeli put forward came from either the CD or physically from the box that everybody in the committee room knew were the public documents.

Now, you guys messed up by citing four different versions of one document. You redacted, as Mr. Fedeli will show you, two lines of the four lines in one document, you didn't redact anything in another document, you redacted a different line in a third document—this is all the same page, just four different times. It shows your government can't even do a cover-up properly.

Interjections.

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

The member will withdraw.

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Mr. Jim Wilson: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

And then there's another copy, a fourth copy of the document, where two other different lines were redacted.

This is a smear campaign. It is below the respect I have for the government House leader on many other matters. He is the person who's supposed to be in charge of the Open Government project that this government is apparently going forward on. The fact that he would do this to my colleague is shameful. You're just simply trying to distract the public from the fact that Mr. Fedeli is a better finance minister than your finance minister will ever be and that he, through diligent work and thousands of documents, has found—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. I'm trying to be as lenient as possible, but I'm also going to ask that you stay directly on the specifics of this issue, please. Thank you.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I get a little emotional, Mr. Speaker, when they pull this nonsense to distract the public from the fact that they can't be honest with the public about the finances of this province.

But having said that, I've dealt with some of the technical arguments that the honourable House leader has

brought forward, and I know Mr. Fedeli would like an opportunity to make his presentation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The House leader of the third party.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: From New Democrats, as the House leader, I want to make a couple of points here. First of all, the honourable House leader for the government said that the estimates committee is not sitting. That is not the case. The estimates committee actually did sit two weeks ago. They're still able to meet because there are some procedural matters they still have to deal with, so I think he should correct his record; in fact, estimates is still in session, and this could have been brought to estimates.

The second thing I would say—I understand that the government is concerned with regard to them feeling sensitive at this particular time within their mandate. They're feeling a little bit, how would you say, "under pressure," considering what's going on politically in this province, and I understand their wanting to try to do this.

But I've got to say the following. The government is right: We have seen an unprecedented number of documents that have been released to various committees of this assembly; that is true. But we also have seen that the government, numerous times, tried to say that certain documents were sensitive, tried to make them private and confidential in camera with the committee, but then when committee members looked at the documents, they weren't commercially sensitive; they were politically embarrassing. That was the difference.

The government in this particular case is making the argument that these were documents that were commercially sensitive. All I'm saying for the record, Mr. Speaker, is that there have been lots of examples in committee over the last two and a half years where documents were attempted to be put in camera by the government so that they would not be released, supposedly because they were commercially sensitive, where, in fact, they were not. I would just say to the government and to your deliberation on that to take that into account.

I understand why the government House leader rises, but I think the point has also been made that the same document exists both in the commercially—just to make it clear: documents are given to the committee, and then the committee has to vote if those documents are made public. The same documents, as I understand it, that are being referred to that are supposedly the ones that are in camera that can't be released are actually in the public documents as well. I think you need to look at both of those when you're making a decision about whether this is, in fact, a case of contempt.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nipissing.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I wanted to take this opportunity to respond to the minister's point of privilege that he sent to you on March 19, 2014. The point of privilege revolves around his accusation that I released confidential documents from the Standing Committee on Estimates.

As you read in the minister's submission, the Standing Committee on Estimates requested the documents on

June 11, 2013, from the Ministry of Finance. Once the documents were received by the committee, the committee passed a motion that said, "[O]ne electronic copy of all redacted and unredacted documents received be provided to each caucus." It goes on to say that unredacted documents were to remain confidential and redacted documents were to be made public—period.

I draw to your attention subsection 4 of the November 26 motion, which states: "That the redacted documents responsive to part 2 of the motion be made public." This is precisely and only where the information I released was sourced: from the redacted files, which were already made public.

This disk here has two sides: "confidential" and "confidential—unredacted and redacted." Part 2 is the area, and only the area, which I drew from.

This is why the minister is categorically false in his assertion that I was releasing confidential information from an unredacted document. I did no such thing. I only released information that the committee had already released into the public domain—again, only from that file.

I have attached in my letter to you, Speaker, four different print screens to my written submission. At the top left hand of each of these screen captures, you'll notice that it says "redacted box," "redacted box," "redacted box," "redacted box." Again, the redacted documents of part 2 "be made public"—so again, I'm only dealing with public documents. You will notice, also, that they tell you which box they're from: box 1, box 4 and box 7. All of that is included on the disk.

You will also note that I have included the page number for you to see: page 373 out of 2,970; page 2,736 out of 3,171; page 2,849 out of a possible 3,179; and page 2,185 out of 2,303 pages. Again, all of that is attached in my document.

In each of these public domain redacted documents, which were per the committee's November 26 motion, you will clearly see that the quote cited by the minister in his submission is redacted in two of the attached documents, but not redacted in box 4 or box 7. Therefore, they are accessible in the public domain.

Again, if I may repeat what the House leader of the third party said, there's nothing commercially sensitive about these; they're just politically explosive.

Let me illustrate again: In one of the versions of the document—on the redacted, which are public domain—somebody has redacted three different paragraphs. In another version of it, somewhere else in the document, somebody has redacted the first and last, but not all the ones in the middle. In another version, somebody redacted the second and the last, not the first and the middle—but this person here just left it all unredacted.

This is the document that I am going from. This is in the redacted file, totally in the public domain, that anybody in the media who takes the disk can access just as easily as I did. That's the evidence that I have specifically to the documents and where I sourced them: only sourced from public domain documents that the committee has already released.

Now, Speaker, I would like to draw your attention to the general rule regarding points of privilege stemming from matters in committee. Mr. Milloy's issue is strictly related to the release of documents that were confidential to the committee. In fact, all of Mr. Milloy's references and precedents relate to the committee.

However, O'Brien and Bosc are categorical when discussing the proper procedures about matters of privilege related to committee. They state: "Speakers have consistently ruled that, except in the most extreme situations, they will only hear questions of privilege arising from committee proceedings upon presentation of a report from the committee which directly deals with the matter and not as a question of privilege raised by an individual member."

They also point to a ruling from former House of Commons Speaker Peter Milliken, concerning the disclosure of a confidential draft committee report. In that case, Speaker Milliken ruled, "In the absence of a report from the committee on such an issue, it is virtually impossible for the Chair to make any judgment as to the prima facie occurrence of a breach of privilege with regard to such charges."

Therefore, the issue should not have even come to the floor of this Legislature, because the government House leader has ignored parliamentary tradition and procedure by failing to raise the issue at the Standing Committee on Estimates.

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Lastly, I take issue with the timeliness of Mr. Milloy's point of privilege. Parliamentary authorities state that a "member must satisfy the Speaker that he or she is bringing the matter to the attention of the House as soon as practicable after becoming aware of the situation. When a member has not fulfilled this important requirement, the Speaker has ruled that the matter is not a prima facie question of privilege." By the time Mr. Milloy will have raised the issue in the House, it will have been over 48 hours since I asked the question that has raised their ire. In fact, the government House leader and his staff had ample opportunity to review the Instant Hansard and check the documents, because they are searchable. All his staff had to do was copy my quote and search the different files. They would have found them in the files that are already disclosed in the public domain. There's no reason why Mr. Milloy needed 30 hours to bring the point of privilege to your attention.

On any points of privilege brought forward by the Ontario PC caucus, we have given notice expeditiously and introduced them on the next sessional day. Mr. Milloy had time to introduce his point of privilege yesterday, but he waited and did not introduce the point of privilege at his earliest possible opportunity. I ask that you find that the government House leader has not fulfilled the requirement and rule against this point of privilege.

In conclusion, I must say, and this is not the first time, I find it deplorable that the government House leader has brought this frivolous point of privilege forward to

distract from the context of the documents. It is an attempt to damage my good standing as an MPP and my reputation. As you can see, I only released redacted documents that were in the public domain already. I followed the committee's instructions and have not released any documents that were marked as confidential. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I listened carefully to the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Well, you have to indicate that. Point of order? On the same issue? The member from Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm not going to take too much more time on this particular issue, but I do want to draw attention to a few things. At the outset, I want to state categorically that the member for Nipissing is a champion for truth for the people of the province of Ontario. I wanted this Legislature and you, Mr. Speaker, to take into account what has transpired with that committee. As has been noted in the government's submission, the initial request for documentation came on June 11, 2013, through a motion. That motion wasn't fully complied with until just a few weeks ago. I think that's important to note because we have been going through this process for nearly a year in trying to extract the documents and to release the documents in an appropriate manner, and there was agreement on the approach that we were taking to do that. I state that because it speaks to the fact that there was ample time to actually go through and vet all those documents. It has already taken almost 10 months to get them fully out in the public domain. There shouldn't be the kinds of inconsistencies that have been very evident in the process of disclosure of this document.

I want to state that we have to understand that this is a very sensitive file. I understand that there are certain reasons why some documents need to be redacted. We have complied with that, we have followed those reasons, and we've respected the wishes of the government to keep those unredacted documents confidential. We have respected that. We have complied with it in due course.

I also want to mention that during the course of committee, we learned that the government and the public service have gone through a process for document disclosure on the basis of all the documents that we've requested in the various committees of this Legislature. They are now contracting an outside law firm to go through and vet all these documents. That's what they're doing. In the process of getting those things vetted, they're trying to standardize their approach for document disclosure and document release, and that's something that we are fully expected to comply with.

So if there is an issue that a document was unredacted that should have been redacted, or vice versa, the responsibility rests with the people doing the redactions, not with the member from Nipissing. I want you to be very clear, Mr. Speaker, that if there is an issue here with documents that weren't completely redacted, the government should take that up with the contracted firm that did

the redactions in the first place, not with the member from Nipissing, who was doing his job to uncover the truth for the people of Ontario.

The motion was very clear. It stated that all redacted documents be made public. The documents that were released by the member from Nipissing came from boxes that were clearly labelled "redacted." If there was some mistake, it is not the member from Nipissing's fault; it is the fault of the people who were doing the redactions. This is a completely frivolous matter, Mr. Speaker. They should be taking this matter up with the people who were doing this process.

In conclusion, we are dealing with only one thing here, and that is that sometimes the truth really hurts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have listened very carefully to all of the presentations. I thank all of the members for their contributions. Seeing the importance of this particular issue, I'll reserve my ruling for a later date. I thank all the members for their input.

At this time, there are no deferred votes. This House will stand recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1206 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I ask all members of the House to join me in welcoming Mr. Jeremy Freed, editor-in-chief of Sharp magazine, one of Canada's leading men's magazines. Please join me in welcoming him today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I know why he's here.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BUSINESS COMMUNITY

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to share the results of my annual Oxford business survey. I want to thank all the business owners and operators who took time to share the challenges they are facing and their suggestions on how to create a climate that will help their business succeed.

Oxford businesses are tied up in government red tape: 73% of respondents said red tape has increased over the last five years, which is actually slightly higher than they reported in the last survey. One business reported they have to deal with 10 different ministries. Electricity rates are a challenge. Over 90% of the businesses said that they have been impacted by the increasing cost of hydro, and 43.5% said the impact on their business was significant.

It's clear that the government is still creating challenges for our businesses. Over 90% said they would be impacted by a gas tax increase. They are very clear that they cannot afford to have this government continue to increase the cost of operating a business in Ontario.

There is some positive news. The survey asked about the impact of legislation like the PC's Million Jobs Act,

which would ensure affordable energy rates, reduce trade barriers and red tape, lower taxes and train more skilled workers. Seventy-seven per cent of the businesses said legislation that addressed those challenges would help them grow their business.

Again, I want to thank everyone who took time to respond. I hope the government will listen and address these concerns in the upcoming budget to ensure our businesses can grow and grow jobs.

PARLIAMENT OAK PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr. Wayne Gates: Today I want to talk to you about Parliament Oak Public School in Niagara-on-the-Lake. I met with families who are trying to stop the closure of this historic local school. The school stands on the very site that was once occupied by this province's Legislature. The Act Against Slavery was signed there in 1793. Parliament Oak School is the heart of the community in Niagara-on-the-Lake. It is the last public school left in the old town.

Unfortunately, this historic school is slated for closure, even though the government just invested \$1.6 million in renovations and upgrades. As a result of the planned closure of Parliament Oak, the school board is looking at expending \$1.3 million in expansion plans for a new school that was built only two years ago.

This Liberal government used to praise the role that rural schools played in small-town Ontario. They used to be called the community hub. Local schools used to be important to this Liberal government. What's happened, Mr. Speaker?

When the Premier recently met with parents of students at Parliament Oak, she assured them she would work on the issue. Now it's time for the Premier to listen to local voices. The community, the parents, the lord mayor, the city council, the chamber of commerce and the government's own accommodation review committee all say the school should stay open. I urge the Premier to commit to keep Parliament Oak Public School open and use it as a model school for all Ontario.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I recently had the opportunity to host a pre-budget consultation in my riding of Scarborough-Guildwood. I know the Minister of Finance and his team are putting a tremendous amount of work into the upcoming budget. The minister and his parliamentary assistant have been a part of many consultations across this province. I know, as a member of the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs, we've also been involved in this process. For me, it was important to hold my own consultation so that my work is informed by the views of the people I was sent here to represent and to work for. Jobs for youth, transportation and infrastructure investments, and ensuring health care for our seniors in Ontario were all highlighted.

Being a strong voice for Scarborough-Guildwood at Queen's Park means providing forums like this for resi-

dents of my community. I look forward to sharing the results of my consultation, which I briefly touched on, with the minister and his team, and I look forward to the continued work of the Minister of Finance when it comes to charting our province's economic future.

MATHEMATICS EDUCATION

Mr. Rob Leone: I'd like to rise in this House to speak about math education in the province of Ontario. We spend \$8.5 billion per year more in education than we did in 2003. All the while, we have 250,000 fewer students in our schools, and our math scores have declined significantly. Since 2003, we have seen a number of international comparisons in the PISA and TIMSS math tests that have shown that our students are achieving less today than they did in 2003, when we left office. For example, on the PISA mathematics test, Ontario scores have declined from a high of 530 in 2003 to a low of 514 in 2012. On the PISA science test, scores declined from a high of 537 to 527 in 2012.

Parents across this province are deeply concerned about math education in the province of Ontario. That's why I was pleased to announce the PC Party's math achievement action plan to restore confidence in our math education in the province of Ontario. It focuses on the fundamentals like rote math skills; it talks about improving teaching excellence, and it talks about utilizing modern tools in a 21st-century education system.

I think all members of this Legislature would do well to review our math achievement action plan and work toward helping our students achieve better.

KYLE AND PAULA WATSON FAMILY

M^{me} France Gélinas: I rise today in the Legislature to ask for the assistance of my colleagues for a family in my riding. Paula and Kyle Watson are a Val Therese couple who have been dealing with many challenges for the last 14 years. Their twin boys, Ian and Scott, were born 10 weeks premature and have cerebral palsy. Ian and Scott have been confined to wheelchairs since childhood. Both are blind, deaf, quadriplegic, prone to epileptic seizures, and require gastric-tube feeding.

The Watson's 10-year-old modified van is the family workhorse. They use it all over, and they use it for frequent trips to Toronto for the boys' medical needs. The boys are getting bigger and they don't fit in the van anymore; they need to upsize. I'm sure everybody will understand that a family with two special-needs children doesn't have a lot of extra money around to buy a new van and pay to have it modified.

This is where all of you guys come in. I would like you to go to www.mobilityawarenessmonth.com—one big word: [mobilityawarenessmonth.com](http://www.mobilityawarenessmonth.com)—and enter "Kyle Watson" under the "Find a Local Hero" tab. The instructions are easy to follow. If the Watsons get the most votes, they get a new van, fully adapted for Ian and Scott's needs.

Mr. Speaker, I need everybody's help. If you know of anybody with a computer, you go to www.mobility-awarenessmonth.com and vote for Kyle Watson—a very deserving family. Thank you.

NOWRUZ

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Just a few minutes ago, at 12:57 p.m. today, spring began. Spring not only heralds warmer weather, we hope, but it marks the beginning of Nowruz, an ancient festival. It celebrates rebirth, hope, peace and prosperity. While Nowruz was established over 3,000 years ago and is based on the traditions of the Zoroastrian belief system, it is neither ethnic nor religious. In fact, it represents the new year in Iran and Afghanistan, as well as for practitioners of the Baha'i faith.

Almost 300,000 Ontarians from various ethnocultural and religious backgrounds celebrate Nowruz every year, many of whom reside in my great riding of Oak Ridges—Markham, including Iranians, Afghans, Azeris, Turks, Kurds, Zoroastrians, Baha'is and Ismailis.

In 2008, the member for Richmond Hill, the Honourable Reza Moridi, put forth a motion that made Ontario the first jurisdiction in Canada to recognize the first day of spring as Nowruz. The federal government followed suit a year later.

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During Nowruz, traditional customs including feasting, visiting friends and relatives, and gift-giving. Most importantly, it includes the decoration of the Haft Sinn table with seven items, each representing one of the seven angelic heralds of life: rebirth, health, happiness, prosperity, joy, patience and beauty.

I would like to wish everyone a happy Nowruz. Nowruz Etan Mobarak.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Frank Klees: This is now the third time that I stand in this Legislature to speak to an issue that is of great concern to seniors and people with disabilities in Newmarket—Aurora and, in fact, throughout all of York region. I put it to the minister that it is her policy that will be responsible for removing the on-site personal care support for many of our vulnerable seniors throughout York region.

The minister responded, in a question staged by the member from Vaughan, to suggest that the challenge that I put to her about those services being cancelled as a result of her policy was wrong. I stand again here to say that it is, in fact, the policy of the Minister of Health that is responsible for that on-site personal care service being cancelled effective April 1.

It's because of that that I tabled a motion here in the House yesterday that calls on the government to reinstate those services and to direct the Central LHIN to commission an independent and objective commission to investigate and analyze the impact of the policy being proposed by the Minister of Health. I'm going to ask that

all members in this House support that motion when it's debated on May 8 to ensure that seniors and people with disabilities in York region are properly cared for.

