



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Thursday 27 March 2014

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Jeudi 27 mars 2014

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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



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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 27 March 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 27 mars 2014

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FAIR MINIMUM WAGE ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 POUR UN SALAIRE
MINIMUM ÉQUITABLE

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 18, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 165, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 with respect to the minimum wage / Projet de loi 165, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le salaire minimum.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate. The member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Good morning, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for recognizing me and giving me the opportunity to give a few comments on Bill 165. It being Thursday morning, I'm very happy, because on Thursday morning I know that tonight I will be seeing my wife and my kids; it's going to be nice. I actually get the opportunity to return home a little bit early, so it's going to be really nice, because I'm going to be able to have supper with her tonight.

Mr. Speaker, I spent the last constituency week touring many, many communities in my riding, particularly the northern part of the riding and also the western part of the riding, meeting with community members. Just last weekend, I met with a lot of the mayors and councillors at the Algoma District Municipal Association meeting up in Sault Ste. Marie.

Time and time again, we are in challenging times. Municipalities are finding it challenging to meet their services, to meet the needs of their constituents, and they're providing the good services that are always provided to the communities of Algoma–Manitoulin by their leadership. But mostly, what I heard also, meeting up with constituents, is the tough times that they're in. That needs to be heard loud and clear across this province: that every day people, particularly the people of Algoma–Manitoulin, the ones that I represent and that I have the honour of coming here and speaking on behalf of, are having a really tough time. They're having tough times with their hydro bills. That is the biggest concern that I heard while

I was going throughout the riding over the last week during my constituency week. Time and time again—and not just hearing complaints, but people coming in—there was a sense of desperation in them. There was a sense of frustration that they're being abandoned. Those are just some of the concerns.

There were various other ones, particularly in northern Ontario, in regard to the condition of our roads—again, the lack of oversight and the lack of quality in regard to road maintenance. That's not news to you, Mr. Speaker. You've heard that consistently from our party and from our northern caucus members, time and time again over the last couple of months.

It's funny—not that it is funny—but a lot of that is now being highlighted because southern Ontario, for some reason, is getting snowstorms—something that didn't happen very often—and it's become an issue. It's always been an issue for us in northern Ontario. Those are some of the issues that I've been dealing with.

I do have some good news—it pertains to G165 as well, and I'm coming around to that—and that is that there are good things happening in Algoma–Manitoulin, particularly in the northern part of the riding. Jobs are being created, there's a mill that has reopened, there's potential for people to come in and actually set up with their families and move on and prosper.

But we have a challenge: We don't have the workforce that is required in order to move them along. I'll just give you an example. There's a mill up in White River. The White River sawmill has now reopened, and a lot of the people had moved out of the community in White River. They had moved out—they've gone to the oil sands. A lot of their key individuals had moved out to other regional communities. They just need to provide the wages and the dollars so they can provide for their families.

So they were really having a crunch time finding the workforce that they're looking for, but they did secure a workforce, and there are a lot of people who have now moved up the ladder from minimum wage jobs into the sawmill. But that has created a huge labour shortage within that community—not just that community, but the region. These are your service providers that are there as well, with key municipal individuals that are needed.

You have your hotels that still need good labour to come in and take care, because tourism season is coming up. They're looking and they're very short on the labour workforce. I've been trying my best to relay that information, and I'm glad I've spoken to both ministers so that we can start having that discussion in regard to what

programs are in place to address some of that labour shortage.

The good news, Mr. Speaker, is that we have jobs in Algoma–Manitoulin. But we just don't have the workforce that will go there. The challenging part is attracting those workers to come there. Not only in restaurants and hotels, but also at gas stations, and there are other supporting employment opportunities there in the region that we just can't get the workforce up there for.

One of the reasons why is because of our minimum wage. It's hard for a family to come up to that area and set up shop and be attracted to come up, because it actually snows and it gets cold sometimes in northern Ontario. But I've always said, and I've been a firm believer, that once we have you, once we have you sitting in our community, once we get you to come to the community, you will recognize why northerners choose to live in northern Ontario. You get a really true sense of what it is, as far as being part of the community; that your issues are their issues. People will come, but we have to develop those policies and we have to take those steps in order to get the people there.

One of the steps we have brought forward—I recognize that the government has brought their plan forward; it's a step. But I just want to put on the record what we'd like to do, as far as what our vision is. It's not a vision that is just looking at one sector. It is a vision that is going to bring all of the individuals who are concerned in regard to the discussion around minimum wage, including those who are most marginalized and most need that increase to the minimum wage. But it also includes the small businesses that are going to be affected. I'm going to just read that to you, Mr. Speaker:

"We have a plan in regard to supporting not only those that are marginalized but also small business, as well as the lowest paid workers in the province, by phasing in a series of reductions in the small business tax rate, while increasing the minimum wage to \$12 per hour over two years."

So it's not a sudden blow. It's a modest increase over the next couple of years to start getting those individuals interested in coming back to good opportunities to set up with their families.

0910

The plan is economically responsible and will help lift hard-working Ontarians out of poverty while allowing small businesses to keep driving our economy forward. Based on the minimum wage of \$11 an hour as of June 1, 2014, the NDP are proposing a three-part plan which includes a 50-cent-per-hour increase to \$11.50 per hour on June 1, 2015; a 50-cent-per-hour increase to \$12 per hour on June 6, 2016; and an annual cost-of-living increase with four months' notice for businesses. The increases to the business—and like I said, there are two sides to this discussion, so we also looked at small business. For small business, we would look at a reduction that would be effective to small business tax corporations, and is as follows: a reduction from 4.5% to 4% as of June 1, 2014; a reduction from 4% to 3.5% as of June

1, 2015; and a reduction from 3.5% to 3% as of June 1, 2016.

That is an approach that the NDP have taken. That is an approach that we've had with our discussions, not only with some, but with all. It's an approach that we believe answers some of the questions for some. It brings them up to a wage. It gives an opportunity in a community like White River, with these modest increments that are in place, to have the ability of attracting people to their community. But we really need to get those right policies in place. Again, I need to stress this, because these are forefront concerns that are there on the part of the people of Algoma–Manitoulin.

If we don't take the time, if we don't challenge ourselves, if we don't build those right policies in order to address the concerns of affordability—and I'm talking about energy costs, minimum wage so that people can make a respectful wage so they can provide good opportunities for their families—we're still going to be left behind and they are going to be left behind and regions of our province are going to suffer from this. Again, there's a lot of great things that are happening in Algoma–Manitoulin, but I want to really make sure that those policies that will complement not only job creation but affordability measures are there. These are just some of the small steps that we're taking with the minimum wage.

My time is up. I wish I had more time, because, I have a lot more to say on this and how it would benefit, but I will sit on those notes.

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

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm pleased to rise to talk a bit about Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act. When I look at all of the issues people in my constituency of Pickering–Scarborough East have come to see me about, this one certainly has been on the top 10 list for sure, as it impacts so many people. I think what I'm also hearing now is that in addition to the wage increase that we're making come into effect to \$11 on June 1, the benefits of this bill are appreciated because the minimum wage will be revised annually by a percentage equal to the percentage change to the Ontario consumer price index. It includes all special wage categories, such as students and liquor servers. They will have their salaries increased by the same percent. If this bill passes—excuse me, I've got a cough thing going on—the first CPI would be announced by April 1, 2015, and take effect October 1 of the same year. That gives suitable notice and time for both workers and business.

I think what people welcome about this is a fair and predictable process, rather than what we've seen before, where a lot of people have a lot of opinions about what the minimum wage should be and when it should be changed. This brings some predictability to go-forward decisions about minimum wage, and it sets up a process by which minimum wage will be determined. This, of course, fits into our commitment as a government to create a fair and prosperous society and a stronger econ-

omy that we can all enjoy as Ontarians. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure, here on a Thursday morning, to listen to my good friend from Algoma-Manitoulin. He certainly brings a very unique perspective from the north and the concerns there and how hard life is there, and how this will, perhaps, improve the state of people of modest means. I always say he speaks directly from the heart and from real experience, and I thank him for that.

As it would be known, I may be speaking next on this. He mentioned the cost of heating your home in the north. I would say across Ontario, any person of modest means is struggling under the unacceptable load by just heating their home. It's not just the bad electricity policy; it's propane; we see now natural gas is going to apply for a 40% increase. Electricity itself has been described, but it's also gasoline; it's home heating oil. I heat with home heating oil and it has doubled in price, as propane has.

These are the things: The minimum wage is certainly the topic this morning, but who is getting hollowed out here are the people of modest means—not all seniors; certainly people who are working one or two jobs. Minimum wage is a popular thing to discuss, I suspect. I would say what we should have are more jobs and then allow performance and other things to determine income. Minimum wage is becoming a bit of a political football, technically, and I am suspicious of the Liberal government any time they do anything. Their motives need to be questioned.

It's not just this debate here this morning; I'll have a little bit more to say about it. I listened yesterday to the scandalous contract on the Pan Am Games and the security thing, which is another part of—they're going to spend more money and we're going to get less service. That's what is most troubling.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to comment on my colleague's submission here this morning. The member from Algoma-Manitoulin obviously has a clear understanding of his region and of his riding and the various regional economic conditions that the people in his riding face.

What I heard of his submission was his attempt to educate and inform the government of some of the remedies that could be put in place to ameliorate or to alleviate the issues, the road blocks that, in some respects, our government created in terms of the ever-increasing cost of hydro, in terms of road maintenance for northern communities. These are vital components to a healthy regional economy and they're ones that I think, if the government took an active role on and a proactive role, they could have anticipated. They could have anticipated a labour shortage, given the demand for development in the north, particularly around the Ring of Fire, and how that translates into other market segments that require

skills and new labour. But that has not happened, obviously. He has informed you of some areas the government could put emphasis on and put a priority on.