LA FRANCOPHONIE

M. John Fraser: Je suis ravi de me lever dans l'Assemblée aujourd'hui pour rendre hommage aux francophones non seulement en Ontario mais autour du monde. Nous célébrons aujourd'hui le 16^e anniversaire de la Journée internationale de la Francophonie.

Today we celebrate the 16th anniversary of the International Day of la Francophonie, a celebration of French language and cultures around the world.

En tant que pays bilingue, nous sommes très chanceux d'avoir deux langues qui nous relie à de nombreux autres pays.

This connection not only enhances our arts and culture, it also benefits our trade and economy. Cette connexion améliore non seulement nos arts et notre culture mais aussi notre commerce et notre économie.

Dans ma circonscription d'Ottawa-Sud, il y a plusieurs francophones qui sont nés en Afrique, en Asie et en Europe. Ils enrichissent notre communauté, et je les remercie pour leurs contributions.

JIM FLAHERTY

Mr. John O'Toole: My speech today is about a very good friend of mine and of this House. I rise to pay tribute to my friend and our colleague Jim Flaherty. Over the past several years, Jim has had a steady hand guiding Canada through our most challenging economic times since the Great Depression. He's been the only finance minister to serve in the Harper government.

In this House, Jim Flaherty served as the MPP for Durham Centre and later Whitby–Ajax. He was a former finance minister of Ontario and a very successful finance minister, as well as Deputy Premier. He also held the portfolios of Attorney General; native affairs; enterprise, opportunity and innovation; labour; Solicitor General; and correctional services. It was my privilege to serve as Jim Flaherty's parliamentary assistant when he was the Minister of Finance, where we challenged many issues.

Despite his demanding roles in cabinet, he has always been optimistic, friendly and willing to help our neighbours, his community and a local politician like myself. Former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney, now governor of the Bank of England said, "Jim Flaherty has exhibited the very best of Canadian virtues in service to" his country and the people.

With his retirement from his duties as federal finance minister, I am confident the members will wish Jim, Christine—who is the member for that riding now—and their sons Galen, John and Quinn all the best in Jim's future plans.

I personally thank you, Jim. I consider you the most successful public servant ever to come from the region of Durham.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

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

Hon. Michael Chan: I believe, Speaker, that we have unanimous content to wear ribbons to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Culture, Tourism and Sport is seeking unanimous consent to wear the ribbons for this special day. Do we agree? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MPP SALARY FREEZE ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE GEL DES TRAITEMENTS DES DÉPUTÉS

Mr. Sousa moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 177, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act / Projet de loi 177, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I'll make my statement during ministerial statements.

VOLUNTARY BLOOD DONATIONS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE DON DE SANG VOLONTAIRE

Ms. Matthews moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 178, An Act to ensure that blood and blood constituents are donated freely / Projet de loi 178, Loi visant à assurer la gratuité du don de sang et de composants sanguins.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'll give my remarks during ministers' statements.

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

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, I believe you'll find unanimous consent to reserve four seats in the front row on the left-hand side for government staff and four seats on the right-hand side of the room for opposition staffers in each committee room of the Legislative Assembly, and I'd like to move that.

Interjection: It's out of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not going to rule it out of order. What I'm going to suggest to the member is that I'm seized with this issue already. I am dealing with it, and I would appreciate the opportunity for me to complete my seizing of the moment. If the member would remove that, I would appreciate it.

I recognize the member from Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: I'll withdraw that motion then, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member from Cambridge for his consideration.

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STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

MEMBERS' COMPENSATION

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'm pleased to rise today for the introduction of the MPP Salary Freeze Act, 2014. Since the beginning of the worst economic recession since the Great Depression, the people of Ontario have taken great strides to help the province of Ontario regain its footing. We are all in this together. In order to help grow the economy, this government has been focused on reforming public services to control spending while maintaining and improving the quality of public services. Our efforts have proved to provide great results.

For the past two years, growth in program expenditures overall has been held to less than 1%. Last year, total government spending fell for the first time in more than a decade. Ontario public service sector wage settlements continue to be below the average of private sector, municipal sector and federal public sector settlements.

We're proud of these accomplishments, yet we know there's more to do. This government remains committed to eliminating the deficit by 2017-18. To do so, we're taking a measured and disciplined approach to balancing the budget while continuing to invest in public services that Ontario families rely on.

We're accomplishing this through a variety of measures, including making key investments in infrastructure, focusing on enhancing skills and training, assisting our youth in obtaining jobs, building our knowledge-based economy and supporting our small businesses. But the fact remains that, with over half of all government expenditures going towards compensation, we cannot achieve our goals and grow the economy without taking measures to restrain growth in public salaries.

In this area, I am proud to say that this government has led by example. In 2009, we introduced wage freezes for all Ontario MPPs. It was the right thing to do, to show our commitment to eliminating the deficit, in part by restricting the growth of compensation in the public sector. In 2010, we extended the salary freeze for MPPs for an additional two years. In 2012, we extended it

further for two years, bringing the total to five years. Once again, it was the right thing to do.

Now, as part of this government's ongoing commitment to responsible fiscal management, I am proud to stand here today to introduce this bill, the MPP Salary Freeze Act, 2014. This act, if passed, would extend the pay freeze for all MPPs until after the budget is balanced in 2017-18. No pay increases would take effect until April 1, 2019, after the public accounts confirm a balanced budget. The government is continuing to lead by example, as it has been consistent and clear that there is no room in the budget to fund incremental increases in compensation.

Our government will continue to take a determined and disciplined approach to eliminating the deficit. Ontario's is the leanest government in Canada. But with over half of the budget going to the cost of compensation, we must all do our part.

I look forward to the discussion that this legislation will generate on this important matter, and I appreciate the attention that I know members will give it.

BLOOD DONATION

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I rise in the House today to introduce the Voluntary Blood Donations Act that, if passed, would prohibit payments to donors for their blood and plasma, a component of blood. Before I continue with my remarks, I very much want to acknowledge a number of safe blood advocates and family members of victims of the tainted blood scandal who are with us today in the House. I'm pleased to welcome Ann Harrington, Ian DeAbreu, David Harvey, Mike McCarthy, Kat Lanteigne, Antonia Swann, Graeme Ball and Karen Plater. They represent the thousands of people who are supportive of this. I also very much want to acknowledge some staff from my ministry who have worked very hard to bring this proposed legislation forward and who are also joining us in the House today. Louis Dimitracopoulos, Mahindan Kanakarathnam and Vinessa Redford, thank you so much for the work you do.

The principle of voluntary donation is critical to Canada's blood system. It was enshrined in our blood system after the tainted blood scandal of the 1980s. The Commission of Inquiry on the Blood System in Canada, also known as the Krever commission, upheld the principle of voluntary donation in its 1997 report.

The commission recommended that donors of blood and plasma should not be paid for their donations, except in rare circumstances. It also recommended that Canada's national blood system be administered by a single, integrated national blood service.

I stand strongly in support of Canada's voluntary blood donation system. I'm proud of our volunteer donors, and I strongly support Ontarians as they continue giving blood and plasma voluntarily.

But as members may have heard, Health Canada has received a licence application from a private, for-profit

company seeking to open plasma collection sites in Ontario that would pay people for their plasma, which would likely be sold for a profit to manufacture plasma protein products for the international market.

Let's be clear: This company would not benefit Ontario patients, but there is a risk, jeopardizing our voluntary donation system. That's why I wrote to the federal health minister in March 2013, asking Health Canada to refrain from granting approval of any new paid donor blood or plasma clinics until there has been an open consultation with provincial health regulators, care providers, Canadian Blood Services and Canadians. I also reiterated my position that the integrity of our voluntary blood donor system must not be compromised.

Unfortunately, the federal government decided to leave the decision to permit or prohibit payment for blood or plasma to the provinces. As a result, I recently wrote to my provincial and territorial colleagues, encouraging them to take a pan-Canadian approach in opposing paid plasma collection anywhere in the country.

Ontario's position is crystal clear: We stand firmly against payment for blood or plasma donations. We hope other jurisdictions agree.

However, until now, no legislation has been proposed in Ontario that would prohibit paying for blood donations. As a first step, we've already amended regulations to strengthen licensing requirements for labs and specimen collection centres to prohibit paying donors for their blood or blood constituents, including reimbursement of expenses or other forms of compensation.

Today, I'm taking the next step by introducing new legislation, the Voluntary Blood Donations Act, 2014, that would, if passed, protect the integrity of the province's public, voluntarily blood donor system. This bill would prohibit all individuals or corporations from providing payment or offering to provide payment to a blood or plasma donor. Likewise, under this bill, donors would be prohibited from accepting any payment in return for their donation.

The proposed legislation would also amend the Laboratory and Specimen Collection Centre Licensing Act to authorize regulations to make it clear that the activity of blood and plasma collection must be licensed under this act. It would expand the public interest grounds to deny a licence for new blood collection facilities, and it would strengthen our lab enforcement regime so we can take quick and decisive action in case of violations.

The stand we are taking upholds the recommendations that came out of the Krever commission report.

Over the past year, I have heard from many health care organizations and individual Ontarians, including tainted blood victims, who are opposed to private, for-profit plasma collection. Mike McCarthy, who has joined us today, is the former vice-president of the Canadian Hemophilia Society. Here's what Mike McCarthy had to say: "The Ontario government's decision to ban paid plasma clinics is a great relief to Canadians who suffered from tainted blood through past mistakes. Ontario is demonstrating it has heeded the lessons of the past and is

committed to protecting our volunteer blood supply system."

Hematologist Dr. Lois Shepherd, a pathology professor at Queen's University, said, "For me, the bigger concern is that we do rely on volunteer blood donors in Canada, and if we're attracting younger people to be paid donors as plasma donors, they are going to be pulled out of a population of people that might potentially be committed red cell whole blood donors."

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I agree with them wholeheartedly. There is no identified need for such a parallel system in Canada, since we are fortunate to have a well-managed, centralized system, with strong quality assurance and oversight measures. It is now recognized as one of the safest in the world.

I have full confidence in Canada's national blood system, and I know that Canadian Blood Services has the ability to successfully manage the blood and blood product supply for Ontarians. More importantly, we must not allow our cherished health care system and voluntary blood donation system to be compromised.

I want to assure the members that this decision to prohibit payment for blood or plasma in the province would not negatively impact or reduce the supply or availability of these products for Ontarians. We all know that blood donation saves lives. I encourage all Ontarians to donate blood if they are able to do so.

We are taking this strong step against the paid blood donation to maintain the integrity of the voluntary blood donation system, and that's something that I believe all members can stand behind. I urge all members to support our proposed legislative changes.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Hon. Michael Coteau: I rise to remind my colleagues that tomorrow, March 21, is the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. I spoke on this day last year, as did my predecessors before me. This is not a day that we should ever allow to pass without observance.

On March 21, 1960, in Sharpeville, South Africa, police opened fire and killed 69 people. Those people had been demonstrating, peacefully, against their country's apartheid "pass law." This was an internal passport system designed to make it easier to segregate the population and limit the movements of black South Africans.

Six years after what will be remembered as the Sharpeville Massacre, the United Nations proclaimed March 21 as the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. In so doing, the UN called on the international community to increase its efforts to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination. I am sad to say that the reason we are still observing this day, more than 50 years later, is because there is so much more work to be done.

It happens that in the past year the world lost a man who could certainly have testified to that. The late

Nelson Mandela died this past December. At the time of the Sharpeville Massacre, he was on trial in South Africa for high treason, which is another way of saying that he was on trial for being a member of the anti-apartheid African National Congress. He was found not guilty on that charge, but as the world knows, he was tried again and jailed for 27 years. He survived and emerged to become the president of South Africa, and a worldwide symbol of the fight against racism.

Speaker, Nelson Mandela did not live in Ontario. If he had lived in Ontario today, he would not have faced the trials that he faced back then. If Nelson Mandela had lived in Ontario, he would have observed how people from over 200 countries, speaking more than 250 languages, can live and work peacefully together.

Since 1962, the Ontario Human Rights Code, the first in Canada, has prohibited discrimination on several grounds, including race. In keeping with the spirit of that code, our government made it clear last fall that Ontario has no intentions to prohibit or restrict freedom of expression and religion in public places. This House later affirmed that decision unanimously.

Never before in the history of this planet has a place like Ontario existed. The incredible, beautiful diversity of race, culture and religion that we have here in the province of Ontario is the envy of many nations around the globe.

Our free and progressive society has given us Lincoln Alexander, novelist Lawrence Hill, singer Molly Johnson, hockey player Nazem Kadri and many, many others, yet even in Ontario, we must continue to remember the struggles of those who fought for the freedom that we enjoy here today. We must continue the work that they started, so that one day racial discrimination will be a distant memory in Ontario's past, so that one day, we will be able to say, as the late Nelson Mandela did say, "Let freedom reign. The sun shall never set on so glorious a human achievement."

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

MEMBERS' COMPENSATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'll be responding to the salary freeze act. Speaker, all of us in Ontario have a part to play in turning our province around and getting our finances headed in the right direction. Sadly, this government continues to feel that it's more important to appear to be doing something than taking real action. Our caucus continues to support an across-the-board wage freeze so the burden is shared equally. Instead, this government's failed wage freeze saw increases given in eight out of 10 contracts over the past years.

This government continues to tinker around the edges and, as we proved through our own internal documents this week, has no plans to balance the budget. This government's spending and deficits are out of control and they're causing Ontarians to lose jobs. Debt and deficits are a major and immediate threat to our province's ability

to attract more jobs as high taxes and user fees drive businesses out of the province. Without urgent action, Ontario will lose more jobs and government will not be able to afford things that we care about, like health and education programs.

We need a government that will implement a turn-around plan immediately. Our caucus is prepared to do our part. Unfortunately, this government, propped up by the NDP, have failed to do theirs.

BLOOD DONATION

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'm responding to the Voluntary Blood Donations Act. I want to acknowledge the tabling of the Voluntary Blood Donations Act. It's very important legislation that is difficult for me to comment on, having not seen the bill or had an opportunity to debate its contents in caucus.

Two comments: (1) Our laws governing the blood supply must be unambiguous and principled. (2) This legislation should have been debated long before now in anticipation of the globalization of the plasma marketplace.

The opening of a Toronto clinic by a private company with a plan to harvest plasma from Canadians and pay them \$25 has raised serious questions. I remember how shocked I was to learn that 30,000 people unknowingly received blood that was infected with HIV and hepatitis C in 1980—thousands had their lives cut short—from a blood supply system we were assured was safe. What we didn't know was that blood purchased for money from disreputable sources in the United States had infected our blood supply. The Krever commission recommended against paying donors for their blood.

Above all, we must ensure that trust and faith in our blood supply system is maintained.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mr. Todd Smith: Tomorrow we'll celebrate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. This day was brought about because in 1960 police fired upon and killed 69 protestors in Sharpeville, South Africa. The protestors were speaking out against racist apartheid laws at the time. The day was proclaimed in 1966 by the United Nations in commemoration of the protestors who died on that day.

As the father of two little girls of Caribbean Canadian heritage, I have a very real and very personal appreciation for the importance of recognizing days like this. I'm thankful that my little girls have had the opportunity to grow up here in Ontario and in Canada where they would have the opportunity to go to school and play hockey and soccer and grow up with kids from many different cultural backgrounds.

This day helps us to celebrate what makes our country great. We're a nation full of immigrants. We're a nation

of people who came here with the hope of seeking a better future.

As we celebrate the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination tomorrow, we must remember from a cultural perspective that we do have a bright future to look forward to, and there is still some work to do.

1340

It's unfortunate that we still have discrimination in our province that exists. In our province today, in 2014, the Ontario Federation of Labour president referred to Ukrainian protesters currently demanding democracy as fascists and thugs and anti-Semites. These comments are still being made in our province today, and it's completely unacceptable. I call on all parties in this Legislature to denounce this kind of vitriolic and hateful talk in our province.

BLOOD DONATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I rise to talk about the Voluntary Blood Donations Act, an act that is so, so, so late.

Since Health Canada finished its consultation on the issue and tabled its report on July 26, 2013, the minister knew that she needed to act. How do I know that? Well, I know she was aware that she needed to act because I talked to her about it on a number of occasions. I and many other people, some of them sitting in the gallery right now, wrote to her about the need to act and to act now. I put questions on the order paper, begging her to act on this issue and to ban paying for plasma or any other blood product. I asked her questions in the House. I suppose that I should have hired pyrotechnics or maybe a banner at the end of the tail of a plane to get her attention on this issue. But it didn't matter what I and many other people were doing. She did not act. She did not act until now.

Do you know what "now" means, Mr. Speaker? It means that we now have Canadian Plasma Resources, that has signed a lease right here in downtown Toronto, on Adelaide Street—number 82, to be precise. They have spent \$6 million on leasehold improvements; on purchases of all of the equipment they need; on recruitment, hiring and training of 30 staff; and on recruitment of donors. They have opened their doors; they have welcomed their first donors.

Why didn't the minister act before? With her delay in putting forward this bill, she failed at her most important task of all, and that is to protect our health care system. The minister talked about risk. The risks are huge. Once you attack the trust in our health care system, you attack the foundation.

What is clear right now is that we have this private, for-profit company that is already open. They have started to welcome donors to their facility.

Everybody talked about the Krever report that was done. That was 30,000 people who got infected when our blood system was not looked after carefully. If the minister has but one task that she needs to do, it is to protect

our health care system. Right now, by those delays, she has failed in her basic responsibility to protect our health care system.

This bill could have been introduced in September. It could have been, and should have been, introduced in October. It could have been, and should have been, introduced in November and December—you know where I'm going, Mr. Speaker—but it was not. She waited until the clinic was open and the \$6 million was already spent.