Of course, when it comes to the minimum wage, as New Democrats we are always prepared to deliver good ideas, intelligent ideas, that make sense not only to the debate but to the people who are affected by the debate. When we talk about the minimum wage, we're not only identifying to the government that they can go further—they can raise the minimum wage higher to acknowledge the income inequality—but they can also support small businesses with an offset that actually makes it palatable for them to increase the minimum wage.

I commend the member from Algoma-Manitoulin for his submission and I always appreciate his dialogue in this House.

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

Hon. David Zimmer: I want to make three points on this minimum wage debate. First, let me just point out that this increase in the minimum wage is building on a strong record. In fact, since 2003, this government has increased the minimum wage by some 50%. We have not forgotten the less fortunate in our society.

0920

The second point I want to make—it's a very important one—is what this act does. It brings predictability to the question of the minimum wage. We're debating this today. Every time there's been an increase in the minimum wage in the past number of years, it's been a time-consuming debate. It has eaten up a lot of time and, in some cases, aroused a lot of frustration. What we have here now is that we've set the minimum wage at \$11 and we've indexed it to the consumer price index. So we're not going to have to debate this every couple of years and get all those tensions to the fore. It will happen automatically, and that's important.

It's important for business. They can plan their costs over the next decade. They know that each year they can check the consumer price index and this is going to be their increase in costs. There's predictability for the minimum wage earner. They can factor that into their budget for the coming year. This is a very, very important factor, and it's the fair thing to do.

In my last 18 seconds, I do want to just comment that I'm troubled that the NDP, at the initial go-round on the minimum wage, was completely absent from that issue. And now that the debate is here in this chamber, of course, they're up to the eyeballs in the debate. Where were they at the start?

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to welcome all the comments that were made to the Minister of Consumer Services. Yes, it's a step in the right direction—a step—and there are a lot of other steps we can take that will complement not just increases to the minimum wage but affordability measures. I think we've been very up front, and we've been providing you with those ideas. I hope

that you're actually going to take them in, within your caucus, and they're going to be reflected in the upcoming budget, whenever that comes.

To the member from Durham: I enjoy our conversations, and it's too bad that once this question period is over, people don't see the amount of discussions we have with our colleagues around this room. Many of us make choices, as far as having those discussions and building those bridges, and I really want you to know that I have appreciated the opportunity and the discussions I've had with you, and I know how passionate you are about your riding. I really want to thank you for having those chats and taking the time to have those discussions with me. Of course, the concerns you have in Durham are very much the same concerns throughout this province: gas prices and your discussions in regards to hydro in your area. They're all part of the puzzle. All of those are part of what we're going to do as far as affordability measures.

The member from Essex stated that, you know, there are good ideas. There are good opportunities in regards to the job creation tax credit program that we have provided to this government. It's up to the government to take the initiative to act. This owl that sits on the wall behind us means be wise, in your decision-making, that you take in those ideas and, when you deliver those ideas, that you move on them.

To the Minister for Aboriginal Affairs: Yes, you're right. It is a step in the right direction in regards to the minimum wage, but you did talk about predictability. I can tell you, from the people of Algoma-Manitoulin, that if things don't change, you can predict that their hard life and their challenges are going to continue with them.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I wish I had an hour, because this bill deserves that kind of attention in terms of the content of what's been said by the previous speakers on this bill. I would say that I could use an hour.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Unanimous consent? I seek unanimous consent to have more time.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can you specify exactly what you're requesting? I only heard a piece of it.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'll try to stick to the 10 minutes, Mr. Speaker. I was provoked into that outrage.

In the very brief time I've been given to speak on this, I think we have to put a bit of context on Bill 165. Let's put some context on it. I put a few notes down, listening to the member from Algoma-Manitoulin. He just brought a practical approach to this thing, and in his last remarks he used the term "predictability." That's really a good place to start. Predictability is one element of this. Tying it, in one section of the bill, to the consumer price index in Ontario, I think, is appropriate. It will desensitize—actually, the consumer price index has been kind of flat-lined recently because the economy is stalled in Ontario, and it's probably stalled across Canada, for that matter.

We're a small country in a global economy, and so that's the context.

Here's what has happened. Let's just look at a small slice of the forecast pie here. Let's just look at the last 10 years in Ontario. If you want to learn about the future, look to the past. Look to see what has happened in history. It's usually a pretty good indicator of what's going to happen in the future.

Sticking to the theme of predictability in Bill 165 is this: In the last 10 years, the—this is quite troubling. Ontario needs more than a minimum wage. When the Liberals first took office, only 3.5% of the workforce was making the minimum wage; today, about 10% of the workforce is making minimum wage. We've seen the travesty in Ontario of Kellogg's, Heinz, Caterpillar and other companies moving to the States. Our finance critic, Mr. Fedeli, has mentioned it pretty well every day trying to get to the bottom of when they're going to have a budget in Ontario, what they are hiding from us, and the \$4.5-billion gap.

The problem here in Ontario is that there are a million people without a job. Some 300,000 have lost work. We need to focus on well-paying jobs and on bringing back what Ontario once was. Ten years ago, this country and this province were stronger.

I say to you, with all due respect to Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act—in fact, I can tell you this bill is quite a small bill. For those who are listening, it's actually four pages. It's actually three pages if you just skip the first page. Here's the first page; there are about four lines on it. It's about a page long and it does two or three things. It sets out, "Until September 30, 2015, the amount that is the prescribed minimum wage for the following classes of employees," and then it breaks down a number of different classifications, whether they're students, whether they're serving alcohol, or whether they're seasonal workers.

That's a shameful statement on Ontario. I think for the last five economic cycles, we've had the highest unemployment in Canada in Ontario. Can you imagine? Once the heartland of the economy of this province, it now has the highest unemployment. The only good jobs in this province are jobs working for the government—whatever government, at any level.

I don't deny the fact that we need to have good-paying jobs. I worked for General Motors for 31 years, over many years, and I would think that I raised my family on it. Where are those jobs in Ontario today? As our leader, Tim Hudak, says almost daily in our briefings before we go to question period: "Remember, John, it's about jobs and the economy."

He cares about youth unemployment. What is the strategy here for youth unemployment?

Our colleague here, Garfield Dunlop, talks about the trades, and what's the strategy for trades? We've got a tax on trades today, the College of Trades. What value does that add to the employment of young people today? I question the motives and the strategies of the McGuinty-

Wynne government. It makes me nervous about the future in Ontario.

We're discussing Bill 165, and in that context, I have a few other notes. I would say, now that the province is looking at this predictable minimum wage income of \$11 or in that range, that it's a sad strategy for Ontario. It's a deflection. The next thing she's going to talk about is we're going to solve this problem by having a pension for everyone. I hope they tell the truth about it. I know they've got strategists working on it, but I'll tell you this: the current way the pensions are struck, if it's tied, as some people are suggesting, to the Canada pension, the Canada pension never was, and was never intended to be fully funded. It never was, it is not today, and never will be continuously funded. It's never funded like a private company. A private company has to fill it on an ongoing basis, and then if the stock falls or the product falls or they have a recall, boom, they are out of debt. What happens? Almost all of the pensions except HOOPP, the Healthcare of Ontario Pension Plan, are not funded. They are not funded. The teachers' pension is not funded. None of them are funded. We found out Ontario Hydro's pensions are not funded. These are future taxes.

0930

Be assured that this government—in 10 years, the debt that we have now has doubled and the deficit has doubled. That's the operating shortfall; it's about \$12 billion. The interest on servicing the debt—

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

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, with all respect, I'll refer back to Bill 165. The plan here today that we're talking about is a page of information which we support—I want to be very clear we support it—but it's in the context of the economy that we're talking about.

Unemployment: We shouldn't be talking about minimum wage. We should be talking about jobs, having less red tape and having affordable electricity to have the fundamentals of our economy.

Our leader has a plan. He has put it on the table. It's called the Million Jobs Act. They don't want to talk about that. They're not even talking on the minimum wage bill. What is it they want to do?

I'm suspicious, when yesterday in question period—this is related, too—we talked about the Pan American Games. We talked about the security contract. It ended up that now it's been flipped over to the OPP as another investigation ongoing. It turns out they accepted an American bid from a company that has been charged for violations under the security act, and they are paying more for an American company—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I will warn the member, you drifted again; if you would speak to the bill.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, it's in that context that minimum wage will not solve the problem. The people still won't be able to afford their electricity and they still won't be able to afford to put gas in their car or food on

their table. What they want is a job, Mr. Speaker. I am crying out this morning—I wish I had more time. But this morning, what I really want is for the members on the government side to step back and bring forward a jobs plan.

Bring forward a budget so we have some certainty and predictability and clarity.

This minimalistic conversation this morning on minimum wage is troubling. It's almost pathetic, and that's what we're spending our time on when Ontario is slowly slipping behind the rest of Canada.

The future of our young children—I look at the pages here; I hope you have a bright future. We have an education system that needs some repairs. We have the most expensive tuition in all of Canada now, and they talk about all these support programs. No, you don't qualify for them. That's the problem.

The minimum wage: I would hope that we would have a discussion on it. I would hope it would go to committee so that the proper implementation—and the last thing I want to say that is fairly relevant: Setting the minimum wage doesn't cost Kathleen Wynne and her government one nickel. It's downloaded to the employer and the employer says, "I'm running a Tim Hortons here. If I have to pay them \$10 or \$12"—whatever that number is, he's either going to increase the price of the coffee or lay somebody off. Period. Because the payroll is not changing. There are going to be fewer people sharing it, that's all that's going to happen, or they will call in their son or daughter to say, "You're going to have to work on Saturdays now."

I just don't get it. This is not a plan for minimum wage. This is the current McGuinty-Wynne plan for Ontario: minimum wage jobs. We have real jobs, jobs with some vision and some kind of connection to innovation and creativity in this great province of Ontario.

This bill really does very little and I would say it won't solve the problems for the people who have been crushed in the last 10 years by exorbitant electricity prices and exorbitant gasoline prices. The HST, which is a tax on everything, has increased by 8%. Whether you're getting your hair cut or your taxes done, you are going to pay 8% more under Kathleen Wynne than you would under any other government. It's simply wrong. This bill fixes nothing.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I don't know how many other opportunities I'm going to have to speak on the comments of my colleague from Durham, but I want to state again that I really do enjoy the opportunities and discussions that we've had, the shared ideas and views. Really, I think we'll both agree to the statement that we both make choices that are best for our constituents back home. We speak on their behalf and we wear our hearts on our sleeves. I'm somewhat sad that I don't know how many more times we are going to be able to have that community. I might have to go visit him in his backyard one of these days, in order to have a pop.

The only thing that really makes us maybe different is that we talk about our issues about making jobs available for people across this province. We talk about affordability measures. We talk about hydro costs.

Again, I want to thank him, along with his caucus members, for supporting my private member's bill on the HST so that we can remove some of the costs on home heating for people who were at home. That's what working together means.

Again, I want to stress that it's unfortunate that Ontarians look at question period and sometimes they judge in regard to the whole fiasco that goes on during that time. They don't get to see the discussions and the bridge-building that goes on when the cameras are off.

What really makes us different is where we list those priorities, in what order and how much importance we put on those. It comes to choices, and this government has to make a choice in regard to not just minimum wage but hydro costs, gas costs and jobs. All of those are part of the puzzle, and we have to make the choice. We have to take the initiative in order to bring in those policies that will benefit all of our community members at home. It's part of a bigger puzzle. We've just got to put the pieces together. That's what we're here for.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: It goes without saying that I always enjoy the comments from my colleague the member from Durham. Many of us say in Peterborough that the member from Durham was the greatest export out of Peterborough about 50 years ago, and Peterborough's contribution to the world.

I have always recognized, and the member from Durham knows, the great contribution of the O'Toole family in my community of Peterborough. Actually, on the street where I live in Peterborough, he's got cousin George. Cousin George is right down the street and, of course, George puts up the appropriate sign at election time. So I appreciate George's support.

But let me say, in terms of minimum wage, that during my municipal career of 18 years, I chaired social services twice for the city of Peterborough. I know one of the key things that was always mentioned to me by people, not only anti-poverty groups but business interests in Peterborough, was to look at ways to increase the minimum wage, to make sure that there's a path forward that was consistent and transparent, so that they know what was happening.

I want to comment that Stuart Harrison, who is the general manager of the Peterborough Chamber of Commerce, and my good friend Allan O'Dette, who is a Peterborough native, who is the chair of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, both support this approach. They had input and insight on how this particular policy was developed. As Allan said to me on many occasions, as we raise the minimum wage, it provides a higher degree of disposable income, which allows for economic activity to take place.

It was the chamber that provided strategic advice in terms of the panel that was put together by then-Minister of Labour Naqvi to provide a path forward, particularly on minimum wage.

I think it happens to be the right approach, and I think it's sound public policy on a go-forward basis.

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

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I think the first question I ask myself is, why are we here? Are we doing the best for the Ontario taxpayer and the people who are asking us to do our jobs?

When you look at the fact that for the last seven years, we are above the national average for unemployment; when you look at the fact that in Statistics Canada, the underemployed are at 27%—youth unemployment is at 16%. We have 400,000 people who have stopped looking for a job, and we have 600,000 who are on unemployment at the same time.

These people are saying to us, "Is the plan to get more people on minimum wage?" I don't think so. I think those people are exhausted and actually want to have a job. When you have almost tripled the amount of people on minimum wage, what does that say about this government? Because there is no plan. There's no way moving forward on how to make this have-not province any better than it has been for the last 11 years.

I had someone say to me the other day: "What is the most important thing?" Well, for us, with Mr. Hudak, it is to do the million jobs plan. Our plan is focused on getting people more than the minimum wage, and paycheques for people who have a part-time job or who are looking for a full-time job.

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Our concern about the minimum wage right now is that almost 10% of the workforce is on minimum wage. In 2003, as the member from Durham said, 3.5% of people were on minimum wage. I think people want to have a party that is going to turn this province around. People will say to me, "What separates you, and what's different?" Here's what's different: When you look at past behaviour, it's indicative of the future. When you look at what we had when the NDP left, we had an \$11.3-billion deficit. Then the PCs got in; not only did they balance the budget four times, the only party to do that—and now where we are, right exactly where we were with the NDP, with everyone leaving and going to other jurisdictions because we don't create the environment here for people to want to be here.

We need to make a change and make this province a have province again, and we can here on this side.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Windsor—Tecumseh.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Windsor—Tecumseh—my apologies.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: No apology needed, Speaker.

It's always a pleasure to stand in this House and speak on behalf of the people from Windsor—Tecumseh, and

sometimes from Windsor West as well, so thank you for that.

Much has been said about the minimum wage, and I was looking last night at where the rates are actually going: from \$10.25 to \$11; student minimum wage, from \$9.60 to \$10.30, if you're a student under the age of 18 and working less than 28 hours a week; if you serve liquor and you get tips, the minimum wage goes from \$8.90 to \$9.55; hunting and fishing guides—the member from Algoma–Manitoulin would know about the fishing guides going from \$51.25 to \$55 if they work less than five hours a day, and double that if they work more than five hours, and it doesn't matter if those hours are consecutive; homeworkers, if you work in the home and maybe you do some sewing for a manufacturer, your wage will go from a mandatory \$11.28 to \$12.10; if you're a student doing work in your home—maybe you're doing some programming for a computer company or a high-tech company—you get the homeworkers' wage up to \$12.10, as opposed to your minimum wage.

I would like to take the opportunity, again—as the member from Algoma–Manitoulin has mentioned, the member from Durham, who, as you know, Speaker, has indicated that he will not be seeking re-election—we will certainly miss him here in the NDP. I've only been here a few months, but I have always appreciated his candour and his guidance, and his sense of humour. It doesn't always come across to the people at home when they see the member from Durham stand up, sometimes they think he's scowling, but that's just his hidden sense of humour. He has been a great delight—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much. The member from Durham, you now have two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I first want to start by saying that last night the Ontario Legiskaters played hockey.

Hon. James J. Bradley: What happened?

Mr. John O'Toole: We lost by a couple of goals, but it was a very close and very exciting game. I want to put on the record that the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, who is in trouble over the closing of agriculture colleges, is a very decent hockey player, and he was kind enough to pass the puck to me, and I scored the fourth goal. I feel very good about that. We went on to lose the game, but it was fun, and that's the kind of thing that the member from Algoma–Manitoulin was talking about: that we do actually enjoy—despite what you see on television, when we're not dealing with head-on issues, we can be sensible and sensitive and get along. He certainly would be welcome in my backyard for a pop at any time.

The member from Peterborough always speaks fondly, generally, indicating that I should have been a Liberal, technically—but my cousin George has made mistakes in his life, I understand that. I would suspect that he might want to talk to Scott Stewart in the next coming election to see if, perhaps, he should have a different sign.

I would say that the member from Burlington, yesterday, in this House, was offended by the Minister of Transportation, and I've felt badly ever since. I wanted to

incorporate that into my speech, that we should stick to the policy and not the personalities, and try to be a little bit respectful there.

I would say that the member from Windsor–Tecumseh has been a real breath of fresh air in this House since the day he came. He got the Minister of Transportation to look at the Windsor bridge and to make some corrections there. He should take full credit for that—and the minister to listen to him.

Anyway, on this bill, Bill 165, it's clear that the minimum wage—we agree to it. There's a lot of work to be done to create real jobs in Ontario. That's our position, and we'll stick to our position about creating jobs for young people in this province.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you so much, Mr. Speaker. It will be my pleasure to add my 10 minutes to this debate.

The first thing I want to put on the record is that I have followed and supported as best as I can the campaign that has been asking for a \$14-an-hour minimum wage. I fully understand where those people are coming from. I wasn't always a politician. I was the executive director of the community health centre in Sudbury. We had the corner clinic, which was our outreach for the homeless. Right next to it was the food bank. I got to meet a lot of the people who came every second week to the food bank, and those were full-time workers working minimum wage—for a lot of them. They came with their kids, they came with their families, and they couldn't make ends meet.

When they came and lobbied me and said, “We want minimum wage to be set at \$14 an hour,” I got it. I fully understand. It would mean no more humiliation in the food bank line. It would mean no more coming up short at the end of the month where, by the time you pay rent so that your kids have a place to live, there is no money left to buy them new shoes for them to go to school. There's no money left to buy them a nutritious food basket—never mind nutritious food; to buy food, period. You have to go to the food bank. And all the rest of it, the humiliation and degradation that comes from living in poverty.

I know a lot of people who are still struggling with not being able to make ends meet. Yet, they work. They are hard workers. They get up every morning. They go to work. Whenever there's a shift of overtime, they will take it. If they can work more hours, they will. They do everything they can. But when you make \$10.25 an hour and your rent, so that you have a bedroom for your kids to sleep in, is close to \$1,000, I'll let you do the math; it doesn't leave a lot of money left at the end of the month to pay for clothes, transportation and food. And God forbid one of your kids gets sick and you have to pay for medication or a pair of glasses or anything like this.

They are the working poor. They want minimum wage to go up to \$14 an hour. Then the index would set in so that they never fall behind again. I completely get that.

When we put the policy together, we also listened to another group of Ontarians that are struggling pretty well just as much. We're talking about small—small business.