We knew all along. Those people came to see me; they went to see her. They told her and they told me, "We are opening up. We don't think there is a problem. We are forging ahead."

I realize that I've taken the time of my colleague who also needs to talk. I needed to get this off my chest.

This bill is so, so late. Damage has already been done to the donors, and this is a real shame.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Mr. Michael Prue: With the minute or so I have left, I'd like to first talk about the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which is going to take place tomorrow. As has been said, this is a commemoration of the 1960 massacre at Sharpeville.

But I think what has not been said, and what needs to be said here today, is that Nelson Mandela, a very great man, when he was bringing the Constitution to the people of South Africa, went to Sharpeville—that's where the Constitution was proclaimed—and he stated the following, and I don't think truer words could ever be said: "Out of the many Sharpevilles which haunt our history was born the unshakable determination that respect for human life, liberty and well-being must be enshrined as rights beyond the power of any force to diminish."

This is the international year—the United Nations has said our focus this year should be on leaders and leaders' ability to influence anti-racist activities and thoughts and deeds.

We are the people who make the laws; we are the people, hopefully, who provide guidance; and we are the people who serve as role models. It is our responsibility to ensure we do that in all of our actions and deeds every day so that any discrimination that does exist in Ontario is outlawed.

There's not time for me to talk about the other issue. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're right. I thank all members for their statements.

The Minister of Finance is seeking a point of order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: A point of order, Mr. Speaker. I seek unanimous consent that the order for second reading of Bill 177, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act, be immediately called and that the question be put on the motion for second reading of the bill without debate or amendment, and that the bill be ordered for third reading, and that the order for third reading of Bill

177 be immediately called and that the question on the motion for third reading of the bill be put without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Sousa is seeking unanimous consent that the order for second reading of Bill 177, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act—

Interjection: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Dispensed.

Unanimous consent is being sought. Do we agree?

I think I heard a no.

It is now time for petitions.

PETITIONS

BLOOD DONATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario, and it reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this petition, and the tens of thousands of people who signed it, and give it to Jonah.

MINIMUM WAGE

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

“Whereas the Ontario government has raised minimum wage by 50% since 2003 and will increase it to

\$11, the highest provincial minimum wage in Canada, on June 1;

“Whereas both families and businesses in Ontario deserve a fair and predictable approach to setting the minimum wage;

“Whereas indexing minimum wage to CPI is supported by business, labour and anti-poverty groups from across Ontario as the best way to achieve that;

“Whereas indexing ensures minimum wage keeps pace with the cost of living, providing fairness for workers and their families and predictability for businesses to plan and stay competitive;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 165, Fair Minimum Wage Act, 2014.”

I fully agree with the petition, and I will give my petition to page Zohaib.

1350

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario’s tradespeople are subject to stifling regulation and are compelled to pay membership fees to the unaccountable College of Trades; and

“Whereas these fees are a tax grab that drives down the wages of skilled tradespeople; and

“Whereas Ontario desperately needs a plan to solve our critical shortage of skilled tradespeople by encouraging our youth to enter the trades and attracting new tradespeople; and

“Whereas the latest policies from the McGuinty-Wynne government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario; and

“Whereas the Liberals and NDP defeated an opposition day motion by the PC caucus which was intended to abolish the College of Trades;

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

“To immediately disband the College of Trades, cease imposing needless membership fees and enact policies to attract young Ontarians into skilled trade careers.”

I affix my signature in support.

REGIONAL CENTRES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“December 9, 2013, was a precedent-setting day in this Legislature for Ontario’s most vulnerable citizens. Premier Kathleen Wynne gave a heartfelt and official apology challenging all Ontarians ‘to be led by our sense of moral purpose before all else’ when she publicly, on behalf of the people of Ontario, took responsibility for the profound suffering of the former residents of

Huronina, Rideau and Southwestern Regional Centres 'who were deeply harmed and continue to bear the scars and the consequences.'

"Whereas the institutional model of care at each of these centres has been acknowledged in the public apology to have been deeply flawed whereby residents 'suffered neglect and abuse within the very system that was meant to provide them care'; and

"Whereas it was acknowledged that former residents 'were forcibly restrained, left in unbearable seclusion, separated from their families and robbed of their potential, their comfort, safety and their dignity'; and

"Whereas all of the class actions for former residents at Huronia, Rideau and Southwestern Regional Centres have reached settlement agreements with the province for a combined total of \$67.7 million; and

"Whereas a \$67.7-million settlement is wholly inadequate as compensation to the thousands of former residents and their families to redress the long-term debilitating impact of this harm; and

"Whereas all legal costs of \$15.6 million are being taken from the combined settlement total before any compensation is paid to the former residents;

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

"We ask that Premier Kathleen Wynne be led by her sense of moral purpose and use her power as Premier to pay the legitimate legal costs of Koskie Minsky LLP from Toronto who acted on behalf of the Huronia, Southwestern and Rideau Regional Centre class members, from sources over and above the combined \$67.7-million settlement."

I couldn't agree more. I sign this and give it to Kathryn to be delivered to the table.

GREENBELT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition this afternoon to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the town of Oakville is studying further land use in the vicinity of Third Line and Bronte Road in Oakville known as the Merton lands; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario is the majority landowner in the study area; and

"Whereas despite the objections of the previous Harris-Hudak Conservative government, the Glenorchy Conservation Area was preserved as 400 hectares of natural area for generations to come; and

"Whereas despite the initial objection of the town of Oakville and region of Halton planning department Glenorchy Conservation Area became the first addition to Ontario's greenbelt; and

"Whereas Ontario's greenbelt is the largest permanent greenbelt in the world, protecting nearly two million acres from development; and

"Whereas residents of Oakville want the natural heritage area of the Merton lands added to Ontario's greenbelt; and

"Whereas the Tim Hudak Progressive Conservative Party voted against the formation of Ontario's greenbelt;

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

"That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario support the request from MPP Kevin Flynn and the mayor and council of the town of Oakville to include the addition of these lands in Ontario's greenbelt."

Obviously, I agree with this, will sign it and send it to the table with Divya.

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 have affixed my signature as I am in agreement.

RANKED BALLOTING

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas, on June 11, 2013, Toronto city council passed a motion requesting a ranked ballot for municipal elections; and

"Whereas Bill 166 will strengthen local democracy within the city of Toronto;

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

"That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 166, the Toronto Ranked Ballot Elections Act, 2014, which was introduced by Mitzie Hunter, MPP (Scarborough-Guildwood) and passed second reading on March 6, 2014."

I will sign this petition and give it to page Calvin.

SMALL BUSINESS

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

"Whereas small businesses are part of the economic and social fabric of communities across Ontario; and

“Whereas small business owners have stated that excessive regulations and red tape have led to decreased productivity, and higher costs for small businesses in Ontario; and

“Whereas, according to the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, small businesses pay the highest per-employee cost to comply with government regulations; and

“Whereas small business owners have cited excessive regulation as a barrier to growth for small businesses in Ontario; and

“Whereas entrepreneurs have asserted that complex and excessive regulations are discouraging people from starting up small businesses in Ontario;

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

“To take immediate action to cut small business red tape by eliminating excessive and redundant regulation with the goal of encouraging the growth of existing small businesses and aiding people in starting new businesses in Ontario.”

I totally agree with this petition, and I’ll send it to the desk with Caroline.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

I sign my signature to this petition and give it to page Nick to deliver to the table.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. John Fraser: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly.

“Whereas the Ontario government has raised minimum wage by 50% since 2003 and will increase it to \$11, the highest provincial minimum wage in Canada, on June 1; and

“Whereas both families and businesses in Ontario deserve a fair and predictable approach to setting the minimum wage; and

“Whereas indexing minimum wage to CPI is supported by business, labour and anti-poverty groups from across Ontario as the best way to achieve that;

“Whereas indexing ensures minimum wage keeps pace with the cost of living, providing fairness for workers and their families and predictability for businesses to plan and stay competitive;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 165, Fair Minimum Wage Act, 2014.”

I support this petition and will affix my signature to it.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. John O’Toole: I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of Leo Subotich that reads as follows:

“Whereas MPAC failed to comply with legislation, international standards and methods recognized by the courts;

“Whereas amendments to the legislation since 2004 have resulted in the weakening of public interests due to ambiguities and interpretations;

“Whereas the public has identified many problems with over-assessments by MPAC, but these over-assessments have not been appropriately investigated;

“Whereas the escalation process and appeals process is costly, unfair and ineffective;

“Whereas key facts and evidence are being withheld or ignored that have resulted in costly delays and undermined the public’s confidence in MPAC assessments;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to establish a committee to make inquiries into: (a) the applications of the respective home statutes by MPAC, IPC/ON and the ARB; (b) a complete performance review and financial audit of MPAC and ARB; (c) make recommendations to improve the escalation and appeal process; (d) estimate the financial impacts on individual homeowners and fiscal circumstances of taxing jurisdictions, and; (e) make findings of misconduct or wrongdoings.”

I’m pleased to sign this and present it to page Anthony, one of the new pages here.

1400

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario. It was collected by Karl Braeker.

“Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes; and

“Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently they don’t complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

“Whereas Ontario is the only province in Canada—including the three territories—where our Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes;”

They petition the assembly “to expand the Ombudsman’s mandate to include Ontario’s long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors.”

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

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr. Todd Smith: It’s a pleasure to be able to present this rather substantial-sized petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the government of Ontario, through the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario, levies the Ontario provincial fee on the sale of break-open tickets by charitable and non-profit organizations in the province; and

“Whereas local hospital auxiliaries/associations across the province, who are members of the Hospital Auxiliaries Association of Ontario, use break-open tickets to raise funds to support local health care equipment needs in more than 100 communities across the province; and

“Whereas in September 2010, the Alcohol and Gaming Commission of Ontario announced a series of changes to the Ontario provincial fee which included a reduction of the fee for certain organizations and the complete elimination of the fee for other organizations, depending on where the break-open tickets are sold; and

“Whereas the September 2010 changes to the Ontario provincial fee unfairly treat certain charitable and non-profit organizations (local hospital auxiliaries) by not providing for the complete elimination of the fee which would otherwise be used by these organizations to increase their support for local health care equipment needs and other community needs;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to eliminate the Ontario provincial fee on break-open tickets for all charitable and non-profit organizations in Ontario and allow all organizations using this fundraising tool to invest more funds in local community projects, including local health care equipment needs, for the benefit of Ontarians.”

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT POLICIES

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I move that in the opinion of this House, the Management Board of Cabinet’s procurement directive and broader public sector procurement directive should be amended to protect the interests of business owners in Ontario by ensuring that if a construction business that performs work for the government, a government agency or a broader public sector entity

willfully or negligently fails to pay a subcontractor or supplier in respect of their work, that business shall be barred from submitting any further bids on or doing further work for the government, government agencies and broader public sector entities until the payment has been made.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I bring forward this private member’s motion to protect hard-working business owners in Ontario, specifically our subcontractors and suppliers who have been left with unpaid bills by large infrastructure firms working under government contract.

By way of example, what’s so unfair about what prompted this resolution is that there was no question or dispute about the quality of work or the quality of service or materials provided; the company just stopped paying its local suppliers and then word got out that the company was bidding on other government work elsewhere in the province. This resolution came about because of what happened to Windsor-area companies involved on the Herb Gray Parkway project.

I think the motion is simple in design. Construction businesses that get the contract for work on government projects, and decide at some point to not pay their subcontractors or suppliers, should be barred from submitting any further bids to or doing any further work for the government and/or its government agencies, such as Infrastructure Ontario.

It’s simple. It’s the right thing to do. It protects businesses. It protects families. It protects those trying to make a living in Ontario. In reality, it protects those who are the backbone of our economy.

In other words, Speaker, if you’re being paid for government work, you can’t stiff business owners on one project and still expect to bid on other government work.

Business owners operate on guiding principles. Call it “willing buyer, willing provider.” When a company needs something done, they seek and find a supplier. When the materials arrive or the work is done, payment is made. It’s a fair transaction.

But when a company doesn’t play by the rules and wilfully decides not to pay its bills for the goods and services received, then we run into problems. The banks get involved. The credit unions get involved. They get nervous about a cash flow problem. People get upset. Sometimes lawyers get involved and, as we know, when that happens, things can get messy real quick.

But, even more outrageous, the situation becomes much less acceptable when the issue arises from a government infrastructure project. Business people in this province have a real expectation that when working on a government project, the government can be trusted to pay its bills or to exercise some leverage to insist that the government money flowing into a project flows downhill to the subcontractors on the job—the little guys, if you will. Because of the government’s past reputation,

business owners expect they'll be paid in a timely fashion. That's the way it used to be.

I know my friend the member from Vaughan has his hands full at the moment, ushering through the legislative process a private member's bill calling for prompt payment legislation. This will help in some situations but not all, and not in the case that launched this resolution, the one originating because of work deficiencies in girders being built and installed along the Herb Gray Parkway.

Again, the bottom line of my resolution is that companies which have the privilege of being awarded large government infrastructure contracts should not be awarded further government work if they have walked away from their financial obligations on another government job.

Unpaid bills threaten the survival of local Ontario job creators. If you don't pay your bills in one community, you shouldn't be awarded work in another by this government. The buck has to stop somewhere, and this is why I've put forward this motion.

I hope I'm seen as doing this in a non-partisan way. I want our local suppliers to finally be paid. I don't care who gets the credit for this. I'm trying to help these small companies stay afloat.

I'm asking the Management Board of Cabinet to make amendments, to be seen to take an interest in the discussion and to make the necessary changes to the procurement directives and the broader public sector procurement directives, in order to offer protection to these businesses and to their employees.

I'm told procurement by the Ontario public sector is controlled primarily by these two directives and not a legislative act. This duty is delegated to the Management Board of Cabinet. Under the Management Board of Cabinet Act, the Management Board of Cabinet has the power and the duty to initiate and supervise the development of management practices and systems for the efficient operation of any part of Ontario's public service.

We need a procurement policy in Ontario that has some teeth and that doesn't let companies continue to be awarded good-paying government work without paying their bills on government projects in another part of the province or, for that matter, on another government project just a mile down the road from where they stopped paying their local suppliers.

Speaker, as you know, I've approached the Minister of Infrastructure on this issue during question period on a number of occasions. Personally, I like the minister. I consider him to be a man of integrity. But he says his hands are tied and his powers are somewhat limited under existing rules.

1410

What I'm offering today may be the solution the minister has been hoping for—I certainly hope so. Speaker, this is a big deal in Windsor and Essex county and in Chatham and Kent. I'm told by others in this House that this has been an issue in other areas of the province on other contracts involving other major com-

panies. That has been a big deal in the not-so-distant past, I'm told.

Windsor area business owners have called the minister's office repeatedly on this issue, and not a lot has been seen to be done. I've said it before in this House, and I'll say it again, because of the existing rules, the sad, unfortunate, inexcusable fact is that the government has failed to protect the local business people who were asked to supply goods and services to this big multinational corporation, the company that was handed a big part of the contract for this huge project, the biggest infrastructure road-building project in the history of our great province.

Let me remind everyone in the House today, the money for this project comes from Ontario taxpayers. It's collected by the government. It's doled out in increments to the foreign multinational companies which the government selected to do the work. These multinational companies have a duty and an obligation to pay their bills. Yet when one of them says no, when they stop paying their bills, hanging a host of local companies out to dry, the government has so far refused to step in and stand up for the local business community.

Let me tell you quickly about who these companies are. Gunther Haas owns a manufacturing company called Waltron Trailers in Ridgetown. He lives in Windsor. He was a supplier of goods and services to Freyssinet Canada since the early stages of construction on the Herb Gray Parkway. Gunther has outstanding invoices totalling more than \$56,000 to date for materials and supplies used on the project. He has not been successful in his attempts to recover those funds.

Let me tell you about another individual, Dave Snyder. Dave owns Jake's Crane Service in Windsor. He's a good guy. His company has supplied services to Freyssinet Canada as well. He's owed more than \$95,000, and he has an outstanding invoice there since June 2013.

Another company, R.J. Cyr Ltd., was hired by Freyssinet Canada to perform work on the girders for the Herb Gray Parkway. Invoices for work performed were sent in April 2013. That will soon be one year ago. In total, R.J. Cyr is owed approximately \$13,000. The company has called Freyssinet continuously since that time with no luck, no favourable response, just a deaf ear.

Let me tell you about my good friend Charlie Hotham. Charlie is a well-established building materials supplier in Windsor. He owns Hotham Building Materials. He has been in business a long time. He has a great reputation. He's a former city councillor. He provides quality building materials at a good price. Look him up, Speaker.

He recently said in a Windsor Star article, "The hardship caused by this outstanding balance is paramount. We're a small local business that employs 10 families with spouses and children who rely on us to make the company effective.

"You are talking about over \$100,000 that we are owed. That's large for me to carry. Banks gets nervous, employees get nervous."

Despite assurances that the minister was on top of the situation, the banks keep calling, the suppliers keep expressing their concerns. The employees keep looking for assurances that their jobs will be secure and that they'll still be able to put food on their tables.

This government is perceived by the small business community as sitting on this file, and now, Speaker, sitting silent because of the threat of legal action. I'm calling on the House to take action. Otherwise, this government may see several of these Ontario business owners go out of business.

I should also point out that I spoke to many infrastructure stakeholders who are supportive of this motion. For example, Jim Lyons, the executive director of the Windsor Construction Association, was quick to add his support. He says the motion brings much-needed attention to a serious problem for business owners who provide good-quality products and services, that are left scrambling to make ends meet when their payment is delayed or withheld. Jim hopes that the government moves quickly on the motion, and so do I. I spoke this afternoon with representatives from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario; I'm told they're behind this resolution as well.