I brought a letter today from the owner of one of these small businesses. She is a new restaurant owner in my riding. She has tremendous menu offerings with lots of fruit, and healthy. She has been at it for two years. I will read into the record her letter. She's addressing it to me, and it goes as such: "I'm addressing you with this letter of concern regarding the minimum wage increase ... I encourage you to read this letter and contact me should you require additional information"—which I did. "It would be my pleasure to meet with you, the media and anyone else who may want to hear my concerns.

"The call for an increase to minimum wage ... could potentially close my business, putting 26 people out of work at my location, and potentially 30 more at my partner's location. My current financial situation cannot support a \$22,000 yearly increase in salaries." She had shown me her books. She had shown me how the calculations were made.

"I am proud to say that I must have almost the best staff Sudbury has to offer. It would break my heart to have to let these people go should I have to close my doors. Not to say what this will do to them and to the Sudbury economy as some of these people will" go on "EI and some on social assistance."

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She goes on to say, "My business is a Quebec franchise and they have different labour laws. We are unable to raise our prices according to what is happening in Ontario in order to help" with this increase. "I work pretty much seven days a week"—I can attest to that—"averaging 10 hour days to ... keep my cost down. After two years of being opened, I still cannot afford to pay myself a salary. What else is a person like myself supposed to do? The start-up costs are very high the first few years as I have huge loans. This increase will make it very difficult to continue." This is a person whose name is Denise Boyer. She lives in my riding and she allowed me to share her concerns.

But there are many small, small businesses, many confectioners, where the owners work full-time. They own a little business; they have two or three people who work for them. They pay their workers minimum wage and they can barely make ends meet; they can barely make a business of it. As time goes by and as their businesses become more stable, they will thrive. We know that a lot of small businesses thrive and survive.

So it was really to bring this into account. There are people who work full-time, full hours right now, who make minimum wage and who live in poverty. But there are also a lot of small businesses—I don't want to sound racist, but a lot of newcomers to my riding, to Nickel Belt, newcomers to our province, are small business owners, and this is a way for them to make a living, to work, and they hire a few part-time. If we were to increase to \$14 an hour right now, a lot of those small

businesses would not survive. Those people have come to see me. They have shown me the books.

So we have to come with some place to land. The government has landed on \$11 an hour and then increased it by the CPI, the consumer price index, in October of every year. For now, no matter what we do in this House, it's already set. This summer, minimum wage will increase to \$11 an hour, and I think my colleague from Windsor—Tecumseh already covered that if you are a student, then your minimum wage will go from \$9.60 an hour to \$10.30 an hour. If you serve alcohol, your minimum wage will go from \$8.90 an hour to \$9.55 an hour. If you're a hunting and fishing guide—I have many of those in my riding—your wages will go from \$51.25 for the first five hours to \$55; if you work a full day—and a full day for a hunting and fishing guide is 24 hours—your wages will go from \$102.50 to \$110. For the home workers, your wages will go from \$11.28 to \$12.10. But for most minimum wage earners, their wages will go to \$11 an hour.

What the NDP had put forward is to make the next two steps into law, to make sure that next year and the year after, we bring this minimum wage to \$12 an hour. That was a compromise that was livable for the small, small businesses and at the same time would help people who work so hard at minimum wage to make ends meet.

How do we balance this? We balance this with a small business tax credit. When you look at the millions of people in Ontario who work minimum wage, a lot of them work for big corporations. For the likes of Tim Hortons and Walmart and all of those, have no fear: Their prices have nothing to do with what they pay their workers. They will increase the cost of their goods based on what the market can bear, not as to how much it costs them to pay their workers more. They presently have the means to do this. It is really the small, small businesses that don't, and this is where the NDP put forward a more balanced plan with a decrease in the taxes that small business pays to try to leave a little bit more money in the pockets of the smaller businesses so that they can afford the minimum wage increases.

The bill in front of us has nothing to do with the increase to 11 bucks an hour. That increase will happen no matter what we do with this bill. We go into an election, this bill dies, we never get it out of this House to go to second reading—it will happen. It will go to 11 bucks an hour. But it talks about the increase. We are basically putting an increase on wages that are still poverty—

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

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate. Certainly, it's a pleasure to speak after my friend from Nickel Belt, the member from Nickel Belt, who I hold in very high regard.

Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act, obviously will bring a variety of opinions to the table. I think the process that has been employed to date is one that we should all be proud of.

The legislation actually acts on the recommendations that came forward from a consensus report from Ontario's Minimum Wage Advisory Panel. We went out. We talked to business. We talked to labour. We talked to youth. We talked to the representatives from the anti-poverty community. This group held 10 public consultations around the province and received over 400 submissions from people who had a specific interest in this issue and the importance of this issue.

They came forward with some recommendations, and we have acted upon those recommendations, because, simply, we're a government that's focused on investing in people. We're trying to fight for that stronger economy in Ontario that we know we should all aspire to, and we want the good-paying jobs that go along with this. What businesses told us, and what people have told us, is that what they really want is a fair, balanced and predictable way of dealing with this issue on an ongoing basis.

As the previous speaker outlined, the minimum wage will be increasing to \$11 on June 1. Ontario, once again, will have the highest provincial minimum wage in the entire country. I think that's something we should be proud of. The 75-cent increase that would take place to bring it to \$11 accounts for inflation that has taken place since the last increase in March 2010.

The minimum wage has increased 60% since 2003. It's something that we put in place here, a special process for dealing with this into the future, that hopefully takes the politics out but allows the minimum wage to keep place with the consumer price index and with inflation.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Nickel Belt always speaks with an empathetic tone. She started off talking about poverty and the plight of those people of modest income. She does that very well and very realistically.

She went on to relate the whole thing of minimum wage to the real marketplace of jobs itself, and she's probably right in terms of a Tim Hortons, where a family owns it. I know the one in my riding—a couple of them own a McDonald's and a Tim Hortons. They're fairly well-off people, I would say that. In one case, they own a Tim Hortons that's very popular, but they work there.

When you buy a franchise, you're actually buying a job. Some people buy a PhD, which costs a couple hundred thousand. But these people are buying a job. They don't make the recipe for Tim Hortons or McDonald's; they get that given to them as part of the job they're buying. In that case there, they may lay off a student and tell their son, "You're going to work more time," because their payroll isn't going to change unless they have more customers or change the price, and they can't change the price, because the franchise dictates what the price is. So you've got to look at it.

The same with Walmart, really: They do markets and do all that stuff, and they figure out what they need to pay. I don't agree with some of that new model of the

business strategy of low wages and keeping minimum wage down so that you only pay \$10 an hour.

I also want to congratulate the new Minister of Labour. I think it's important to recognize that Mr. Flynn has worked hard here, and I'm surprised he didn't get municipal affairs.

I will say this, though: The real truth of the story here is, in Ontario today—and the minister said it in his response—we have the highest minimum wage. We also have the highest unemployment rate in Canada. There's some message to be learned here. Let's talk about real jobs with real income so that people can have a decent life in Ontario. The last 10 years have been disastrous in Ontario.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to add my comment and my support to that of the comments of my colleague from Nickel Belt, who, I think, is always well received in this House when she has the opportunity to offer her insight. Particularly, she focused on the reasonable, realistic and balanced approach that New Democrats have taken to this debate in terms of identifying, understanding and communicating the challenges, particularly with small businesses in our communities that are sensitive, that have a heightened sensitivity to fluctuations on either input costs, whether it be hydro or the minimum wage.

She referenced some small businesses in her community. We all have them. I can tell you that Lou Parish is an owner of a restaurant in downtown Essex, Main Street Diner. It's a wonderful place to go for breakfast. Lou is supportive of the initiatives that I have worked on but is concerned about an increasing minimum wage without any offsets to be able to buffer that impact.

It's something that we hope the government acknowledges. They haven't, in this particular debate; they haven't acknowledged that those small businesses in our communities, taking into account all of the other challenges that we have at this particular moment, deserve some support as well. They should be able to rely on the government to acknowledge that for them to be able to take on the added component of an increased minimum wage, they should also be rewarded and acknowledged for increasing the employment. We know—all of us say it at one point or another in this House—that small business is the economic engine in terms of hiring the new workforce in Ontario. We should acknowledge that and support them in that endeavour.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I appreciate the comments from the member from Nickel Belt, but I'm a little perplexed by where the NDP is coming from. I don't know whether they've been in the House recently, but we just reduced the employer health tax; 15,000 small businesses no longer pay that. It has been reduced dramatically for 60,000. It was one of the largest tax cuts for small

business. It wasn't lost on us that this was done prior to a minimum wage increase to give small businesses more room and ability.

We also, as you know, have corporate tax rates in this decade that are half of what they were when I was in high school. Corporate tax rates now in Ontario are amongst the lowest in the world.

If you want to maintain the kind of infrastructure—the twinning of highways, the money for the Ring of Fire, the money for rapid transit—that tax money has to come from somewhere. The NDP are always in favour of tax cuts these days, when they actually used to be a moderating force in politics because they understood, as I think Liberals do, that tax cuts don't help communities if that's all they get. People need hospitals; they need roads; people need higher incomes.

All of those small businesses benefit once the minimum wage goes up, because it doesn't just affect the most marginal and vulnerable employees; it actually increases the wages of the \$15-, \$16- and \$17-an-hour people who also get some pressure. Everyone who has done it has seen this as important. What they argue for is a \$5,000 tax credit for employers, when employers don't need that. What they actually need is, generally, a skilled workforce and for the working middle-class and modest-income people to have enough household income to be able to have breakfast at the diner more often and shop at the local convenience store. So I hope we can have a more rational discussion between the Liberals and New Democrats on this, because we should be on the same page.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Nickel Belt, you have two minutes for your response.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'd like to thank the new Minister of Labour for his comment, the Minister of Transportation, the member for Durham and the member for Essex.