This is the right thing to do. It's the right time to do it. The intent is honourable. It's a pressure tactic to force a resolution so that local business owners, job creators, get to stay in business. I look to all members of the House for your support on this motion.

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

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak to this motion. I have to agree—I'm sure all of us in this House would agree—that businesses should be paid what they're owed. We all agree that we want all our businesses to stay afloat and that we want our businesses to succeed. In fact, long before the member opposite tabled this motion, the member from Vaughan, as he indicated, introduced an actual bill to address this issue. I'm glad to see that they're following our example at bringing something forward. But we know that this motion won't actually solve the problem at hand. This motion will not result in a resolution for the companies that the member has referenced, regardless of what the member says in this House or in a press release.

While bills become timeless laws, motions are non-binding and an opinion of the day. I know the member hasn't been here for long, but I'm sure he knows that the motion is purely symbolic and potentially aimed at scoring political points.

I find it quite interesting that this motion is coming forward from the third party, considering that yesterday they chastised the Conservatives for exactly the same thing. The member from Timmins–James Bay tweeted, "Surprise! Tories are up to same old games, nothing new hear. Opposition day motions are non binding."

The NDP House leader is correct in his assessment. Unfortunately, it seems the member from Windsor–Tecumseh has chosen to play politics with this issue instead of putting forward something constructive.

I'm especially disappointed that the NDP attempt to paint the \$1.5-billion investment in Windsor as something negative. Ever since that parkway was first announced, the NDP has voted against it. If they had their way, work on this critical parkway would never have started.

In the 2009-10 and 2010-11 Ontario budgets, our government committed close to a billion dollars for this parkway. The NDP voted against this commitment. They voted against the investment in Windsor. They voted against creating thousands of jobs in Windsor. They voted against making it easier for businesses to move goods throughout the province, and they voted against keeping residential roads safe for our children.

The member from Windsor–Tecumseh should ask his leader why she voted against this project; why the NDP didn't believe in a project that is not only creating jobs, but will connect neighbourhoods and add 300 acres of green space; why they don't think local businesses should have the opportunity to reach global markets—talking about supporting business—and why they think drivers, young and old, in Windsor–Essex should have to dodge large semis when they're driving in their neighbourhoods.

This project is in my backyard. I drive it regularly when I'm home, and each time I marvel at the scope and complexity of this project. I've met with local parkway contractors on numerous occasions, and I agree that they provide quality service. We have fantastic contractors and suppliers in our region.

They're extremely thankful that we've had this investment, because over the last few years, as you know, Speaker, unemployment in Windsor—we were hit with the recession, and this parkway certainly created much-needed jobs in our area. These contractors have created thousands of jobs and reinvested millions of dollars in our community. I certainly have seen the positive impact this has had on the local economy.

It's unfortunate that we can't understand the complexity of these large-scale projects. When I first heard that local contractors were owed money for this project, I immediately brought this to the attention of the Minister of Transportation.

I don't believe in playing political games; I believe in working hard and finding solutions. At the end of the day, going for headlines and bringing forward a symbolic motion doesn't really achieve anything. I've met with the Minister of Transportation, the chief engineer and the Windsor Essex Mobility Group, because that's the way to work together toward results.

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This parkway, you may know, is named after the Right Honourable Herb Gray, a road named for an amazing representative that I had the great pleasure to work with and learn from. Every day, I'm reminded of the example he set of standing up for constituents and getting results for Windsor.

I'm fortunate to serve in a cabinet with some of the finest representatives in this province. On a daily basis, I

have the privilege of meeting with them to bring the views and concerns of my community to the table. I did this when it came to creating jobs in the manufacturing and agri-food sector and when it came to protecting and expanding cancer services for our region.

Nobody is going to disagree that all businesses and workers should be paid in a timely manner, and that they deserve to receive the money they're owed. I'm sure the member from Vaughan will speak to this in his remarks. We know there's a bill currently before the House that addresses this issue. Bill 69, the Prompt Payment Act, was introduced by that member and sets out a schedule by which subcontractors can ensure they get paid.

As the NDP House leader said yesterday, opposition motions are nothing more than political games. It's just unfortunate that the member opposite has not put forward an item of substance that could actually solve the problem we're talking about.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I applaud the member from Windsor–Tecumseh on this bill. I think it's a good initiative, and we support this bill. Prompt payment in the MUSH sector is an important principle, and I believe this government can take steps. There are many excuses, like he's heard, that they can't make changes, but surely those changes are through.

We have some concerns out there in the municipal sector—I came from the municipal sector. There need to be tools to protect municipalities and school boards and such for good quality work. Holdbacks are common, and those, of course, are included in contracts. I believe, and I think we over here believe, that contracts should be upheld, and that's a good way for municipalities to ensure good work. There are many stories out there where contractors are not getting paid, and I think we have to take steps to make that happen. It's a sense of fairness.

I know that sometimes, in seeing some of the actions by the party opposite, we don't see a lot of fairness in the government. I'm somewhat surprised at some of the comments made by the minister about not being positive, because I think that we on this side are trying to make initiatives that we can get through. But, of course, we're very limited in what we can do with this government.

I think the people of Ontario are demanding an election, and we're hoping we can finally get support from the third party to make sure that happens, because we see a lot of things. Just like today, trying to change the page by throwing over our member from Nipissing over the release of information that's clearly in public hands and trying to point out that maybe there was something wrong with that. I think that's shameful. We've seen enough of this government where they're trying to change the plan.

I think we want to make sure that we have some positive things done in this Legislature. We want to see some positive actions toward jobs. Helping out small businesses, as the member from Windsor is talking about, is all a part of that.

I was quite surprised about her talking about the lack of positive ideas on this side, especially from a government that recently, in my riding, closed one important campus. My residents actually go to both of them, the one in Alfred and the one in Kemptville. To try to insinuate that they knew nothing about it—these campuses are closed. They're the only campuses in eastern Ontario, in an industry that the Minister of Agriculture, who also serves as Premier, talked just on Monday of last week about how important it was and needing new jobs. We certainly didn't see that. I'm getting letters now from people—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to restrict his comments to the motion that's in front of us, please.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Of course, we're talking about help for small business, and this is just part of it. Education, I believe, is very important for small business; in this case, agriculture. So we'd like to see that. We'd like some help on the issue. So far, all we've gotten is—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): To the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, this is my second warning to confine your remarks to the motion that's in front of us.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm responding to the speaker on the other side, where they're talking about nothing being positive on this side. I think that's very fair to be talking about some of the issues. It was something brought up by them, and I think that lack of initiative towards maintaining education is very important to our small business and, in this case, agriculture—a priority of this Premier—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry: This is my final warning to ask you to confine your comments to the motion in front of us.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Speaker, I—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): My final warning will be that I'll have to move to the next speaker.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I was just saying that I'm passing my time off to my other speakers on this side. Thank you.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to add my comments and thoughts to this debate by my colleague the member for Windsor–Tecumseh, Mr. Hatfield, Percy—a good friend of mine. I want to congratulate him, first and foremost, for having the courage to stand up for his community and bring about—you know, if all politics is local, we all know that it's important for us to do that job, that local job; I see it reflected in many bills that come forward in this House. I'm really proud to see how quickly and effectively the new member from Windsor–Tecumseh has identified a problem, worked with stakeholders and brought a solution forward—a practical solution—to this House for us to consider to actually implement.

We can debate the nature of what a motion is versus a bill, but ultimately, at the end of the day, people will see

the vote in this House. They will understand that we together, as a legislative body, endorse the principles built into the motion. That's what it is about. It's an effective means for us to get that principle forward. I just can't thank him enough for doing this, and making it a priority to support small businesses in our communities, because each one of us, in our ridings and our communities, have faced this problem with small businesses—especially in the construction sector. So I want to thank him.

This issue has been borne about by the government's initiative and embracing of public-private partnerships, and it's specifically borne out of the Herb Gray Parkway and the fact that that project has been given to a foreign multinational without any skin in the game—no skin in the game. They've come in. They're able to finance the project. They apply a massive amount of pressure on subcontractors in our region—in fact, sometimes making them go through 900-page contracts to even bid on the projects, let alone win the tender. So you've got that.

Then, secondly, when contractors do get the ability to perform some of the work, it most likely is a related employer, as in the case of Freyssinet, which is a French multinational that has ties to the actual conglomerate of Acciona, Dragados—the Spanish firms. This is an employer that has realized that the only way for them to be able to make a buck off of this P3 is that they have skirted regulatory issues in the construction and fabrication of the girders. Thankfully, myself, my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh—Mr. Hatfield—and the federal member from Windsor West sounded the alarm. And the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the member from Windsor West, has the gall to stand and say that we're chasing headlines. If it were not for New Democrats in southwestern Ontario, the government would have turned a blind eye to the defective girders and made a project unsafe for decades, for generations. How dare the minister tell us that we're chasing headlines. We're actually shining a light on the ineffectiveness of the government when it comes to public infrastructure projects.

Back to the fact that companies are able to bid and not have any skin in the game, let alone provide really a defective product at the end of the day—they are not paying their bills. The member from Windsor–Tecumseh listed off a whole host of suppliers that, in good faith, provided quality projects to this foreign multinational and supplied them on time at a reasonable price, all along thinking that certainly there should be no problem here. It's an easy transaction of commerce. But yet, Freyssinet decided that, maybe in retribution for the government finally acting and kicking off that project, thanks to the work that we've done, they're not going to pay their bills, so they're walking away.

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Charlie Hotham, from Hotham Building Materials, has \$100,000 in outstanding debt. Brad Coxon of Coxon's Towing Service is owed money. Greg Drouillard from Target Building Materials—these are people we've all

met with. They can't believe it. They're long-standing small businesses in our community. They have wonderful reputations. They're good business people in good standing in our communities. Yet this company, through the endorsement of the government, is allowed to not only work on these projects, but bid on other projects.

This is what this bill does today—

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's not a bill.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Sorry, a motion; you're correct.

The motion presents a really practical solution and concept that I hope the member from Vaughan might consider as an amendment to his bill; I don't know. Or maybe he could use his influence to do this, because it seems very practical to us. If, through your own negligence or—we're saying that these businesses are not willing to pay their bill at all. They shouldn't be allowed to bid on other projects, government projects. If they are willfully walking away from their outstanding bills, then no way; you're not going to get to bid on the 403 or the 407 or any other projects. Pay your bills to local contractors first before you do it.

It goes back to that entire issue of how we are approaching procurement and construction of major infrastructure projects in the province. The member from Windsor West spoke about our reluctance to support the government's initiative on the Herb Gray Parkway. That's because we identified, way, way before, that you were heading into a P3 disaster, and that has actually happened. And you've done it all along, through hospital procurement, in our education system, building schools, whatever it is. This reliance on P3s is creating a real disaster through the bundling of projects. These are concerns that the government should know of. We knew of it back before the project was even fully worked out, in terms of whether it was going to be completely below grade or above grade or half and half. We knew that, overall, the P3 model was not going to be an effective model, and there were major red flags.

Again, I have to take issue with the fact that the member from Windsor West says that we were not supportive of the Herb Gray Parkway. We were not supportive of the way we knew they were going to finance it and abdicate their responsibility to make sure that we have the best infrastructure at the best cost and that our local contractors were benefiting from it. What they're concerned about is that they've got public dollars being used to finance or to pay for these infrastructure projects that are actually ending up bankrupting smaller businesses, small contractors, in our region. Could you imagine that, that public dollars are actually putting small businesses in our communities out of business?

The government has an opportunity here today to remedy the problem by adopting and supporting my friend's motion by acknowledging that—you know what?—it's quite reasonable to expect that anybody who engages in public infrastructure construction or procurement should abide by some normal standards of commerce. Pay your bills. We want you to be on the up-and-up. We want you to leave a legacy of good faith in

the communities in which you build, regardless of if you're home-based in Ontario or a foreign company. We do things a certain way here, and what the Liberals have done is say, "We don't care how you get it done. We don't care who gets left in the wake. We don't care how many businesses have to chase you through the liens act or have to initiate legal action on you and spend probably multiples of what they're owed." Some companies are saying: "You know what? It's not worth as much as it's going to cost me to go and chase a massive foreign multinational for \$15,000."

Unfortunately, Charlie Hotham has had to initiate legal action against the government. Is that what it takes? The member from Windsor West says we're chasing headlines. The red flags have been waving in the face of the Ministry of Infrastructure and the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for quite some time. For months and months they've tried to resolve this issue. Charlie Hotham has written to the minister without any resolve, any resolution. We're at wits' end. I want to, again, applaud the member from Windsor–Tecumseh for having the courage to stand up. It would almost be expected that they would say we were grandstanding on this issue. Not at all, Speaker. This is common sense. It's a practical, easy solution for the government to adopt into their overall infrastructure plan.

We spoke yesterday about a bill. The Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act was debated in the House yesterday, and the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation spoke about the benefits of domestic procurement. He spoke about the fact that good, solid projects support communities. Well, when they're done in the way that obviously pits smaller contractors against foreign multinationals and leaves them hanging, that's not a way that I think Ontarians want to see us procure any infrastructure in the future.

We need to absolutely understand that we have a certain code here in the province, we have a certain standard that should be expected, and through supporting this motion today, you will send that message to any bidder, any construction company, any firm that's willing and ready to build in this province, that they have to do it in an up-and-up way and in good faith.

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

Mr. Steven Del Duca: It's a great—jeez, I sound like a broken record; I say this virtually every time. It is a great honour, a great privilege, to have the chance to stand and speak today regarding this particular motion, motion number 63, brought forward by the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

It is, as I think would be known by most in this House, an issue that is near and dear to my heart. As has been mentioned by I think virtually every speaker so far, this is a motion that is, at a philosophical level, very consistent with the private member's bill that I brought forward in May 2013, Bill 69, otherwise known as the Prompt Payment Act, which itself is based on the fundamental principle that work in the construction sector that is

completed, that is certified as complete, should be paid on time.

As many will know in this House, that is a bill that was introduced in May 2013, passed second reading in May 2013, and earlier this week, just yesterday in fact, arrived for its first round of public hearings at committee. So to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, I want to acknowledge that he has brought forward this particular motion today, and I also want to acknowledge and thank him for participating at committee yesterday, along with myself, several members of our caucus and other members from both opposition caucuses, for what I thought was a very robust discussion from a number of participants representing the entire spectrum of Ontario's construction industry, with more to come next Wednesday—people who are very passionate about the work that takes place in the construction realm, in the infrastructure realm, people who want to make sure that none of us who has an interest in making sure that Ontario's construction industry continues to flourish does anything to take away from that fundamental principle that work that is certified as complete is paid on time or paid within a reasonable period of time.

There are a couple of things that I've heard, primarily from the member from Essex, that I'd like to spend a little bit of time talking about if I have time near the end of my contribution this afternoon, but I think it is important to note that what we are discussing here today is something that is largely symbolic because it is a motion before this House; it doesn't bind anyone.

I think it's also important to note that when the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the member from Windsor West, stood in her place earlier in this debate and spoke about this particular motion, she made some very, very important points. Unusually for me, I don't want to get into too much of a partisan back and forth on this issue, but I think it is important to note that over the last 10 years—not just on this particular project for the Windsor area and not just for the Windsor area; this is a project that's important for the entire economy of the province of Ontario—right across this province, since 2003, for more than a generation, governments of every stripe here in Ontario—Liberal, Conservative and NDP—had left infrastructure renewal off to the side. It's a fairly complex issue, and it's an expensive issue, and sometimes it's easy to punt those expensive, difficult decisions further down the road to let someone else take on and handle.

But back in 2003, our government made the decision that we could no longer let Ontario's significant and increasing infrastructure deficit continue. It's why we embarked, 10 years ago and in every successive year, on a very aggressive strategy, a very aggressive plan, to make sure that we rebuilt Ontario's infrastructure.

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It's not a partisan issue. I'm not blaming the other two opposition parties for the time when they were in government. They deserve some of the blame, but so do we, because, historically, there were times when we served in

power as well and we didn't necessarily make the right decisions.

Ten years ago, we decided to start investing billions of dollars, not only to benefit communities like Windsor but to benefit my community, Vaughan; York region; the north; the east; rural Ontario; urban Ontario; suburban Ontario. We've seen dozens of hospitals built. We've seen university additions and revitalizations, schools, community centres, roads, bridges, sewers, highways and public transit infrastructure built right across this province, using—not in every single case but in many cases—world-leading innovative procurement techniques. It's working, Speaker.

So when I hear members like the member from Essex stand and talk about how public-private partnerships around procurement for infrastructure are not working particularly well, I say that doesn't stand up to scrutiny. Infrastructure Ontario is a global leader when it comes to being innovative around how we procure large-scale infrastructure projects. They have an exemplary and stellar record of delivering dozens of massive infrastructure projects, on budget and on time, that don't just benefit the Ontario economy because of the economic output but provide jobs—thousands and thousands and thousands of jobs.

I don't have much time left on the clock, and this is a debate and a discussion that deserves far more attention than the last 60 seconds or so, as it relates to procurement.

I do want to say, circling back to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, I hope you'll have the chance to join us at committee next Wednesday for the second round of public hearings on my private member's bill. I do thank him, to an extent, for bringing forward this philosophically similar motion today. I will personally be supporting this motion.

But I do want to stress to the people from Windsor and southwestern Ontario, who I'm sure are watching intently from home today, that the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the member from Windsor West, is an extraordinary champion for her community. She, on a daily basis, stands in her place in this chamber, in our caucus room and at the cabinet table, and makes sure that she puts the residents and the businesses of Windsor and her community first and foremost. She's doing a phenomenal job and she deserves a great deal of credit, not only for delivering crucial investments to her community but for doing her community proud in this place.

With that, I'll close off my remarks and say thank you very much for the opportunity.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, it's my pleasure to rise today and to speak to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh's motion. I'm not going to read his motion in detail, because it's quite extensive, but for the most part, this is a pretty straightforward motion for those of us who have some background in this sort of thing.

For those at home who may not have expertise in construction or procurement, let's just think of this as the

“fool me once” motion. I'm not going to do my George W. Bush impersonation of “fool me once,” but if you fool me once, shame on you. If you fool me twice, shame on me. If a construction business performing work for the provincial government fails to in turn pay its sub-contractors, rest assured they won't be able to fool us again.

This motion would in fact punish companies that either wilfully or negligently fail to pay their sub-contractors or suppliers when it comes to government work. They will be barred from future public contracts, which then actually rewards the many companies in Ontario that do play by the rules.

Good, ethical companies pay their bills on time, and these are the companies that we should be entrusting public dollars and vitally important projects to. This motion will have no impact on the companies that do the right thing. But by getting unethical or, at the very least, unreliable companies out of the way, we open the door for inclusion of better business.

We need to stand up for Ontario's small and medium-sized businesses, that stand to lose the most when questionable companies fail to pay a contractor or supplier. Many of these companies just simply cannot afford to wait for months and months to receive payment. It's hard enough to stay in business in Ontario under this Liberal government when energy costs are skyrocketing and tax hikes are looming overhead.

Mr. Speaker, you can understand why the member from Windsor–Tecumseh would bring forward such a motion, given some of the recent events that have unfolded in his riding regarding the Herb Gray Parkway. Here's a quote from the Windsor Star, dated November 13, 2013: “The European girder manufacturer which was bounced from the Herb Gray Parkway project owes money to more than a dozen Windsor-area companies and some of the debts top six figures.” This obviously is very concerning to those Windsor-area companies, their employees and their families.

I've seen first-hand in my riding of Chatham–Kent–Essex the concern that is raised when any point of the supply chain is jeopardized. We can talk a little bit about the Heinz closure back in November. The good news is, about a third of those lost jobs will in fact be recouped come this summer.

But again, Speaker, despite all of this, this European manufacturer that reportedly owes more than a dozen Windsor-area companies is still able to bid on additional government contracts. You have to wonder why the government continues to do business with these sorts of companies.

This motion, if passed, would allow future governments to protect the public purse and Ontario companies by ensuring that we only deal with responsible businesses that honour their obligations to those they enter into contracts with. Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.

Speaker, I support this motion, and I look forward to ongoing debate.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I wish I had more time to respond to the member from Vaughan. He's absolutely right: The Ontario government has carried out more infrastructure public-private partnerships than any other government in Canada. That is true. They're more aggressive in those deals than the Conservative Party at the federal level. They go hand in hand, they are locked hand in hand, in giving away large contracts to the conglomerates involved in these public-private partnerships. The value for money doesn't go to the public; it goes to the conglomerates. The profits go into their pockets, not ours. That's what I wish I had more time to respond to, and I don't.

Unfortunately, you can never see the value-for-money contracts because of confidentiality agreements and because the details of those agreements are never really broken down. So we will never know. But the fact of the matter is, as it relates to this resolution, if a company does the work, if a subcontractor does the work, for a government, and they are not paying, they should not have any more work. That's the simple matter of this resolution, and all the Liberal members need to do is say, "We agree."

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

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'm pleased to rise today and join the debate around the motion introduced by the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. It's safe to assume that today's motion is rooted in the member's riding and a string of incidents around the construction of the Herb Gray Parkway.

The firm selected to supply the bulk of the girders for the parkway's construction was, of course, a Spanish company, working in partnership with a French company. They established an operation in Windsor, hired workers and delivered hundreds of girders, which were installed, later found to be defective, and then ordered removed. Production and installation of the girders was carried out for months before the plant in question was certified by the Canadian Standards Association.

Since then, both companies have left the city, raising some serious questions about the way contracts are handed out and about the standards being brought to bear on these projects, Speaker.

Aside from the issue of quality standards, both of the offending firms on the Windsor parkway project have also reportedly left unpaid bills in their wake. The motion before us asks that if a construction business performs work for the government, a government agency or broader public sector entity and fails to pay a subcontractor or supplier in respect of that work, they would be barred from consideration on future public sector bids until such time as they have made payment, Speaker.

As things stand, the firms responsible for the shoddy girders in Windsor and who apparently left subcontractors in the lurch may still be free to bid on addi-

tional public projects. It's not clear that the Windsor debacle, or their conduct in its wake, would disqualify them from consideration.

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The intention of this motion before us today is, on the face of it, sound. It represents what would be widely seen as a positive step. I think that people across Ontario would agree that the province's broader public sector should conduct business with reputable companies that pay their bills and conduct themselves in an above-the-board manner.

The government is tasked with building and maintaining the province's infrastructure on an ongoing basis. These substantial opportunities are capable of creating not just public assets but also enormous economic opportunity. Hand in hand with that is a responsibility to the people of Ontario.

We support the core principle here, which is that subcontractors or suppliers should be paid for their work in a timely manner, but this motion strikes me as more symbolic than substantial. Ontario businesses face far larger challenges than the problem this motion tackles, and Ontario Progressive Conservatives are the only ones with a comprehensive job plan to address current economic concerns.

The people of this province deserve a government with a plan to grow the economy and to turn Ontario around. The people of this province deserve a government that takes the public trust seriously and that understands that leadership is about making tough but necessary decisions.

There is no easy path back to greatness, but the future belongs to the bold. Ontario Progressive Conservatives have a plan to create a million new jobs. We know what needs to be done, and we're prepared to lead.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Windsor–Tecumseh: You have two minutes.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker. If I can start by addressing the concerns raised by the member from Windsor West—playing politics, and calling it symbolic and a pressure tactic—yes, absolutely, it is symbolic.

The reason we got involved—let's not rewrite history: The suppliers came to us because the member from Windsor West would not return their calls, would not hold a meeting with them and would not listen to them. Their businesses were in trouble, jobs were on the line, and the member for Windsor West was silent. She was invisible, so yes, they came to us. Yes, we listened, and we're putting forward today a symbolic resolution, trying to keep the partisanship out of it, but looking for reconciliation to get some bills paid.

Yes, I admitted it to the minister when I gave him the notice of it a couple of weeks ago: We're just trying to help you out, because the minister has told me that, under current legislation, he doesn't really have the power to force this company to pay its bills. So we said that maybe this will help.

I know that the member from Vaughan, who's the author of Bill 69, the Prompt Payment Act—this might

have helped a year or two ago. It's not doing anything right now. So we moved this resolution and gave it to the minister hoping that, if Management Board of Cabinet can make a few minor changes, Freysinett Canada will not be allowed to bid on other government work until they pay their bills that have been outstanding for almost a year. That's all this is about. It's a pressure tactic to make the guy pay his bills.

I want to thank all the members who spoke on it—especially my good friend the member from Essex, for his very passionate defence of this motion. It's not rocket science; it's a pretty simple resolution, and it's only designed to help out the little guy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote on the motion at the end of private members' business.

LEARNING THROUGH WORKPLACE
EXPERIENCE ACT, 2014
LOI DE 2014 SUR
L'APPRENTISSAGE PAR L'EXPÉRIENCE
EN MILIEU DE TRAVAIL

Ms. Sattler moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act to establish the Advisory Council on Work-Integrated Learning / Projet de loi 172, Loi modifiant la Loi sur le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités pour créer le Conseil consultatif de l'apprentissage intégré au travail.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm honoured to stand today, as MPP for London West, to speak in support of my first private member's bill, the Learning Through Workplace Experience Act. The opportunity to shape public policy is one of the most important roles that MPPs play as we bring forward legislation that responds to the needs of our communities and helps to make things better for the people we represent, not only in our own ridings but across the province.

The overall purpose of my bill is to expand work-integrated learning opportunities for post-secondary students. Work-integrated learning, or WIL as it is known, includes such programs as co-ops, field placements, internships, service learning and more—programs that are integrated into a student's course of study as either mandatory or voluntary components. My bill does this by bringing together students, post-secondary institutions and employers in a provincial Advisory Council on Work-Integrated Learning, mandated to make recommendations to the minister on how to engage more employers in providing work-integrated learning and paid opportunities in particular; how to support post-secondary institutions in delivering quality WIL experiences for students; and how to ensure that all students

who are interested in participating in WIL are able to participate across different faculties and fields of study.

This is an initiative that is critical to my community of London. London is home to two of Ontario's largest and finest post-secondary institutions: Fanshawe College and Western University. With over 200 programs, Fanshawe has an international reputation for the high quality of its hands-on learning opportunities. Known for offering Canada's best student experience, and as a global knowledge leader—Western's new strategic plan, Achieving Excellence on the World Stage, commits Western to investing the incremental resources required to increase the number of work-integrated-learning experiences and international learning opportunities, so that any academically eligible student wishing to participate in such learning opportunities will be able to do so.

My community is also situated in a region that has been hardest hit by the collapse of the manufacturing sector, and we continue to struggle with persistently high unemployment rates. This is especially the case for young people. Youth unemployment in Middlesex-London rose from 11% in 2007 to almost 21% in 2011, a level higher than any other large Ontario CMA. So my community has a huge stake in ensuring that the students graduating from our local institutions are able to transition seamlessly into the workforce, to get jobs that reflect the skills they gained during post-secondary study and to help our economy grow and prosper.

We know from the research that work experience is a crucial factor, perhaps the crucial factor, in ensuring positive labour market outcomes for post-secondary students. It is also critical to assist internationally educated professionals in integrating into the labour market, who frequently face barriers because of lack of Canadian experience. But tight labour markets are leaving more and more students without opportunities to find jobs. In fact, this has led to the OECD identifying a new cohort of workers called PINEs, or poorly integrated new entrants. These are young people with post-secondary credentials who frequently go back and forth between temporary, precarious jobs, unemployment, and withdrawal from the labour market altogether, representing a critical loss of talent and an enormous missed opportunity to leverage the skills of these young people to contribute to economic growth and prosperity. More troubling, precarious work creates discouragement, fear and a loss of career hope, which can lead to disengagement from the labour market, from the political process and from the community.

I'm proud to have the support of a range of both local and provincial organizations for my bill, and I'd like to take a few minutes to share with you why these organizations are supporting my effort.

Tyler Sutton is the president of Emerging Leaders, a civic organization focused on attracting, connecting and retaining London's 20-to-44-year-old youth demographic. He says, "Emerging Leaders of London is firmly in support of programs and initiatives that provide young people with the skills, opportunities and resources needed to excel in Ontario's rapidly changing economy. This"

PMB “will help to build bridges between school and work in Ontario. With abundant and well-designed practicums, clinical placements,” co-ops “and internships incorporated into Ontario’s education system, both students and employers will benefit. With more opportunities for London’s post-secondary students to work directly with our community’s thriving businesses and organizations, connecting and retaining London’s best and brightest will be made that much easier.”

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Deb Mountenay of the Elgin Middlesex Oxford Workforce Planning and Development Board says, “Work-integrated-learning programs facilitate the transition for students from their post-secondary education into employment. This benefits students, employers and our local communities.... Through the establishment of an advisory council on work-integrated learning, the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities would be taking a leadership role in encouraging broader participation in work-integrated-learning programs by employers and students.”

My bill is also supported by Western University, the Western University student council, the Fanshawe Student Union and the president of the London and District Labour Council. Provincially, my bill is supported by the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, or OUSA; the Canadian Federation of Students—Ontario; and Education at Work Ontario, a provincial organization representing all Ontario college and university co-op programs.

The president of OUSA says, “OUSA believes that the work of the advisory council on work-integrated learning has the potential to increase student access to high-impact learning and working experiences. This can give students greater opportunity and choice as they transition out of university and begin their careers in Ontario. As such, our students strongly support this bill.”

Similarly, the chairperson of CFS-Ontario says, “Students welcome this initial step in expanding and increasing access to paid internships, work terms and co-op placement at Ontario colleges and universities. We look forward to continuing to work with MPPs on addressing the current crisis in youth un- and under-employment across the province.”

Finally, Education at Work Ontario offered these comments: “This legislation is an excellent and long-overdue initiative. We, as co-op professionals, recognize the substantial impact that WIL has on a graduate’s ability to find program-related work opportunities when they complete their program. An employer’s need for experienced, qualified help does not diminish despite the economic climate, and WIL is a cost-effective, successful method to provide the resources when needed.”

Support for my bill is strong because it responds directly to concerns identified by leading economic organizations and public policy think tanks. The Ontario Chamber of Commerce recently urged the government to launch a province-wide initiative to foster greater awareness of, and participation in, experiential learning at all levels in order to equip students with the practical

business-related skills required to make a seamless transition from the classroom to the workplace.

A 2013 report on youth unemployment in Ontario by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives recommended that Ontario make much greater use of innovative work-integrated learning programs and community service learning programs. Their report, *The Young and the Jobless*, points out: “Greater investment in programming along these lines can increase the responsiveness of both the labour market and the education system to economic needs, while at the same time providing more meaningful educational experiences.”

The barriers to employer involvement in providing WIL are particularly significant for small and medium-sized enterprises, or SME. The Mowat Centre for policy innovation noted that many SMEs find it difficult to initiate collaborations with post-secondary institutions and to participate in work-integrated-learning programs like co-ops.

A 2008 study of experiential learning by the Canadian Council on Learning observed that institutional processes may be difficult for employers to navigate and that centralized information and examples of appropriate work placements would be helpful to employers.

How does my bill address these issues? First, it amends the MTCU act to add the term “work-integrated learning” to legislation in Ontario for the first time as an overarching term to describe programs that combine work with a course of study. This responds to concerns expressed all too often by post-secondary students who engage in work activities as part of their college or university study, where they’re asked to perform menial, unpaid routine tasks that do not advance their skills or contribute to their learning. The legislation also offers a definition of work-integrated learning that defines it as separate and distinct from other types of labour market activity.

Second, the bill creates an advisory council on work-integrated learning and identifies the membership of the council as representing a broad range of stakeholder organizations across the post-secondary, labour market and economic development sectors.

What’s most important to me as a former policy researcher is that the bill is informed directly by data gathered over a four-year multi-phase study led by the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario, in which I was a principal investigator. That study generated three key findings: There is growing student demand for WIL, there is limited employer involvement in providing WIL, and there is strong commitment across the post-secondary sector to ensuring quality WIL experiences for students.

Before I conclude, I want to recognize the efforts of Dakin McDonald, from NDP caucus research, for his exemplary assistance with my legislation.

This bill highlights the value of programs like field placements, co-ops, practicums and internships in helping students gain valuable skills and preparing them for good jobs while helping employers develop the talent

they need in their sector. When we support post-secondary students in transitioning more effectively from education to the labour market, the province as a whole benefits from lower youth unemployment, increased productivity and a higher number of graduates equipped with the skills required to address labour market needs.

I urge your support for this bill and welcome hearing your comments.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I'm glad for the opportunity to rise and to speak to Bill 172, the Learning Through Workplace Experience Act, 2014, introduced by the member for London West. I want to congratulate the member on the introduction of her first private member's bill, and this is definitely a good one.

I agree with the member that learning through experience is vital to this government's commitment to investing in Ontario's youth. This government has always been open to the expansion and improvement of programs that offer youth experiential learning opportunities. We are recognized leaders in North America for this with renowned institutions like Sheridan College, with their digital animation program; the University of Waterloo; and the University of Toronto, with many of its programs, including at the Scarborough campus. We recognize that providing our youth with these dynamic opportunities will foster a more dynamic business climate here in Ontario for years to come.

In my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, there is a significant youth population. Centennial College, the Progress Campus, is located within my riding, and the University of Toronto Scarborough campus sits just on its border. Our youth are very concerned about being equipped for the job market upon graduation. I had the opportunity to speak to many of these youth at my youth career fair in Scarborough–Guildwood at the beginning of this month, and another opportunity to speak to the parents and youth advocates in my riding at my recent pre-budget consultation. Investment in youth opportunities is a huge priority in my riding, a riding that is full of teens, young adults and young families, who are also concerned for the future of their children. Investing in the youth of this province is a way to guarantee a better future for Ontario. Ontario's youth are our future, and it is up to us to ensure that they are well equipped and prepared to take up our jobs when we leave the workforce.

Youth and families are concerned about what awaits recent graduates, whether they have learnt enough in their post-secondary experience to transition successfully into the labour market and if it will make it easier for them to find gainful employment in a field that they are passionate about. However, another concern for these families is the role of government in this case. While this bill, in theory, is reasonable and places a focus on a very key area within the youth employment sector, we as legislators need to identify if there are already programs or a system in place that tries to achieve the same thing and if the Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and

Universities is the best, most direct route for achieving these goals.

This government supports the development of the skills and knowledge base of students through experiential learning, and especially co-op education. This government continues to make investments in the post-secondary education system. We are well aware of the benefits of the 30% off tuition grant, the Ontario Co-operative Education Tax Credit and the Co-op Diploma Apprenticeship Program.

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This government is committed to investing in Ontario's youth. Our youth employment fund, in fact, is one of the ways that we're doing so. Just last night, I had the opportunity to launch the LiveGood Project. It's a program by Goodwill that is focusing on matching youth with employers. In fact, 65 businesses in the creative sector have employed 65 young people to give them that hands-on experience.

That is why I will be supporting this bill, but I would like to see it go to committee, where it can be further analyzed in order to address any inefficiencies or redundancies that may be present in this bill, should it pass.

Speaker, 21st-century learning requires students to develop and expand on their ideas. While at CivicAction, I had the opportunity to participate in much experiential learning. The ideas that were presented by these young people were transformative. We welcome and need their ideas and their creativity.

In fact, these ideas have the power to change our communities. One of the programs that I participated in was at Centennial College. It was called the Big Race, and it brought together the idea of changing how we invest in infrastructure for transit in our city. Through this cross-divisional program, it created an understanding and a learning that not only do we need to invest in these, but we must invest in our infrastructure in order to provide the business community, young people and students with an opportunity to get around more efficiently.