The discussion about minimum wage is always tied to poverty, because the idea behind minimum wage is that if you work full-time, full year, you should not live in poverty. You should have a living wage. But why is that important? Well, in part, because it is one of the most important determinants of health. Research will show you that for every thousand dollars more of disposable income that a family has, their health status increases—so you can actually measure the percentage increase in chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease, migraines, bronchitis—and the percentage goes down for every thousand dollars more of disposable income.

You have to add to this that there's a good chance that if you work for minimum wage, you don't have a vision plan, you don't have a dental plan, and you don't have a plan for prescription medication either, which has a direct effect on your health.

Unfortunately, if you look around and you see people with bad teeth, there's a good chance that this is a badge of shame that they are living in poverty. Why are they not able to have their teeth fixed? Because they don't

have enough money to go to the dentist. This is a badge of shame that we all wear when we see Ontarians who cannot afford dental care.

Then, without money, you don't have access to nutritious food, which is a determinant of health—

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

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's always great to stand here in this hallowed chamber and debate bills. It's quite an honour, and I just wanted to thank the people from Northumberland–Quinte West for allowing me to represent them here at Queen's Park.

I've been listening very intently to the debate and the ideas that we're exchanging here today. One of the great things about debate is that we get to see a different perspective, a different view of how we should move forward to try to make Ontario and each of our individual ridings much better for the constituents we represent.

Of course, with Bill 165, we're talking about the minimum wage act and what this does for the people in the province of Ontario, those who are not making a very good wage. I just want to point out, Mr. Speaker, that we're obviously going to support this bill going forward. There are a few things, obviously, that we need to amend and tweak and look at once it gets to committee.

I want to share some of the concerns that I've heard from small businesses back home in my riding, in the service industry in particular. The member from Durham outlined very eloquently that these mom-and-pop businesses are struggling already. They hire students or perhaps seniors who are just trying to keep themselves busy or make a few extra dollars to pay their hydro bill, which keeps skyrocketing. These people who own the small businesses and are hiring seniors and young students are going to have to lay these individuals off, because they can't afford to keep these young people or seniors trying to make a few extra dollars on. It's very sad to me, because this Liberal government, for 11 years, has driven out 300,000 manufacturing jobs. Those are good, middle-class, wage-earning jobs. A lot of them are good union jobs with benefits, with pensions, and they're gone.

What we've had for the last decade with this Liberal government is a government that keeps raising taxes. Quite honestly, the minimum wage being raised to \$11 is going to be an insignificant amount of income for those earning that wage when their property taxes are going up and their hydro bills are skyrocketing out of control under the Green Energy Act, which we've asked this government to scrap numerous times. It's costing Ontario a billion dollars. Don't take my word for it, Mr. Speaker; that's the Auditor General's report that says it costs a billion dollars to taxpayers here in the province of Ontario every year.

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I want to touch on something else as well. I have some ideas around what would perhaps—in my personal opinion, and that's what we're here debating—have a greater impact on low-income earners or the working poor, if you will, and that's raising the ceiling of income tax paid

to \$25,000. Right now, it's around \$16,500. If you make up to \$16,500, you don't pay income tax. On anything over \$16,500, you pay income tax. Raise it to \$25,000 and put the money back in the pockets of the working poor.

Study after study has shown—and the member for Durham has said this—that small businesses will actually lay people off. So instead of working for \$10.25 an hour, now you don't have a job. It makes no sense at all. There are other avenues you can take to actually put money back in the pockets of the working poor or those individuals.

I just also want to point out that a vast majority of people who are minimum wage earners are students and seniors. There are obviously individuals who have to work two or three jobs, who have a mortgage and mouths to feed, as the member from Nickel Belt pointed out, but a vast majority are students and seniors. It's seniors, like I say, who are trying to pay their hydro bills and keep the lights on because this Liberal government keeps driving up the cost of electricity. It's tied into the price of electricity; it's tied into what's happening in our manufacturing sector.

Tim Hudak and the PC Party over here, we have a plan that's actually going to create more middle-class, very good-paying jobs here in the province of Ontario, particularly in the manufacturing sector. That is one of the approaches that we fundamentally believe: The best anti-poverty strategy you could have is to have a good-paying job. But that's not happening under this current Liberal government. They're driving people away from the province of Ontario. They're going out west. They have to go to other jurisdictions in the United States or abroad, and this is very disconcerting.

The Minister of Transportation pointed out that they're very happy that they lowered the benefit tax for small businesses; 15,000 small businesses aren't going to have to pay that tax.

I want to just touch on what I refer to as—and the people listening at home, you need to pay very close attention to this, because you've started to hear little snippets of the Premier's ambition for this Ontario pension plan, the OPP. This is a sleeping giant, and it's going to crush the economy here in the province of Ontario if the Liberals are allowed to implement this strategy.

Now, we're all for making sure that individuals are secure financially when they retire but, under this Liberal government, you can't retire at 65 when you normally do; you have to work till you're 70, 75. But the Ontario pension plan—I just want to get this out there. In my riding of Northumberland–Quinte West, for instance—if you just take the county of Northumberland, there's about 87,000 people. Let's say 50,000 for mathematical reasons, because I'm not going to be finance minister one day. Trust me, Mr. Speaker. But if you use 50,000 as the base number of individuals who are working, or you're an employer, what Premier Wynne is proposing is that each employee contribute \$2,350 a year to a separate

Ontario pension fund, and each employer has to match that \$2,350. You multiply that by 50,000, and that is \$117.5 million that is sucked out of the local economy in Northumberland county alone. I have to ask the Liberals today: What cost analysis is that going to have on small businesses in my riding of Northumberland–Quinte West and across the province of Ontario?

This government's plan to come forward with their own independent, made-in-Ontario pension plan is going to bankrupt this province. It has to be put out there. The Premier is starting to talk about it. It's going to be a major plank in their election platform—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask the member to bring back to the bill that's in front of us.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: How it relates to Bill 165 is that you can up the minimum wage to \$11 and increase it by 75 cents an hour for part-time workers, but if that part-time worker now has to contribute \$25 a week to a pension plan, you actually are losing about \$17 a week, so it's a fallacy. It's a shell game. This is going to cost the province a lot of money, and it's going to cause small businesses to go out of business. As was eloquently said here a few weeks ago, if you want to have a small business here in the province of Ontario, start with a big business. Right? That's the Liberal economics around this.

As I said, we're talking about the minimum wage and Bill 165. We're going to support it. But again, I think personally, there are other strategies, other avenues we can go down to ensure that people actually have money in their pockets, can put food on the table for their families, and keep the roof over their heads and keep the lights on.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, for the time here. It's always a pleasure. I must say you're looking rather dapper in the chair this morning.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

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

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I am delighted today to introduce family members who are here today with Anthony Bello, who is our page captain this morning and who is from my riding. Today in the members' gallery we are joined by Domenico Bello, Margarita Lazarakis, Nicholas Bello—that's Anthony's brother—and his aunt and uncle, Clemente Bello and Denise Bello, who are here with us today from lovely Collingwood. I want to welcome them to the gallery and congratulate Anthony for being here.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again, I'd like to welcome a volunteer in our office here at Queen's Park, Candies Kotchapaw, to the members' gallery.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to announce the presence of Marcy Scribe and Nicole Brunelle, and they're here from the Dental Hygiene Practitioners of Ontario. Welcome, girls, to the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Further introduction of guests.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Walking in to work this morning, I saw a robin, so I'd like to welcome the robin to Ontario. We all know what a robin brings: six weeks until an election.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Jocularly, jocularly.

Further introduction of guests.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome Rob Gascho from OSSTF here to the House today.

Mr. Todd Smith: Point of order.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: I just wanted to update the House that last night the Ontario Legiskaters were in action in a big game over at the Varsity Arena at U of T. The Legiskaters fell again, this time to the Ontario Dental Association, but from what I understand, Mr. Speaker, it was one heck of a game: a 7-6 loss to the dentists. John O'Toole scored a goal, and Martin Regg Cohn of the Toronto Star had a hat trick last night for the Legiskaters.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sure all members would agree that (a) it's not a point of order, but (b) that's just too bad. I'm sorry to hear that happened. I was told that the name of the team is the Dentonators, along with the Legiskaters.

I will continue with introduction of guests.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'd like to welcome the parents of page Mira Donaldson up in the gallery. We have her father, Guy Donaldson, and her mother, Kelly Spicer. Welcome.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I would like to welcome back the Leader of the Opposition, Tim Hudak, and congratulate him on being a new father. Having worked in the delivery room for many years, I know the joy and the happiness that a newborn brings to the family. Congratulations.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to introduce Asquith Allen from the great riding of York South–Weston, who is here to see the proceedings this morning.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure on this side of the House to welcome back a proud new father, the leader of our party, Tim Hudak. I want to congratulate him on the birth of Maitland Hutton Hudak. Of course, we also send best wishes to our friend and his wife, Debbie.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): My fear is that he hasn't gotten any sleep.

On behalf of the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton here, visiting page captain Bani Arora are: mother Naupreet Arora; father Preet Arora; sister Saakhi Arora; friend Nikita Ghaghda; and family friend Oksana Darkeyuch. Thank you and welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CABINET MINISTERS

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'll just say to my colleagues on all sides: Thank you for the standing ovation for the birth of little Maitland. I presume that, though, was for Debbie because I actually had a lot easier part of the job. But thank you to all my colleagues for the very kind best wishes and congratulations.

My question is to the Premier. Premier, I noticed that when you changed your cabinet after Minister Jeffrey left cabinet, you decided to increase the size of your cabinet yet again. I think leadership starts at the top. This is the second time you have chosen to expand your cabinet. Don't you think that was a mistake?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: No, Mr. Speaker, I don't think it was a mistake. We need people at the table to make the decisions and do the work that is required. I made decisions, and have put two people into cabinet who are very competent, experienced and are bringing very important voices to the table.