So, absolutely, I support Bill 172, but I want to ensure that we are taking a close examination so that we're not repeating things that are already in place.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This bill falls into the category of "Who wouldn't want to help our students learn from experience and make for a richer educational experience for them?"

However, this bill has a lot of questions associated with it. Creating a new bureaucracy is always dangerous. What cost would that be? Who's going to oversee the council that's proposed, or is it just going to wander down the road without oversight? Who will administer it, and at what additional cost would that be? Many of the universities and colleges of today already have outreach programs that involve co-op learning and those kinds of things. What kinds of processes are going to be put in place to avoid duplication in those areas?

Much of this bill seems to be rather long on bureaucracy; it seems to be rather short on details. It doesn't

enunciate very clearly how those services are going to be provided, it doesn't talk about how it's going to control costs, and it certainly doesn't talk about how it's going to avoid duplication. However, those things could all probably be addressed in committee.

In the spirit of helping students towards a richer educational process, I would probably support the bill in second reading, but without massive changes in committee, I would reserve the right not to support this bill in third reading.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 172, the Learning Through Workplace Experience Act. However, before I do that, I want to take a moment to congratulate my colleague from London West. She has done her homework, as always; she has done the hard work. The depth of knowledge that she brings to this bill is certainly bar none. She is, by her own admission, a researcher, and a very well-educated researcher at that. I know from her experience that she brings to this Legislature that this bill is probably going to be one of the best bills you'll see going to committee, and you may find hardly any efficiencies. I just want to put that forward. I have a lot of confidence in this bill and a lot of confidence in the member of London West that she took the time and the due diligence to make this bill the best it can be.

Introducing your first private member's bill is an important milestone in the career of every member, as we know, and this particular bill demonstrates my colleague's commitment and passion for helping Ontario's post-secondary students gain the valuable skills they need to prepare them for the job market. This bill represents the kind of thoughtful and meaningful approach that New Democrats are committed to delivering. Moreover, it will bring together students, post-secondary institutions and employers to expand work-integrated-learning opportunities for students.

For me, one of the most important issues in this bill addresses the current state of the vulnerability of our students and our youth. Our youth are facing unprecedented levels of unemployment; I believe that that number is hovering at approximately 16% right now. That, along with the ever-increasing trend toward unpaid internships that do not contribute to their learning and skills development, are significant concerns and take a very serious toll on the professional, financial and emotional stability of Ontario's youth.

We need to ask ourselves some important questions about the kind of future we are providing today's youth. Currently, Ontario's students are paying the highest tuition fees in this country. They are seeing the least per capita investment in this country, while forcing them to work for free under all-encompassing terms like "co-op," "placement," "internship" and "service learning."

Ontario's students need opportunities to earn while they learn, and this bill offers our students the opportunity to do just that. It further codifies how true work-

integrated-learning opportunities should work, by bringing together all partners in the sector and giving them an equal seat at the table.

For me, the creation of a provincial advisory council on work-integrated learning is the most important facet to establishing real change and new ways of thinking about integrated learning opportunities. Further, by defining work-integrated learning, as she has done, it provides clarity to what are now very convoluted—and difficult for most people to understand—terms of reference. It also calls for important, needed oversight by ensuring the supervisory component truly necessary for student success. Most importantly, I'm very happy that it requires all work to be defined and agreed to in writing by the institution, the employer and the participant before the work placement begins.

I'm also very impressed with how the member made connections between work-integrated learning as a partial fulfillment of the requirements of a post-secondary course of study and as an option within a post-secondary course of study. By focusing on the WILs, on the predetermined and agreed learning outcomes, it allows students, in collaboration with the university or college, to genuinely and critically reflect on their work experience.

The proposed council will have their work cut out for them, but I understand that that is an opportunity. By allowing the scope of the council to include three key areas, the first opportunity includes increasing employer awareness of the benefits of WILs by providing resources to assist employers develop WIL suitability for their business, and by highlighting the availability of financial and other supports for participating employers.

The next opportunity for council, as I understand it, is the identification of resources and supports to the post-secondary institutions. This will ensure the success of the expansion of WIL opportunities across faculties and programs. It will also help improve the deliveries of programs to help maximize educational benefits for students.

The council will also be tasked with ensuring that the students who are interested in participating in WIL are able to do so. By tasking the council to make recommendations to the development website, this bill will see a web portal that becomes a one-stop access point for students and employers and raises awareness about the shared benefits for everyone.

I truly believe that this bill represents a win-win scenario for students, employers, colleges and universities. What I am most pleased about are the tangible returns we will see as a province.

There's also another component I'd like to bring up: about new Canadians who enter post-secondary education.

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Many, many years ago, there were vast opportunities for new immigrants to enter the workforce. I believe that this bill, the WIL bill, will also give new immigrants and new Canadians the opportunity, in order to enter the workforce, to gain experience and also be paid.

Right now, many new Canadians are entering precarious work through temporary agencies, and they aren't getting benefits or any kind of stability. This will also help new Canadians to integrate into the workforce.

I just want to say congratulations again to the member from London West. I do look forward to this bill passing and having it go to committee, to see if there is possibly any way of improving this bill. I'd love to know what that would be.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise to speak and provide my comments with regard to the member from London West on Bill 172. Let me begin my remarks with the timeliness of this bill. This week is recognized as national co-op education week, so I want to recognize the timeliness of this bill.

But I also want to share with you, with respect to this bill, that in this House we all know the importance of experiential learning for our young learners. We know that there is evidence to prove that experiential learning is good for every student. Also, this government has recognized that experiential learning is a priority. We have always been open with respect to expanding and improving these programs across Ontario. Right now, we're currently supporting 40,000 co-op students in our post-secondary institutions.

I'm not sure the members across as well as in the House know this, but Waterloo University is recognized as having the largest co-op education program in the world. So the home of the largest co-op education program in the entire world is here in the province of Ontario. Again, I want to applaud the university and those across the province, as well as the colleges.

Co-op education is an integral part of university and college education across this province, with hosts of post-secondary co-op programs offered in not just one university but, across the province, in colleges and universities.

The other piece is, our government has supported post-secondary co-op education through the Ontario Co-operative Education Tax Credit, which provides up to \$3,000 to help employers that hire co-op students. Ontario has thousands of employers involved in hiring co-op students in multiple sectors, like manufacturing and finance. Through our Co-op Diploma Apprenticeship Program, students can get on-the-job apprenticeship training while earning a college degree.

Recently, the minister announced that we will be extending the 30% off tuition grant to students in their final year of a five-year co-op program. Eligible students can save up to \$1,730 in tuition fees each year.

The other piece I want to share with the members of this House is the fact that the proposed bill does not provide clarity, so I want to share a piece here. I want to make sure that the members hear it.

I'm not sure of the clarity of the bill, with regard to the debate, that the new advisory council is the best conduit for this type of change. In terms of the mandate, we don't know the lifespan of this advisory committee. The cost of this advisory committee is a concern.

The other piece is that we already have Colleges Ontario and the Council of Ontario Universities. Those bodies already exist. Can they be part of this advisory council? I know the mandate in terms of membership, but are we going to create another layer of a body to review post-secondary co-op education?

The other piece here is that a significant concern I have—the member did not address it in her proposed legislation—is the safety component. In terms of the membership, there's no comment made about safety.

I know that the Minister of Labour recently proposed his legislation, Bill 146, that talks about amending the Occupational Health and Safety Act, and it talks about post-secondary students who are performing or supplying services with no monetary compensation. It talks about the whole amendment on the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

The other concern that I have is that although the intent of the bill is to ensure co-op education is province-wide, giving experiential learning and hopefully improving youth unemployment, the other piece that we need to also ask is with respect to this type of public appointment. The membership of this advisory council is publicly appointed and there's no mention of consulting with legal services or the Public Appointments Secretariat to make sure the process is vetted and that the membership of this council is open and transparent.

So those are my concerns.

The other piece here is that we also need to recognize the fact that the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities is right now working on work-integrated learning as a part of ongoing post-secondary education transformation. So how does this particular bill work with that particular transformation conversation currently with the ministry?

So all in all, I certainly hear the passion, the interest from the member from London West, and I certainly know there is lots of merit in experiential learning.

In my last 38 seconds, Mr. Speaker, I want to share some of the comments from my constituent. I'm going to name her, because she gave me permission. Darlene said to me, "My practicum experiences in teachers' college have definitely enhanced my skills as both a student and teacher. I'm the kind of learner who requires hands-on application in conjunction with theoretical learning." Her boyfriend, Praveen, who is also a constituent of mine, spent two co-op terms with Facebook and is currently working at Facebook in Singapore.

So we know that many life stories of experiential learning lead to employment. I want to applaud the member opposite for bringing this particular bill to the House.

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: First of all, I'd like to congratulate the member from London West on her first private member's bill. It's an important moment, and you've done some very good work on it.

I want to comment on it in the sense that we have to take a look at its overall effectiveness, and so that's where I'm going to focus.

Increasing the opportunity for students to engage in what are being called work-integrated-learning opportunities is certainly a good idea. In plain language, these are co-op programs and a variety of other work-study programs that are available at colleges and universities across the province.

The Learning Through Workplace Experience Act addresses an important issue. We are in a situation in Ontario where many graduates of post-secondary institutions, both colleges and universities, are finding it difficult to enter the workforce.

I would be remiss if I didn't recognize the fact that, as of last week—recognizing I come from a primarily agricultural riding of Huron-Bruce—students in eastern Ontario are going to find it difficult to be able to go to school to study an area that they are absolutely committed to, which is the agri-food sector. It's a shame that the agriculture minister has stood by to let this college be closed. I know how that community feels, because in 1993-94, the NDP closed the Centralia agricultural college. It's an absolute travesty, when we have a government that's encouraging workforces and the agri-food industry sector to step up to provide more jobs.

So we certainly need to be able to connect the dots between where the jobs are and what type of experience students need to get those jobs.

I'm afraid, when I look at it in more detail, that the advisory council on the work-integrated-learning aspect would be yet another layer of bureaucracy, and that would do more to get in the way of progress than it would to increase work-integrated-learning opportunities in Ontario. Having a centralized website with program offerings and general information about co-op programs and other work-study programs available in Ontario is a good idea, but having a panel of 18 people to put on another advisory council? I'd have to question that in terms of overall effectiveness and best use of our time.

I'm going to hold my comments on that, but I need to let you know that I reached out to a couple of teachers on this issue, and here's one comment in particular that came back: "I wonder why it's needed and if it's a waste of time/money—lots of talking but what will the council actually do? And the council will get paid? With taxpayers' dollars?"

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"I don't know really what the amendments are changing.... In of itself, is there a need for changes or is it change for the sake of change?"

We have to be very, very careful here in what we're proposing, and we have to do a lot more work on this particular private member's initiative, because it's lacking a lot of details, and that has already been addressed.

When we're facing a shortage of jobs—300,000 jobs—we have to be our best. Ontario needs a job plan that will go into effect immediately. The Ontario PC

Party is the only party that has a plan, and we're ready to get it into action.

To close, I have to say I agree with the member from Halton. In committee, a lot of work must be done in order to ensure continued support.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It is such a pleasure for me to stand in this house today in support of the private member's bill from the member from London West. I'm incredibly proud of her because both of us served, I think, a collective 22 years, through the public education system, as school board trustees. And even back then, the hunger for experiential learning opportunities from our youngest students was prevalent. We were pushing the government for the last 10 years to move towards a 21st-century learning model, which incorporates creative and communication and connecting and critical thinking skills.

When we first approached the member from London West to seek the nomination and run in that riding, we promised the opportunity to positively affect public policy in a meaningful way, in a pragmatic way. It's amazing that she has brought forward a piece of legislation which will do exactly that. The timing is perfect. It's crafted in a way which is so well researched and layered, and the consultation has already happened. In fact, the Liberal government should just pick it up and run with it, but we're going to make sure that it goes through the regular course of this House.

I just want to share a quick story. This morning, our leader, Andrea Horwath, was meeting with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, with their business advisory council, and a question came from the floor as to how we are going to address the productivity gap in this province. Because there is. There are employers who have a demand for a certain skill set which our post-secondary and our public education systems—we haven't quite got it right yet. Our leader answered that this is the first step. This is the first step to moving forward through learning through workplace experiences. These are powerful learning opportunities. I'm the MPP for Kitchener-Waterloo. I have spoken to students over the last year and a half from both the University of Waterloo and from Wilfrid Laurier, which have amazing co-op programs. Obviously, it's already been stated, the University of Waterloo has sort of broke ground on this, but also Conestoga College. Those are the experiences that students are seeking. They want the curriculum that they are learning in the classroom to be grounded by experience in the real world, and it's a mutually beneficial experience.

Some of the criticism I've heard this afternoon has not been overly surprising. I mean, the Conservatives say, "What's it going to cost?" Well, there is a cost to doing nothing. There is a cost to standing still. There is a cost to maintaining the status quo. The Liberals say that they're sort of already doing this, but they haven't put the infrastructure in place to make it happen. What we've

learned through many years of research is that you can talk about collaboration, and certainly there's a lot of talk in this House on that issue, but you actually have to put the mechanisms, the administration, in place to ensure that collaboration happens in a very balanced way.

This private member's bill would give some credibility to a new learning agenda. Students want—in fact, there's a growing student demand for working-integrated learning. There's a limited employer involvement in providing working-integrated learning, and there's a strong commitment across the post-secondary sector to ensuring quality experiences like this happen in the province of Ontario. It is timely. It is needed. Let's support it.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I'll be brief in my small time. First of all, I want to commend the member from London West. She does have an eminent background in what she speaks, so I commend her for that.

In a practical way, I want to communicate some of the background I have on this issue. I certainly agree with the work-integrated learning. It comes under many, many different names.

I should say that I worked for a very large company, and part of my time there was coordinating the largest co-op program in industry in Canada. We had about 72 engineers from Waterloo in each session. There's an A and a B session. I was the coordinator; I used to go and recruit them at the university. It was very excellent. Systems engineering, electrical engineering, when we were going robotic in the auto sector, were very important.

We also worked with the other colleges and universities to try and develop work-related experiences. We were instrumental in—the University of Toronto now has a co-op program called PEY, Professional Experience Year, for engineers between their third and fourth year. The same now is at Queen's University. Queen's was very much a theoretical engineering school, but I think it's important to say that institutions—and that's the message you're sending—need to adapt.

In fact, look at the education system itself. It's wrong to think that all children move around in little groups of 20. It's simply wrong. It works for the system but not for the students. I think if you can draw that out—learning the right skills at the right time becomes important and learning them in some kind of planned, organized way, what skills are appropriate at a certain developmental age. It's called play-based learning now in schooling.

I would say that this bill is provocative. I think the work world is changing totally. If you look at Rick Miner's book *People Without Jobs, Jobs Without People*, it's telling you a lot in that book. It's telling you that working for a company for 30 years is all finished. That will never happen. It will, perhaps, in the public sector. But people will become redundant in 10 years unless they're trained continuously. So work-integrated learning is already part of the life of work itself.

I would only say this: My children live in different parts of the world. I say that, but one of them practises law in Russia, China and Brazil. It's all online. They don't really have a place to go. If they have personnel meetings, they're usually in London, England. This is a true story of the life of the future.

So I ask the Minister of Labour today: What are the jobs of the future? It's got to be integrated manufacturing and other kinds of integration of systems along with human skills. So skills and skill sets are the most important thing in the world of work.

Not everybody is going to be an engineer. Some may be musicians, writers, artists, whatever else, but there's an appropriate time to learn. To think that, today, in our system, all the children move around in little groups of 20, is simply wrong. I'm not criticizing the system, the teachers. My wife is one, and my daughter is one—all the rest of it. I'm not blaming them. I'm saying the system—that's us; we create these systems—needs to change.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on your bill, and I'm sure it will pass.

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

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'm pleased to rise this spring afternoon—it is spring today at 11:57—and join the debate on Bill 172, the Learning Through Workplace Experience Act. As the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party's critic for economic development, trade and employment, I am actually aware of the challenges that our economy faces. The day-to-day reality can challenge even the most optimistic among us. These are not Ontario's brightest days, as we know, and as a mother of five children, I'm very concerned, concerned about the lack of jobs today and concerned about the impact of government policy on long-term opportunity in Ontario.

On this government's watch, Ontario has lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs and created 300,000 bureaucratic jobs. Nearly a million Ontarians are out of work. At the same time, experts tell us that, within a few years, we will have a million skilled-trade jobs left unfilled if the status quo doesn't change. The solution is not complicated, but it will require courage and conviction.

First, this government needs to restore balance to the province's books. Spending must be brought in line with revenues so Ontario can get back on a solid, competitive economic footing. Right now, almost 10% of government revenue goes to debt payments. That's a millstone hanging around our necks, and it endangers every single thing that we value.

Alongside that, I would suggest two more key priorities that speak to the focus of Bill 172. First, government needs to encourage more people to enter the skilled trades. Second, government needs to remove existing barriers to matching people with jobs, just like the member from Durham has just spoken about.

In light of the concerns I've described and the very personal interest I have as an opposition critic and as a mother, I'm obviously very interested in proposed legislation that announces its allegiance to work-integrated learning.

1540

But despite this encouraging start, Bill 172 is thin on specific details relating to the functions of its proposed advisory council which would advise the ministry with respect to work-integrated-learning opportunities. This quickly starts to look like just another level of bureaucracy, another body that is more concerned with branding itself as solutions-driven than actually bringing forward real solutions to the real problems Ontarians and Ontario students face.

I mentioned my children earlier. My son, Mac, is pursuing a career in marine mechanics. He's loving it, and we both hope it will be a prosperous career for him. But he found that path and that passion himself. Nobody fostered that passion in him or showed him the way forward. Luckily, he's a strong self-starter and he found opportunity on his own. But for many more young people like him, that path might not be as clear. The system isn't helping them as much as they deserve, and neither will this bill, as it stands.