In terms of the size of cabinet, Mr. Speaker, I understand that the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No different than yesterday.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I understand that the Leader of the Opposition has 34 shadow cabinet positions, so that would foreshadow what he would do if he were Premier. We're not going there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Interjections.

Mr. Tim Hudak: No. You're not getting raises, you're not getting limousines, you're not getting extra staff in my shadow cabinet.

Here's the difference, Premier, and I think you know this: What you've done by adding on additional cabinet ministers now for the second time is it shows that you're more interested in appeasing Liberal MPPs than taxpayers in the province. That is the problem. I have hard-working MPPs, and I'm proud of them, but they don't get raises when they're in the shadow cabinet; yours do—they get drivers and staff.

Here's a contrast I want to raise for you. I visited a real cabinetmaker the other day, Surjit Aheer. He runs Hallmark Furniture. He's actually a real cabinetmaker, but he has gone from 40 employees down to four under the Liberal government because of the cost of doing business. I actually want to send a signal to him that we've got our fiscal house in order, that we're going to grow the economy. I want to see his cabinet business increase, and I want to put yours out of business, quite frankly, and bring one that's going to balance the budget in the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I understand that this is a gimmick that the Leader of the Opposition wants to focus on. He was a member of a cabinet under a previous government that had 26 members in it.

The fact is we have work to do in this government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll have to do what I didn't want to do. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, come to order. The member from Nipissing, come to order, and the member from Chat-ham–Kent–Essex, come to order.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

I heard someone say that I'm dismissive. I'm not dismissive of the concerns of the economy of this province. I'm not dismissive of the need to put in place the strategies that are going to create jobs.

I am dismissive of a Leader of the Opposition who is putting forward a notion that would actually stop job creation in the province, that would cut the economic growth, that would force good jobs out of the province. That's what he's putting forward. We're not—

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

1040

Mr. Tim Hudak: Sadly, Premier, you have been dismissive of the concerns of Surjit Aheer and other job creators across the province. You once called manufacturing job losses a myth. I saw it in person, sadly. They went from 40 employees down to four. I want to see them get back up to 40. That's why I'm focusing my million jobs plan on creating an environment for entrepreneurs like this to succeed and to hire again, to go—

Interjection.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: You actually now have more cabinet ministers than do you backbenchers and non-cabinet members. I think that sends the wrong signal to job creators about your seriousness in balancing the books of the province.

Let me ask you this very directly. You are focusing on quantity rather than quality of your cabinet. I think you should reduce it down to 16. I think that's the appropriate size to send the right signal, and the big difference between you and me.

Premier, will you accept my challenge to actually, instead of growing your cabinet, reduce it down to 16, get them focused on jobs and the economy and send the signal to taxpayers that you're serious about balancing the books in the great province of Ontario?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Leader of the Opposition is focusing on cost here. There's a lot of work

to be done, and I have the cabinet that we need in order to make the decisions and put the policies in place that will move us forward.

In fact, the Leader of the Opposition's party is blocking a piece of legislation that would actually continue the freeze on MPPs' salaries. So if he's so concerned about the wages and the cost of MPPs in this—

Interjections.

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

Carry on.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We don't think it's appropriate for MPPs to have an increase. We need this legislation to continue that freeze.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think that it would be very helpful if the Leader of the Opposition would work with us to freeze the salaries.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Look, Premier, I think you know this. As soon as you table legislation on an MPP wage freeze, wages are frozen. I think you know those facts. That's done. I've been calling for that for years.

But here's the opportunity, Premier: Let's actually do something that's going to save the taxpayers \$2 billion a year and send a signal to job creators across the province that we're going to balance the books and create an environment for success, to set up Ontario to grow the economy and create jobs again, to restore hope to people like Surjit Aheer and the 36 employees who used to work for him.

Why don't you actually amend the legislation and add an across-the-board wage freeze for the broader public sector that will save us \$2 billion a year? Will you do the right thing?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think the Leader of the Opposition knows perfectly well that we are working across government—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There have been billions of dollars saved because of the—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dufferin–Caledon, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —processes that we have engaged in.

We are going to continue to work in partnership with the employees within government and the broader public service.

The Leader of the Opposition wants a fight. He wants a fight with the people who do the business of this province, the people who deliver services in this province. He wants to fire education workers. He wants to fire health care workers. He's not interested in making the investments in post-secondary education and in health care that are necessary. He wants—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'll tell you what I'm going to fight for. I'm going to fight for jobs. I'm going to fight for a better Ontario—I've got a plan to do that; it's called the million jobs plan—to get energy under control, to lower taxes, to balance the books in this province. It will work; it is proven.

Let me ask you again, Premier. You made another significant error. You weren't even in negotiations with the teachers' unions, but you still gave them a big pay increase. I don't know if that was payback for leadership support, but it was unaffordable. You weren't in negotiations, but you gave them a big pay increase of hundreds of millions of dollars.

I think we need to go in the opposite direction, so I'll ask you again. My colleague Mr. Fedeli, from Nipissing, is going to bring forward amendments to the Wage Freeze Act to broaden it to an across-the-board wage freeze for all of us in the broader public sector. It will save \$2 billion. It's the right thing to do. Can I count on your support for this sensible and thoughtful amendment to the legislation?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Since I have been in this office, I have been fighting for the people of Ontario, to bring jobs to the province. What I'm saying is, he wants to fight with the people who deliver services. He wants to fight with the people who are providing the education, the health care that the people of this province need. I do not believe that is the way forward.

I would suggest to the Leader of the Opposition that if he is really interested in being a leader in terms of wage freeze, he would get the legislation passed that would continue to freeze MPPs' salaries. That seems like a pretty fundamental step he should take. We look to him to work with us on that.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: The legislation is going to pass; I've been calling for this for years. In my point of view, why don't we improve it? Why don't we actually make a big impact on the economy? I'm happy that I finally got the words "wage" and "freeze" out of your mouths at the same time, in concession. That was fabulous.

But let's go a bit further. Let me ask you this, too: I think that if cabinet ministers aren't doing their jobs, they shouldn't be in cabinet. If they can't even meet their fiscal targets, they should dock their pay. Another very straightforward amendment we want to make is, if your cabinet ministers cannot balance the books and they remain in deficit, just like they did in BC, let's dock their pay. Let's actually reduce cabinet pay to give them an incentive to prioritize and balance the books—a simple, thoughtful, straightforward amendment. Will you support that change to the bill and dock cabinet's pay if they can't even balance the books in our province?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Every single minister in this government has worked within their ministries to find efficiencies. They have worked extremely hard to make sure that we exceed the targets that were put in place. That work is ongoing.

I don't need to punish the ministers. They're doing the work they know needs to be done. We don't need a punitive regime, which is what the Leader of the Opposition thinks he would need to put in place. Maybe that's what he needs in his caucus; that's not what we need over here. People do their work.

I would just say to the Leader of the Opposition we are going to continue to work to make sure that we bring business to this province, that we make the investments that are necessary. We are going to invest in post-secondary education, we are going to invest in infrastructure and we are going to work with communities to bring those jobs to the province. That's work that's happening.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Let me first congratulate, on behalf of New Democrats, the Leader of the Opposition for the birth of his daughter Maitland—and his wife, Deb, and his daughter Miller.

Speaker, my question is to the Premier. Families across Ontario are wondering how they'll pay the bills. In the last year, our manufacturing sector has shrunk by 3%. Since the recession, we're still down 300,000 manufacturing jobs, and half a million Ontarians are looking for work. How can the Premier defend the status quo to the 500,000 Ontarians who are looking for work?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I have never defended the status quo. I have never defended the status quo the whole time I have been in government. The reason I'm in electoral politics—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I am in politics because I do not defend the status quo. I believe there needs to be change and improvement, and that we can always improve.

So when I talk about our plan, which envisions investing in the talent and skills of the people of this province—the announcement that we made this morning, the Minister of Training Colleges and Universities and I, where we're putting out a request for proposals to increase the capacity of our post-secondary education system, colleges and universities working in partnership with each other to make sure that we have the capacity where there's growth in the province: That's not the status quo; that's progress. That's what we're fighting for.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier seems more interested in attacking a job creator tax credit and defending her own status quo plan.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Training, College and Universities will come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The families who got layoff notices this week will tell you that they need more to be done. The Premier knows that when Heinz was laying off workers in Leamington, they were hiring workers in a state with a job creator tax credit.

Will the Premier tell families why she's defending the status quo and attacking a practical proposal that will reward job creators and create jobs for Ontario families?

1050

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to talk about the situation in Leamington and the Heinz plant for a moment. I want to acknowledge the Minister of Children and Youth Services because of the work that she did on the ground, working with the community. In fact, Canco is going to be able to retain about 50% of those jobs at Heinz.

We recognize that it's very painful when a business makes a decision about downsizing or leaving a community, but government's responsibility is to be on top of that and to make sure that there's a process whereby new jobs can come in or those jobs can be retained. That's the work that we did.

In terms of the tax credit notion that the NDP is putting forward, we're open to new ideas, but we want ideas that work. That is an idea that has been demonstrated, in other jurisdictions, not to work.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think it's interesting that the Premier talks like Republican lines out of the playbook from the US.

For families worried about jobs, all we see from this government is more of the same. They keep handing blank cheques to businesses that move jobs away, and driving hydro rates up. Doing the same thing and expecting a different result simply does not make any sense.

It's not working for people who lost their jobs at Energex Tube in Welland just this week, or 500 people who lost their jobs at Kellogg's in London, or 350 people who lost their jobs at A.O. Smith in Fergus. Why does this Premier keep telling people like these laid-off workers that her plan is working?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we have seen 100,000 new jobs created in the last year. The fact is that we are working with businesses across the province, whether it's through the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund or the Eastern Ontario Development Fund or the Northern Ontario Heritage Fund, to help them to make the investments that they will need to be able to compete globally. That's the kind of partnership that I think is very, very important. That's not the status quo. That means that when we work with Ford, for example, they are able to build a platform that's going to allow them to compete globally. That kind of advancement is absolutely necessary.

What we can't do is spend what we estimate would be \$2.5 billion on an employer tax credit that would actually just subsidize jobs that were going to be created anyway. That's what has been discovered in other jurisdictions, so we're going to learn from that, and we're not going to go down that road.

PAN AM GAMES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's funny how the Premier will spend a billion dollars for three jobs for members of her caucus.

Speaker, my next question is for the Premier. In 2011, Contemporary Security pled guilty to charges of violating its licence during the G20. Will the Premier tell Ontarians who made the final decision to select Contemporary Security for the Pan/Parapan Am Games?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite, the leader of the third party, for this important question.

Speaker, I think we have to remember that this is a very exciting opportunity for the province of Ontario. The Pan/Parapan Am Games is a world-class event that puts our province on the map when it comes to welcoming world-class athletes from the Americas and welcoming their coaches, their families, and 250,000 tourists.

This is an amazing opportunity to make sure that we also build world-class sporting infrastructure in our province.

Speaker, the success of these games relies on ensuring that they are safe and secure for all Ontarians and also for all the athletes who will be participating. That's why we are relying on the Ontario Provincial Police to decide on the plan for the security.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, it seems like the minister didn't get the memo on accountability and transparency.

The government seems to be suggesting that the OPP chose Contemporary Security, but when an experienced Ontario-based security firm offered the very same services for \$14 million less, they didn't get a rejection letter from the OPP, they got it from the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

What is the government trying to hide by distancing itself from that decision?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, our focus is to make sure that we have a safe and secure sporting event when the Pan/Parapan Am Games take place in 2015. Our priority is the safety of athletes, the safety of coaches, the safety of volunteers, the safety of families, the safety of all Ontarians, and that is why we are relying on the Ontario Provincial Police to make those decisions. They are the people who keep our streets and our neighbourhoods safe every single day. That's why the Ontario Provincial Police are responsible for the content of the request for proposals that was put out, they are the ones responsible for the evaluation of all the bids, and they are the ones responsible for selecting the successful bidder in this particular case.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What about the safety of the tax dollar? That's what I want to know. What about the safety of the tax dollar? Yesterday, the Minister of Community Safety and the minister for the Pan Am Games said the decision to choose Contemporary Security had nothing to do with the Liberal government, but the losing bidder, Reilly Security, got a letter from the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services telling them that their bid hadn't been accepted.

You can play hot potato with this one as much as you like over there, but the buck has to stop with the minister in charge. If the government is so confident in the process, why didn't they let the auditor take a look and get some answers for the people who pay the tabs?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The entire process followed all the directives and the guidelines of the Ontario government in terms of having a fair and transparent procurement process. The entire process has been overseen by a fairness commissioner to ensure that the process is fair.

At the end of the day, we are going to rely on the experts on safety and security, and that is the Ontario Provincial Police. The opposition may be interested in playing political games with this issue; we are interested in making sure that we have a successful games in the Pan/Parapan Am Games, taking place right here in Ontario.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: My question is to the minister responsible for the Pan/Parapan American Games.

The minister's oversight of senior Pan Am personnel is farcical. This week in committee, TO2015 sent Bob O'Doherty to pretend to be the senior vice-president of sport and venues. He refused to answer basic questions about the Ivor Wynne Stadium, the velodrome, the rowing and shooting venues, and clarified that he is only relevant at game time. So why have we been paying him \$292,000, plus \$17,000 in benefits, plus \$64,000 in expenses, since 2010? Minister, why are you paying this

guy, and who is actually responsible for sport and venues now?

Hon. Michael Chan: I wasn't in the committee, but all I can tell you is that for the Pan Am Games, 2015, the mandate is to ensure efficient and effective delivery of the games. This includes staffing, streamlining and organizational changes as appropriate. These staffing decisions are made by the CEO of TO2015, and I am very confident that Mr. Rafi will make decisions for the good of the games. We would hope that the parties opposite would support the games and Mr. Rafi's decisions.

While he is doing everything to destroy the games, the parties opposite are doing everything to tear down the games, we are not. We are promoting the games. We're going to have the best ever Pan/Parapan American Games in Ontario in 2015.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Another question, another no answer. Minister, it's insulting to the games that you allow O'Doherty to take taxpayers for a ride, specifically to Miami, Rio, Mexico, Phoenix, Jamaica, the Cayman Islands, Barbados, Barcelona and St. Kitts, just to name a few. Minister, you seem to be as oblivious to your responsibilities as O'Doherty is to his. He was demoted on Thursday. He came to committee on Monday, playing at his old title, but wouldn't answer any questions on venues. Can someone please resend the email to O'Doherty, just to let him know that he has been demoted and doesn't waste committee time anymore?

1100

Consider this, Minister, my technical briefing for you: It's Allen Vansen, the pet expense guy, who assumed responsibility for sport and venues. Minister, do you think when O'Doherty wilfully misrepresented himself at committee, he committed contempt?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question.

On this side of the House, we understand how to manage the games. On the other side, they don't. Let me give you some examples here. The member opposite asked when was the last time—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order. Minister?

Hon. Michael Chan: Let me help him. It was held in 2011.

Allow me to give another example here. Someone tweeted a six-inch toy Pachi in Sochi. The member opposite asked why the Pan Am mascot, Pachi, was in Sochi. Again, let me help him. Mascot Pachi was not in Sochi; Pachi is in Ontario, and Pachi is well and alive.

Speaker, through you to the member: Stop attacking the games. Stop attacking Pachi.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Premier. Families in Ontario want to see a government that will respect their hard-earned dollars, so they're asking why

the government picked a more expensive Pan/Parapan security bid.

Does this Premier agree with the editorial in today's Toronto Star calling for a review by the auditor because she has failed to be transparent with the public?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services has already answered some of these questions, but he will want to comment on the supplementary.

But what I want to assure the people of Ontario is that we believe that having the Pan/Parapan Games in Toronto and in the region is a very good thing. We believe that having a safe, secure games is of paramount importance. We believe that having the OPP make those decisions and make the recommendations to government—of course, the ministry was involved, but the ministry did not make the selection.

The OPP selected CSC, selected the company, and this company has been involved, as I understand it, with nine other Olympic and Paralympic Games. This is a company that has a demonstrated track record, and we are relying on the OPP—whose business it is to understand security—to make those decisions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Families deserve full accountability, and while New Democrats are asking who signed the contract with the US firm that has violated its own licence and why we didn't choose a more affordable option, it's clear that the decision was made by the government, Premier.

According to OPP inspector Mike McDonnell, the commissioner signed off on the security contract. It then went off to the ministry for a final bid and the last bit of vetting, if you will. This lies squarely at the feet of the government.

Is this Premier going to continue to stonewall the auditor too? Or will she listen to growing calls for accountability and support a full investigation by the auditor of Ontario?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: The fact of the matter is that Ontarians want a successful world-class event in the Pan/Parapan Am Games in Ontario. They want safety and security of these games.

In the world that we live in, safety and security is a paramount issue, as you know, so we need to ensure that we work with the Ontario Provincial Police. We need to ensure that the Ontario Provincial Police, which is responsible for the safety of our streets and our neighbourhoods every single day, are the ones responsible for the safety of athletes, of coaches, of families, of volunteers, of all Ontarians, when it comes to these games.

The company it has chosen has vast experience in providing safety and security for multi-sporting events like this particular one, including the Winter Olympics Sochi 2014, Vancouver 2010, London 2012 and Rio de Janeiro in 2016. This is not a subject for political games.

This is an issue of safety and security of the games and of all of Ontario.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Ma question est pour le ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires, the Honourable Ted McMeekin. As the MPP for Etobicoke North, I know that developmental services are, of course, much needed. As a physician, I see first-hand the necessity, impact and benefit of such services.

Speaker, as you'll know, the delivery of these services has changed dramatically over the last few years. Our government has moved towards inclusion, in which people with a developmental disability now live as independently as possible out there in the community, where they want to be.

My question is this: Now that institutional care is a thing of the past—a relic from days gone by—can the minister explain the decision tree? How are the supports for individuals with developmental disabilities determined?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to answer the member's question. I want to say at the outset that I'm truly humbled to have the opportunity to be serving this particular sector during this dramatic time of transition. Families have told us that every adult with a developmental disability should be assessed in the same way. We believe that.

We've also heard that people should only have to go to one place to apply for supports. That's why our government created Developmental Services Ontario in legislation, so that, in fact, could happen. Before the DSOs, people with similar needs often received different levels of services and support. Today, there's more consistency and increased fairness for people applying for services.

However, transformation is a long-term plan, and we're going to continue to work with everybody in this House as we make the developmental services sector fairer, more flexible and sustainable.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Minister, not merely for your answer today but also for your ongoing heartfelt advocacy.

I appreciate your description of the transformation of developmental services as an important first step. However, many families across my riding and across the province need, demand, expect and anticipate that more action will be taken. As you know, Minister, it has been said that the mark of a just society is how it takes care of its most vulnerable. Ontarians need to know that their government gets that.