Bill 172 contains no specific details describing how the jobs and work internships necessary to the council's mandate would be created. Where are the workplace opportunities going to come from? Not from this government, obviously. Hopefully, we can add some meat to the bones in committee.

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

The member for London West, you have time left from your party and two minutes for your response.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I would like to thank all the members who offered comments on this bill, in particular the member from Scarborough–Guildwood, the member from Halton, and the members from London–Fanshawe, Huron–Bruce, Kitchener–Waterloo, Durham and Burlington. Many of the comments were very helpful, and I am encouraged by the support—some begrudgingly—that generally has been expressed for the bill.

There were a couple of issues raised that I wanted to respond to directly. The member from Scarborough–Guildwood talked about what the government is currently doing with the Co-operative Education Tax Credit. That is great, that financial assistance that's offered to employers to participate in one particular kind of WIL, but there are many other forms of work-integrated learning and there's no other financial assistance to support employers who participate in those kinds of programs.

The research that I was involved with for HEQCO found that 61% of employers do not participate in work-integrated learning. They don't offer these kinds of opportunities for students. They talked about some of the barriers that prevent them from being involved. In particular, lack of financial support was a barrier for employers, because there are costs involved in appropriately integrating a quality learning experience when you have a student in the workplace.

I also wanted to respond to some of the concerns that were raised by my colleagues to the right here about the creation of a new bureaucracy. I liked what the member

for Kitchener–Waterloo had to say about the costs of doing nothing. We know there's considerable research on the cost savings to employers in terms of recruitment when they are able to participate in work-integrated-learning programs and screen potential new hires in the workplace. These cost savings to employers can be huge. So by enabling more employers to participate in providing these programs, we contribute to the future productivity of our firms in the province.

In particular, I mentioned in my comments about the benefits of the work of the advisory council on work-integrated learning for SMEs. Currently, institutions have relationships with individual employers but there is no centralized one-stop access for employers to find out about what programs are available within their area, what kinds of skills the students coming from those programs would bring to the workplace. The website that is referenced in my bill would directly address that concern.

Finally, I want to say to the member for Scarborough–Agincourt that I really like what she said about the need to acknowledge workplace safety for young people. That's an important component, and I would be pleased to talk about that further when the bill goes to committee, as I hope it will.

I want to again thank all of the members who spoke to my legislation for your feedback and your support.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We'll take the vote at the end of private members' business.

FINANCIAL ADVISORS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LES CONSEILLERS FINANCIERS

Mr. Bartolucci moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 157, An Act to regulate financial advisors / *Projet de loi 157, Loi réglementant les conseillers financiers.*

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

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: Before I start my comments, I want to recognize three people who are in the gallery today. They're from Advocis: Greg Pollock, Peter Tzanetakis and Kristin Doucet. I want to publicly thank them for the incredible efforts that they have put forth with this piece of legislation.

It would be remiss if I didn't also mention Eric Chamney. He's a lawyer from the office of the legislative counsel. We don't normally recognize them, but this was a very, very complex piece of legislation, and I do want to thank him and them so much for working together.

Last month, I tabled Bill 157, the Financial Advisors Act, 2014. If passed, the bill would protect consumers by requiring financial advisers to participate in a professional body. It would raise education standards for financial advisers, ensure adherence to a code of professional and ethical conduct, and create a disciplinary process. The bill would enhance confidence in the sector and protect consumers.

In the current environment, anybody can set up shop and call themselves financial advisers, regardless of their licences, training, education or ethics. This can put Ontarians at major risk as they take financial advice from people who may not necessarily be experts, or may actually be out to harm them. Bill 157 creates an oversight mechanism for individuals who hold themselves out to the public as financial advisers, and requires membership in a recognized professional body.

Financial advisers are one of the last groups of specialized practitioners whose professional title is not protected in law. Examples of practitioners whose titles are protected in law include doctors, lawyers, accountants and engineers, just to mention a few. It is time to put financial advisers on the path to professional status.

Last year, I was approached by Advocis, the Financial Advisors Association of Canada, during their annual Legislature day. Michael Vagnini, a former student of mine, and Allain Labelle, who are Advocis members from Sudbury, explained to me that day that anyone can call himself or herself a financial adviser, and that consumers do not necessarily know if they are dealing with an ethical, qualified financial adviser.

I was shocked by this statement, given Ontario's multitude of regulators, including the Ontario Securities Commission and the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, not to mention the Investment Industry Regulatory Organization of Canada and the Mutual Fund Dealers Association of Canada. These are self-regulatory bodies that have the regulatory authority to oversee financial service representatives in the sale of investment products.

But it's true: Unfortunately for Ontarians, anyone can claim to be a financial adviser, and currently our regulators' hands are virtually tied. The only time our regulators will intervene is if it happens to be within their jurisdiction of product regulation, or in a case that is brought forward and an investigation is initiated with an accusation of fraud. In my view, this is a case of too little, too late for those unsuspecting individuals, people like you and I whose lives have been turned upside down by a fraudster or unqualified adviser.

1550

Not only is the title of "financial adviser" not protected in law; the standard for adviser conduct varies greatly among advisers. This—to me, to them, to everyone—is a major concern. While our provincial regulators enforce initial eligible requirements prior to issuing life insurance and securities licences for the sale of life insurance and investment products, there is no consistent oversight of adviser conduct.

Membership in a professional association like Advocis, for example, is entirely voluntary. In Ontario, Advocis has 5,000 members that adhere to education standards and a code of conduct; however, there are over 40,000 individuals in Ontario who claim to be financial advisers. Where do they belong? Are they adhering to a code of conduct and high continuing-education standards?

While there are a few groups out there, it is evident to me that the standards are all over the map. Bill 157 changes that as it moves to create more uniform standards across the industry.

Financial advisers, as we know, play a fundamental role in raising the financial literacy of their clients. They help Ontarians prepare for important events and needs throughout their lives and to become more financially self-sufficient. Consumers value the advice they receive from their advisers. Financial advisers help Ontarians to save and plan for their future and to protect the savings they have accumulated through comprehensive planning and a wide range of life and health insurance and investment opportunities.

People who receive advice accumulate more financial wealth, are better protected, and are better prepared for retirement and unexpected events. Financial security and independence are important to Ontarians. That transparency and clarity are precisely why I was compelled to address these glaring problems through the introduction of Bill 157.

Again, I would like to thank Advocis for their incredible work throughout this extremely complex bill. I look forward to working with them in the future as well. They presented a well-thought-out proposal that covers many key issues that needed to be addressed. But what I was most impressed with was that Advocis—and I commend them for this—brought this issue forward from the consumer's perspective, first and foremost. To me, that's a sign of individuals who want something to happen in the best interests of Ontarians.

Here are some of the specifics regarding the proposed legislation. If passed, the legislation would offer Ontario consumers an accessible complaint-handling mechanism and would provide easier access to review an adviser's credentials and complaints history.

Further, the professional body for financial advisers would have the authority to—and there are several here:

- establish a code of professional and ethical conduct;
- establish specializations and recognize those organizations, such as Advocis, that meet a standard;
- require the members to maintain errors and omissions professional liability insurance to protect consumers;
- require minimum initial proficiency standards for members;
- require continuing education, addressing substantive and professional matters;
- establish a governance structure that includes both advisers and representation from the public;
- establish a complaints and disciplinary process, with powers to suspend an adviser's membership; and
- provide public access to check an adviser's credentials and disciplinary history.

Anyone presenting as a financial adviser would have to register with the new body irrespective of other professions; however, as stated earlier, Bill 157 would not apply to those working in certain professions already governed under separate acts and whereby they are not

holding out as financial advisers. These include—let me repeat—lawyers, accountants, real estate brokers, mortgage brokers, property and casualty insurance brokers, and bank employees offering advice on simple deposit projects such as savings accounts and guaranteed income certificates.

Ontario would be the first jurisdiction in Canada to introduce such comprehensive oversight of financial advisers. Bill 157 is a first and would make Ontario a leader in consumer protection and professional standards for all financial advisers.

What we are talking about is not unlike the recent unification of the accounting profession in Ontario that brought the CAs, CMAs and CGAs under the same tent. High standards and reputable designations can and should be recognized, as the proposed legislation calls for the recognition of such standards through the creation of specializations. These details would be outlined in the regulations and subsequent administrative agreements once the legislation is passed.

The other important element of Bill 157 is that it lays the groundwork for the evolution of the regulatory environment of financial advisers where a government is providing an effective streamlined form of regulation and eliminates as much duplication as possible without watering down the consumer protection gaps it needs to address. You know that our government has worked diligently in recent years to reduce duplication of regulation. The objective of Bill 157 is to ensure that the new body oversees the profession of financial advisers, like all other professions in the province.

Current regulation is focused on the sale and distribution of product, with each sector, including mutual funds, life insurance and securities, having its own set of regulations and regulators. Ultimately, these costs are borne by the consumer. This bill, for the first time in history, would directly regulate all advisers, regardless of the products they are selling. This harmonized approach will streamline and simplify the regulatory process.

In closing, all Ontarians would benefit under Bill 157. Let me conclude by simply saying that the financial services product providers and distributors who are such an important part of Ontario's high-value-added service economy will benefit greatly as well. Moving to a profession of financial advisers will support the recruitment of new advisers into the industry through enhanced professional standing. This will result in tremendous economic opportunity and growth as the industry around the profession will flourish. At the very end of the day, it has to be a win-win situation: a win for the consumer and a win for financial advisers. If they win, we win.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to rise today to speak to Bill 157, the Financial Advisors Act. I have to start by saying to you that I don't often agree with the member from Sudbury, but the point that all Ontarians must have protection for their nest egg I think is something we can all agree on.

Over the past number of weeks, I've had the opportunity to meet with several stakeholders within the financial service sector to discuss Bill 157, and it is abundantly clear that there is much division within the industry with regard to the legislation. The member from Sudbury said it best himself, that his bill covers many of the issues but not all of the issues. Most have said there is a need to enhance consumer protection by increasing professional standards for financial advisers and that the risks to consumers are far too great to allow simply anyone to call themselves a financial adviser. I couldn't agree more.

The government, however, is confusing matters by having two simultaneous issues going on. One is this private member's bill, and the other is the ministry holding consultations in advance of their own bill coming forward.

Let me take a moment to address some of the concerns that I've heard with regard to this legislation from stakeholders. First, there is a concern that this bill appears to come forward with very little consultation of the industry as a whole. The vast majority of Ontario financial advisers licensed to sell financial products are regulated, which also raises questions about the potential for jurisdictional duplication and overlap. There is concern the bill will add more bureaucracy and red tape, one of the things Ontarians told us is killing jobs and investment during our pre-budget hearings, when we toured those eight cities. The last thing we need right now in Ontario is more red tape and more costly bureaucracy.

We've shown this week that the government has provided inaccurate information regarding the state of our finances. We can't afford to implement legislation that will add to the growing debt burden and act as a deterrent to job creation and economic growth. I quite frankly would like the government to come forward and express what they have planned, as I know the Ministry of Finance hears the same concerns that I've heard. If the government truly wanted to do something about this, then they would table a government bill, not a private member's bill.

1600

In closing, I want to stress that it is important that we do what we can in this Legislature to safeguard consumers when it comes to their investment. For many, we're talking about their life savings, money they plan to use for their retirement. I believe we all want the same thing at the end of the day, and our caucus will work to get a proper bill enacted to protect the consumer.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: Congratulations to my colleague from Sudbury for bringing this bill forward.

I want to preface my remarks with a couple of things. First of all, it is my intention to support the bill. Everything you're going to hear you may not like, but I think I need to stand up here, first of all, and say that I'm going to support the bill in the final analysis today, because it is a bill that needs to come.

A couple of weeks ago, if you had the opportunity to be watching CBC news, there was a compelling docu-

mentary about financial planners. They went in with hidden television cameras to some of the big banks and financial institutions across the country and sought ordinary advice from people who hung out a shingle and said, “We are financial planners.”

Some of that advice was absolutely abysmal. The consequences we saw as a result of that bad advice included broken marriages. There was one man who had lost his business, his wife, his children, his house, everything, as a result of advice that was so—I don’t know what other word to use—preposterous that it ought not to have ever been given in the first place.

It was quite clear at the end of the show that the banks and financial institutions who had hired some of these people, or allowed them to practise inside the building or inside the institution, were taken aback as well by the people who were in their employ or under their control. So there’s no doubt in my mind at all that we need to go somewhere with this.

I did have the opportunity, as did my colleague from Nipissing, who just spoke, to meet with some of the other groups, though, that are not quite so enamoured of the bill as my friends in Advocis. I consider my friendship with the people in Advocis to be a building one and a good one. It has now been some 10 or 12 years since I first made their acquaintance and got to know what their industry is all about. I trust very much the advice they have given, and I am sure they have given all the best advice to my friend from Sudbury.

However, I did have an opportunity to sit down around a little table in my constituency office last Friday with a group of people who were opposed, who came and quite frankly shocked me. But what they talked about was something that I think we need to deal with, as and when and if this bill moves forward past the reading today and into committee.

Those people who came to see me came from the Financial Planning Standards Council, the Investment Industry Regulatory Organization of Canada, and the Canadian Federation for Advancement of Investor Rights. They also alluded, although that person was not there, to the Coalition for Professional Standards, which I think all of them belong to anyway.

I think what they had to say was profound. I think it was important, and I don’t think it in any way negates what is trying to be done here today. But what they were asking for was caution. They were asking for us to proceed slowly on this. They were asking for some public hearings, and they need to get their head around exactly where they’re going. What they said was that discussions were essential.

They were worried about a couple of things that I could easily put my finger on, that didn’t require consultation. They were worried because they were not sure, within the body of the bill as it presently exists, to which ministry a new agency might report, an overarching one. Would it go to the Ministry of Finance—which is logical because everything else now goes through the Minister of Finance—or would it go to the Ministry of Consumer

Services? I wasn’t sure either when I read the bill, and I think they had a fairly good point.

They gave me a couple of journals which I’d like to quote from. I shouldn’t say journals; they were more like small news articles. I thought the small news articles pointed it out fairly well. I think this is what we have to get our heads around as legislators, and it’s also what we need to get our heads around when and if this goes to committee, because these questions have to be answered, and they have to be asked, and people have to make deputations. We need to make sure that whatever bill we finally get at the end of this, it works for the people of Ontario. If we get the bill wrong, then the circumstances that we saw on CBC, in that documentary, will continue. If we get the bill right, we can put an end to it and at the same time bring all the people under one big umbrella group.

I have been here in this Legislature for a while, and I have seen many of the groups come forward and try to come to some kind of agreement to have an umbrella organization for their respective disciplines. I know we still have not succeeded in getting the engineers all together. We keep trying, but we can’t get them all to agree. We tried to get the accountants all together, and yet, after a couple of years, they are still in negotiations to bring the various accounting bodies together, and that hasn’t happened. So I think we need to do it right, and we need to get it ready at the beginning.

What was written in these two articles—I’d just like to quote a little bit, because I think they were well written, and perhaps members who haven’t seen them should look them up.

The first one is entitled “The Best Regulatory Approach?” Fiona Collie writes, in part:

“However, other sector associations believe this approach would not work because of the disparate nature of the financial services business.

“Cary List, president and CEO of the Financial Planning Standards Council (FPSC) in Toronto, argues that the term ‘financial adviser’ is too generic and does not represent the numerous careers in the financial planning sector and the different skills required for each. However, he adds: ‘The notion of professionalizing or raising the standard for all financial advisers is an admirable one.’”

It goes on to quote Mr. List further: “‘We think a tailored approach to financial planners is a more tenable solution than to capture the entire universe of all licensed individuals.’”

It goes on—and I’m mindful of the time—to also quote people from the IIAC and from the Independent Financial Brokers of Canada, which was the only body, that I could tell, that was opposed to the legislation. The others wanted to work within the system and try to iron out the wrinkles.

There are also a couple of excellent articles under the title Investment Executive, written by Keith Costello, which I think some of the members may have seen. Mr. Costello, in his March 9, 2014, newsletter, writes in part:

“In particular, financial advisers or financial planners should be concerned with three issues in Bill 157, An Act to regulate financial advisors, which was introduced by Rick Bartolucci, a Liberal member of provincial Parliament (MPP) for Sudbury, Ont.:

“Issue 1 is that the regulations in the act governing the financial adviser, and his or her advice, is very prescriptive and intrusive.

“Issue 2 is what body will ultimately oversee this act?”

“And issue 3 is how does this act fit in with the Ontario government’s sponsored consultations on regulating financial planning in Ontario, considering that Bill 157 was introduced by a member of Ontario’s Liberal provincial government. Are you confused?”

At the end of the article, I think a very good suggestion was made: “Thus, the government should take the good ideas from Bill 157 and allow existing regulators to oversee them, but only after they amalgamate the Ontario Securities Commission with the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, and the Mutual Fund Dealers Association of Canada with the Investment Industry Regulatory Organization of Canada. This new streamlined regulatory structure is best to achieve this act’s objectives.”

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, so that I leave some time for my friend, I support this bill. I think we need to have this discussion. The vehicle to have this discussion is in the committee. I welcome the good and sage advice that I have always received from Advocis, but I also want to hear from those groups that are not fully on board.

1610

When and if this bill is introduced for third reading, I think all of us need to know that the bill has satisfied all of the objections, that all of the financial planners in Ontario are on board, and that the result will be the finest financial planning body and regulations that this country has. The people of Ontario’s profits, the people of Ontario’s savings are too important to leave to unregulated financial planners.

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

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I’m very pleased to stand today to speak with my colleague on Bill 157, the Financial Advisors Act. The member from Sudbury is bringing this forward. As we have been talking about, if passed, it will require financial advisers to be members of a professional body. It would also set out education standards for financial advisers, a code of ethics and a disciplinary process.

When I look at the bill, it has all the hallmarks of a good regulatory piece. There’s a complaint mechanism, there are provisions for continuing education, there’s a governance structure, reasonable exemption and many other provisions. It’s a very well-thought-out bill.

The member from Sudbury has, of course, brought this forward with the intention of protecting the public. As the Minister of Consumer Services, I’m always interested in things that protect the public, especially consumers. As many people have heard me say in this House, when we

have protection of consumers and strong consumer confidence, that is good for our economy.

I’d also like to acknowledge Advocis for being strong advocates on this issue and for the work they’ve done with the MPP from Sudbury to bring this forward. They work really hard here at Queen’s Park, not just with the MPP from Sudbury, but in briefing us all here at Queen’s Park and in many, if not all, of our constituency offices. Thank you so much for the work you’ve been doing.

I used to work at Manulife Financial, so I know a little about this sector—not everything, but I know a little bit. I know the role of financial advisers in Ontario, and I think we all know how they help people plan and save for their future, and raise the level of financial literacy for their clients. They help us all prepare for those very important moments in life; in fact, for many of our financial needs throughout our lives. They also help clients protect the savings they have accumulated over time. People who get good advice in this area tend to accumulate more wealth and are therefore better prepared for retirement’s unexpected events.

As a government, we’ve certainly worked hard to increase consumer protection and awareness in recent years. We have had a number of things introduced. I think when we look at this act that’s being proposed, it is going to strengthen the work that we’ve been doing to make our economy stronger and support consumers.

I’m really happy to see my colleague bring this bill forward. I know he has worked very hard at it.

I worry when you have a profession where, as the member said, anyone can hang their shingle out and present themselves as an expert. Some of them may well be experts, but in this case they’re unregulated and they play a really important job, so they deserve this kind of recognition as well.

Hopefully, we can move this to committee and be the first province, I think, in Canada to have this kind of legislation.

Again, congratulations to my colleague.

I am going to share my time with a number of other members, so I’ll conclude with that.

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

Mr. John O’Toole: First of all, I want to thank the member, Mr. Bartolucci from Sudbury, for Bill 157. I commend him for the bill, first. I want to put a bit of context around it. How I look at it in today’s world is, it’s more important than ever that we have rules.

One disappointment I have—you and I spoke on this the other day, and I commend you for bringing it forward. I am a little disappointed that it’s not a government bill, because a private member’s bill allows us to discuss it, and then it usually gets filed in the circular file. I don’t mean that to be mean to you, but I’m saying, because we’re all speaking pretty much in favour of it—in the climate today, especially with seniors like myself and funds that need to be properly managed, low interest and living longer, people are going to have to really take care of those pennies.

I'm one of them; I'm over 70. I worked 30 years at General Motors and I'm 19 years here. We have a sort of pension plan here, sort of. It's not a pension, really; it's a defined contribution registered pension plan. After 19 years, I have \$272,000 in that fund. Why? Because in 2008, the funds we got to pick went into the ditch by about 22%. It's tragic. Now, if I look at \$272,000, after I get it in my hand, I have about \$135,000, because it's all taxed. Plus once you get to \$73,000, they claw all your universal benefits back. We are in a deep ditch in the market.

Here's the problem: There are many scammers in the system, even though there are regulators. The Mutual Fund Dealers Association is regulated nationally. You guys all know this; I'm just saying it for the record here. The IDA, the Investment Dealers Association—when I was in finance, Joe Oliver was the CEO of the IDA at that time. They are regulated and have standards. What we're mixed up with here is financial planners and certified financial planners.

What the customer, the consumer—you and I—need to have is certainty on standards, oversight and enforcement. There has to be some clarity within the OSC itself in terms of—they have an inherent conflict in their structure as well. They set the regulations, investigate them, enforce them and prosecute them. There should be a separation of issues there. We should have an enforcement branch that treats all of them and resolves disputes with all those different people selling paper. It protects consumers, promotes professional, ethical behaviour within the industry, and professionalizes it.

As said by other speakers, it's a shark's game out there, quite honestly. Look at Bernie Madoff when he started off. They're there. I think it's really important in the context—just a couple of weeks ago, I watched the movie *The Wolf of Wall Street*. It's just tragic. For anybody who hasn't seen that movie yet, it's terrible.

I leave it at that. I commend the member. I would support it and hope it goes to committee so we can clean it up and make sure we provide the right tools for the professionals in the marketplace.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I just heard a Conservative at the beginning of that say that we need more rules. Something has happened. Tell that to your red tape critic.

I want to commend the member from Sudbury for bringing forward this bill. It is needed. It is needed, although I think that we have heard from the various stakeholders across the province that they can't quite agree on what the best course is, going forward.

The timing is, of course, very interesting. The Ministry of Finance has only recently begun their consultation process on this very issue. One can hope that this bill, moving forward, if it gets called, would actually inform part of that process. But I think that the member's intention is to try to hold his own government accountable to put some of these measures in place. For us, we share that concern. We don't know exactly what the way

is going forward, but we certainly are going to work towards finding a solution.

What I am interested in is the public consultation and the people coming forward and sharing their stories, because I know for a fact that you will hear some heartbreaking stories from people who have been victims of so-called financial advisers—and sometimes those people are family members, which gets extra messy. I know that when those people come forward to this House to share their personal stories, those emotional stories—because this is often their life savings—those stories will be compelling, because they are real stories that affect Ontarians because some of those safeguards have not been put in place. I suspect some of those people will come into this House and say that perhaps this government should get some good financial advice as well.

Of course, we are going to be supporting the member. I know that he isn't running again, but if this is your last hurrah, it's a good hurrah.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Ottawa–Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I rise today in support of the member from Sudbury, MPP Bartolucci, and his private member's bill, the Financial Advisors Act, 2014.

Kris Birchard is in the gallery today, and he has certainly spoken to me several times over the last few years about the importance of bringing this type of legislation forward.

1620

Finances are on the minds of Ontario families. The people of Ontario and in my riding of Ottawa–Orléans work hard for their earnings and should feel confident trusting the level and quality of financial advice available to them. By holding every financial adviser to the same standards and ethics, we can ensure that people have the assurance of safely investing in their families and their futures: not much different from my friend Shafiq here, who follows all the rules of the medical profession—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'll remind the member that he should refer to colleagues by riding.

Mr. Phil McNeely: —and I follow all the rules of the engineers when I'm practising.

The changes proposed will standardize the rules and regulations for financial advisers. A code of ethics would be established, and financial advisers would be held accountable to following that code. If a financial adviser is found to be conducting himself or herself unethically, the office of the director would have the power to impose financial penalties and suspend or revoke licences. This means that families in Ottawa–Orléans and across the province can invest safely, knowing that their registered adviser is safeguarding their interests. This will leave constituents with the peace of mind needed to plan and invest for life's milestones, such as the purchase of their first home, post-secondary education for their children, and a comfortable retirement.

The bill is a win-win for both investors and investment advisers. Should this bill pass, investors in my riding will

have the ability to identify the qualities and proficiencies of an adviser through the database of registered financial advisers. They will have the means for disciplinary action in the case of foul play, and they will have a platform to share consumer input.

The financial advising industry will benefit from the restoration of credibility and professionalism. They will have the ability to add input into the regulation of the profession, and it will allow for an opportunity to consolidate and integrate regulations. The act will ensure a level of accountability and will protect the consumer.

My colleague from Sudbury is presenting this bill to address an area of concern for his constituents and constituents across the province. I urge all members to support this bill.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: I am pleased to stand and talk for a few minutes on behalf of the member from Sudbury and his private member's bill, the Financial Advisors Act, Bill 157, and I wish the member from Sudbury and his Wolves all the best in the OHL playoffs which are under way.

Coming up in late April, we're going to have our annual Advocis Day here at Queen's Park. This will be the third straight year that I have been a part of meeting with financial advisers from Advocis and financial advisers from my community in the Quinte area, and this will be the third straight year that I'm going to hear the same message, I'm sure: that we need to raise the bar when it comes to financial advisers and their profession.

Previously, I was the small business and red-tape critic for Tim Hudak and the PC caucus, and as the member from Kitchener-Waterloo alluded to moments ago, we don't usually hear from industry that they want to add red tape or regulation. This is one of the rare occurrences where we have heard from a group who want to protect the integrity of their industry, which has been under attack because of a few bad apples that are out there. There are a few so-called snakes in the grass, and we have heard about that this afternoon. They are taking advantage of people's retirement savings, they are taking advantage of people's trust in them, and in some cases they are actually losing everything they have.

The problem is, in Ontario, anybody can be a financial adviser. So what we need to do is work with groups like Advocis, who have been pushing this, and help them raise the bar. As the member from Durham alluded to a few moments ago, though, if the government was serious about this, they would have made this a government bill.

That's where we get into some of the concern about duplication or overlap. What we really want to do is protect the retirement savings and the savings plans and the future prosperity of Ontarians who are trying to do the responsible thing: They are trying to save their money; they're trying to invest their money in the proper places so that they can turn what they have into more.

The head of my local Advocis chapter is Shannon Neely. He's a good friend of mine, and he has come here

the last two years on the lobby day. We're not trying to stop anybody from becoming a financial adviser. We just want to make sure that our financial advisers are trained properly, that they are certified, so that when they give Ontarians financial advice, they are giving them the best financial advice that they possibly can. Again, the goal is to get rid of those bad apples in the industry.

Advocis and others out there want to institute a common professional standard that all 40,000 financial advisers in Ontario would have to meet, and I believe that's what the goal of the bill is. So while we are a bit concerned about red tape with this bill, what we really want to do is get this bill into committee and then turn it into a bill that truly raises the bar for financial advisers across the province.

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

Mr. John Fraser: I'm very happy today to stand in support of Bill 157 and my colleague from Sudbury.

Before I start, I'd like to recognize Kris Birchard in the gallery. Kris Birchard is from Advocis. He's a friend of mine. He has been a great advocate on this issue, and I'd just like to thank him for being here today, and for all his help. It's very much appreciated.

I'm sure that many of the members here today all agree that raising the bar in this industry is an important thing to do. One of the reasons that we are here is to try and collectively do the best we can to protect each other in many different ways.

I know that I was shocked a number of years ago, before I was in the Legislature, in meeting with Kris, hearing that anybody could just hang out a shingle and say, "I'm a financial adviser." I didn't believe that could happen.

I know that Ontarians work hard to earn their money, and when they seek guidance on how they can invest that money, they put themselves at risk. They're putting a person in a position of trust. Ontarians need to know that they are protected, so that when they do make those investments, they can do it with some confidence.

This bill, if passed, will:

- establish a code of professional and ethical conduct;
- establish specializations and recognize organizations, such as Advocis, that meet that standard;
- require that members maintain errors-and-omissions professional liability insurance to protect consumers; and
- require minimum initial proficiency standards for members.

Mr. Speaker, protecting consumers and building confidence in the financial advice services industry is the right thing to do.

I would like to remind the members opposite of the value of private members' bills. I know that they've been saying that they would like to have seen government legislation. I do know that private members' bills do work their way into governmental legislation and do get passed and do make a difference.

I'm very proud to stand today, speaking in support of Bill 157 and all the efforts that have gone forward. I'll

leave a little bit of time for my colleague the member from Ottawa Centre.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: And a fabulous riding it is. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In general, I support the protection of consumers and welcome any legislation that's going to provide such protection. But if we really want to enhance public confidence in the reliability of financial markets, then you need to table a bill that will do just that: protect the integrity of capital markets, safeguard investor confidence, and regularly review the Securities Act to ensure that the legislation in Ontario is up to date and that it properly and proactively protects investors and fosters a fair and efficient marketplace.

My cousin Paul Walker, from Walker-Bumstead Financial, is one of those. He's a member of Advocis. He is a certified financial planner and does a great job. Certainly, he wants to ensure that his industry as a whole is doing that.

My colleague from Prince Edward county suggested that there are some bad apples up there, and that's certainly not a good thing.

Someone from my riding has brought in numerous concerns to my office. Steven Brockhouse, of Annan, has voiced valid concerns on numerous times with the minister and his predecessor, the Premier, and her predecessor, about the lack of rights and recourse for investors who fall prey to companies that make misleading or untrue statements, or fail to give full and timely information.

Mr. Brockhouse, alongside another 1,000 people, fell victim to First Leaside and are strong examples of the damage that can be done to investors, pensioners, communities and markets if we continue—like the Liberals have done in their 10 years—to sit by idly and do nothing.

This is a private member's bill, as I believe my colleague from Durham, John O'Toole, has said. Unless the will of the government is to move that forward expeditiously, it's going to die in the circular bin.

We would have liked to have seen a whole more fulsome piece of legislation brought by the government. Protecting consumers and ensuring, as Advocis is trying to do, that the investor has full protection and security is something we should all be paying attention to.

1630

Given the importance of protecting these people, why are we doing patchwork with a private member's bill? Where is the Liberal government's own bill? Why are they not taking this seriously, particularly with the financial jeopardy that they've created for our province?

March is Fraud Prevention Month. This administration should recognize it by tabling a comprehensive govern-

ment bill to deal with the myriad issues plaguing the financial sector.

I've even got a letter here from Rachel Desmarais, again from Owen Sound. She's actually a member of the Independent Financial Brokers of Canada. She's voicing concerns about duplication of effort, and all of the regulations that she now has to put up with.

I want to hear from both sides. We need to ensure that any legislation we put in this House—she has really said it, and it's been very typical of this government: lack of consultation with the sector, rushing something to the table and expecting us just to say yes.

We definitely want to protect the consumer. We need to get it to committee, where we can actually review it and put good legislation forward for the people of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Before I move on to the next speaker: Can I have a little quiet in the House? I'm trying to hear the speakers, and it's very difficult, because there are about 20 conversations going on.

Further debate? The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me and giving me the opportunity to speak on Bill 157.

I want to start with a point that I think has been mentioned a few times: Year after year, we have heard from our friends from Advocis about the need to regulate financial advisers to make sure that there is consumer protection for financial advisers. I have heard members from all three parties talking about their desire to do the same, so I am very excited.

I want to congratulate the member from Sudbury for finally taking this step and putting forward Bill 157. Talk is cheap; action matters, and in this case the member from Sudbury has shown action in putting forward a very comprehensive bill which gives us the opportunity to work together on this very important issue.

I want to acknowledge our friends from Advocis who are here today—Greg Pollock, Peter Tzanetakis, Kristin Doucet and our very good friend from Ottawa, Kris Birchard—for their hard work and advocacy, and for educating all of us on the need and necessity to have a bill like Bill 157.

I've also heard, too many times now, "Where is the government bill?" and I think members know—especially the official opposition; if they read the budget document, they will know—that the government is also working on this issue. I quote from page 167 of the budget: "People need access to informed, professional financial advice to ensure that their investment decisions serve their financial goals. Financial planning is not currently subject to general regulatory oversight or self-regulatory rules. The government will investigate the merits of proceeding with more tailored regulation of financial planners and consider the appropriate regulatory framework for doing so."

Clearly, the budget that this House passed last spring outlines its desire to move in this area to create a self-

regulatory body. I want to congratulate the member from Sudbury for taking it a step further and actually giving us a framework. I think this is a great example where members are paying attention to what government is doing, and government is paying attention to what our stakeholders are talking about and bringing it all together, so that we can create good rules and regulations.

I'm hopeful that this bill will pass second reading and will go to committee, so that we can hear from all interested parties, but at the end of the day the most fundamental issue is to provide consumer confidence, to provide that guarantee, that assurance—to citizens, to our constituents and especially to senior citizens, who have worked extremely hard to save their money—that there is a safeguard mechanism, that there is regulation of financial advisors, and that their hard-earned money is being treated with respect by professionals. I want to again congratulate Advocis for bringing these issues forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Oh, my apologies. The member from Sudbury, I forgot you. I'm so concerned that you've got to leave. You have two minutes for your response.

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: Speaker, you certainly never have to apologize. My remarks will be very, very brief.

I just want to thank everyone who spoke to this legislation. I hope it goes to committee. I hope it passes. I hope we have public input, and I hope that, at the end of the day, what we finally vote on at third reading is a powerful piece of legislation that will make a difference in the lives of not only financial advisers but the people we protect: the people of Ontario who choose to invest their money.

To the member from Nipissing, the member from Beaches–East York, the Minister of Consumer Services, the members from Durham, Kitchener–Waterloo, Ottawa–Orléans, Prince Edward–Hastings and Ottawa South, the Minister of Labour and the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound: Thank you very much for your comments. I look forward to further debate on this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time has expired for private members' public business.

GOVERNMENT PROCUREMENT POLICIES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 79, standing in the name of Mr. Hatfield.

Mr. Hatfield has moved private members' notice of motion number 63. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

LEARNING THROUGH WORKPLACE EXPERIENCE ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'APPRENTISSAGE PAR L'EXPÉRIENCE EN MILIEU DE TRAVAIL

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Sattler has moved second reading of Bill 172, An Act to amend the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act to establish the Advisory Council on Work-Integrated Learning.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the bill is referred to the committee—I would ask the member for London West.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy. Agreed? Agreed.

FINANCIAL ADVISORS ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 SUR LES CONSEILLERS FINANCIERS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Bartolucci has moved second reading of Bill 157, An Act to regulate financial advisers.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the member for Sudbury?

Mr. Rick Bartolucci: I'd like to refer the bill to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to the standing committee on finance. Agreed? Agreed.

Orders of the day?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Agreed? Agreed.

This House stands adjourned until 10:30 a.m. on Monday the 24th.

The House adjourned at 1638.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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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

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Bartolucci, Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
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Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
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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
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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	

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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
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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
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Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
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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
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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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
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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
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Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
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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
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Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
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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
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John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
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Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
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des services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle**

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Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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