My question is this: What is the ministry doing to strengthen developmental services for Ontarians?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: To paraphrase the Premier, I'm not here to defend the status quo. We're here to advance changes. We're taking immediate action to improve ser-

vices, address housing needs and promote innovation in supports for adults with a developmental disability. We created an Inter-Ministerial Housing Task Force that will recommend innovative housing solutions—a good first step. We're also investing \$3 million in projects across the province that would increase community inclusion and help agencies pursue innovative partnerships. We're investing over \$1.7 billion in the developmental services sector, and we recognize that the demand is growing and we need to do more.

That's why I was so happy to support the idea of a developmental services select committee and why I'm looking so very much forward to their final report with recommendations.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, in what has become typical Liberal fashion, you're trying to lay blame on everybody but yourself when it comes to winter maintenance contracts. Like everything else, there's a right way to do things and a bad way to do things. Your NDP partners probably don't agree, but outsourcing can be a good thing. In fact, from 1996 to 2010, Ontario had a good outsourcing model for winter road maintenance, and it worked. It saved taxpayers lots of money and made sure our roads were clear and safe. Only since 2010 have there been severe issues with winter road maintenance. So what happened in 2010? The answer is: Your ministry changed the outsourcing model. You tinkered with a model that was working, and now it's broken.

Minister, will you finally take responsibility and admit the problems with snow clearing this year are yours and yours alone?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: My honourable critic should take a little tour of northern Ontario, going back to 1996. They have a long laundry list of things that that government did to northern Ontario: undermined its infrastructure, disinvested in its highways, closed schools and hospitals. So no one up in northern Ontario was particularly happy when—

1110

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Northumberland, come to order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: But we have contractors who are well paid. They signed contracts that had very clear performance standards in them. Most of those contractors are meeting those standards. My job as minister is to make sure that we get good value for tax dollars and that we have safe roads. My ministry is working hard to ensure that those standards are met, and I will not interfere or politicize the proper enforcement of law, or interfere

with public servants holding contractors to account to comply with their contracts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Minister, once again, you were given a model from the former PC government that worked, and you broke it. I guess the solution going forward is for a new PC government to come and fix things in this province.

Minister, before 2010, we had a hybrid model that awarded area maintenance contracts for more densely populated areas and managed outsourced contracts for more rural areas, particularly in the east and the north. An engineer from your ministry wrote a report in 2005 that stated that the managed outsourcing delivery method "was expected to produce the most cost effective service in the province's rural areas." So the model that the former PC government set up not only provided better service, it also saved more money, yet your government completely ended all managed outsourced contracts in 2010.

Minister, regardless of the blame game that you continue to play in the media and through Twitter, can you finally admit that this failure is yours and yours alone?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: You know, Mr. Speaker, the member opposite should discover Google and click-click, because a lot has been written since 2005—a lot of studies and reports. We are now delivering snow removal and winter and summer maintenance contracts at a lower cost level, getting better value for dollar than they ever got when they were in government.

And they absolutely outsourced 100% of MTO, laying off 3,000 Ministry of Transportation employees. They did it at the time so that we could never change the model again in any substantive way.

Now, this model is working very well across the vast majority of Ontario, and we are reviewing it in a couple of areas where there are problems, where we have low populations and a lot of road, and the resources are not working the way we'd like—

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

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. There is a mounting crisis in London because of a lack of mental health beds. This week, we learned about 18-year-old patient Jenepher Watt, who was forced to sleep on the hospital floor in the emergency room at Victoria Hospital.

This is not an isolated case. It reflects a systemic problem. As a London Health Sciences Centre executive said today, "We cannot continue on this path and expect different results—it is time for a fundamental change." Can

the minister explain when this fundamental change is coming?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can tell you, Speaker, that I was very disturbed when I heard the story that the member opposite is referring to. I know that the hospital is investigating. They are understanding what happened, and we have to make sure that that does not happen again.

We are investing heavily in supports for people with mental health challenges. We are doing a lot to keep them out of hospital, out of the emergency department. Is there more we need to do? Absolutely, yes. There's more we need to do in London, and, as I say, I know that London Health Sciences Centre is focusing on finding solutions so that this does not happen again. But we also need to do more across the province to support people with mental health challenges. That's why we have made some significant improvements, including a 24-hour crisis line that is actually helping people get the right care.

There is more to do, and I'll speak further to that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: The minister talks about investing in mental health services and making improvements, but the reality tells us a different story. London is about to lose almost 150 psychiatric beds, and there isn't sufficient capacity in the community to meet the needs of patients.

One of my constituents in London West has been living at London Health Sciences Centre for 10 months because there is nowhere else for him to live safely in the community. The lack of community services means that patients with mental health diagnoses end up in crisis and are left waiting for days in the emergency room. I ask the minister again: What is she doing to address this crisis in London and across the province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would be the last person to say that our work is done when it comes to providing care for people with mental health challenges. What I can say is, we are making significant investments, and we'll continue to accelerate that, because we know that by supporting people with mental illness outside of the hospital, we can reduce their reliance on hospitals. That work is well under way, and I hope the member opposite has actually had a briefing—and if not, I would be more than happy to arrange it—about how the investments we're making specifically in London are making a difference.

Have we done everything we need to do? No. Have we come a long way? Yes.

NATURAL GAS

Mr. Grant Crack: My question is to the Minister of Energy. TransCanada recently submitted the project description for their proposed Energy East Pipeline project to the National Energy Board, the first formal step in the regulatory filing process. Some Ontarians have voiced concerns about the proposal, including some of my own

constituents in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, part of which the pipeline goes through, in East Hawkesbury.

Recent federal legislation has limited the scope and time allocated for National Energy Board hearings, and this can limit community and public participation in the regulatory approvals process.

Many Ontarians are interested in knowing what role the province will play in the regulatory process and whether they will have the opportunity to provide their input and express their concerns on the project. Can the minister please tell the House what role Ontario will play in the hearing process and what the government is doing to ensure the voices of Ontarians are heard?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for this very important question. This issue is a federal responsibility before a more restricted National Energy Board process. So when it comes to large pipeline projects, it is vital that all governments take the time to hear from experts—community, municipal, aboriginal—and business leaders to ensure that all voices can be heard during the regulatory process. That's why we have asked the Ontario Energy Board to engage with stakeholders, First Nation and Métis communities, and the public, and to complete a report that will represent the interests of all Ontarians.

The OEB is hosting community discussions along the proposed route, which began Tuesday in Kenora and will continue until April 8 with the last meeting in Cornwall. When Ontario intervenes in the National Energy Board process hearings, the OEB's work will ensure that the voices of all Ontarians are heard and their interests reflected in our submission.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Grant Crack: Thank you very much, Minister, for that comprehensive answer. I know my constituents in Glengarry–Prescott–Russell will appreciate the opportunity to give their feedback and express their concerns on the proposed project. The consultations will not only be a forum for Ontarians to provide their input but also to learn more about the proposed project itself. This is important because my constituents are asking: What's in it for Ontario? What does the province stand to gain from the project? What criteria will the government use when assessing the proposal?

Speaker, through you: Will the economic benefit to Ontario be considered as part of the approvals process, and what principles will the government use when evaluating the project?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The supplementary is also a very important question. The project must generate significant economic activity for Ontario and move resources across Canada in a safe and economic manner. However, it is vital that the proposal only move forward once it adheres to clear principles. The highest safety and environmental standards must be met. The duty to consult with aboriginal communities must be met. There must be world-leading emergency response programs, including financial security for any environmental damage costs. Current consumers of natural gas must be protected with regard to price and supply. It must demonstrate economic

benefits and opportunities to the people of Ontario over the short and long term. Part of our government's work will be to identify those benefits and opportunities, and to ensure that when we intervene, we can do so having considered all the factors that are important to Ontarians.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of Energy: I met with a local couple recently. They own a modest 790-square-foot house. Their last month's electricity bill was \$641—\$234 was delivery charge.

1120

Minister, will you explain to this couple why their heating bill is so high? Is it the cost of transmission? The cost of regulation? Is it generation? The cost of fuel? Your Green Energy Act? Is it your debt retirement charge? Is it your HST? The list goes on. Is it because of the cancelling of the natural gas generating stations? Or is it your mismanagement and lack of a plan?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: First of all, it's their retirement charge, not ours. Over the last 10 years, we have been making the system reliable, clean and affordable. We took over a system that was in deficit, a system that was dirty. We cleaned it up with our new generation—more expensive than their dirty coal. That definitely put pressure on prices.

Realizing that there was pressure on prices, we put the 10% discount on the bill. Number two, we created the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli:—which can give individuals up to \$963 per year and a maximum of \$1,097 per year for qualifying seniors. We also have a Northern Ontario Energy Credit. We have taken significant steps to accommodate that. But he must remember that consumption has gone up by between 10% and 20% January over January because of this winter, and if you choose to deny that and—

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, it is winter. Tell us something we don't know. I can't take that answer back to this couple, but I can guarantee cheaper rates under a Hudak government than under the Liberals.

Our rates were 4.3 cents a kilowatt hour. You charge 12.4 cents at peak. Why is that? You have a surplus of power, but you subsidize unneeded wind and solar and then you spill hydro power, you shut down nuclear, you export at a loss.

Why the high prices? Is it OPG cost overruns? Is it Hydro One inefficiencies? High salaries? Cost of smart meters? Smart grids? Minister, what do you tell this couple? They can't afford to heat their house.

Interjections.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: Cheap nuclear energy. That's the answer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence, come to order.

Minister of Energy?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: What I would start telling them at the beginning is that that member voted against the 10% discount, which is called the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit. That member voted against the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, which saves qualifying individuals up to \$963 per year. That member voted against the Northern Ontario Energy Credit. He voted against the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program. What he has not done is he has not told his constituents that these programs exist, because he's embarrassed that he voted against them.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The Premier has repeatedly promised in this Legislature that there will be a 2014 horse racing season in Fort Erie. The racetrack has done everything asked of them. Now we're just days away from a looming deadline of April 1, when a quarterly rent cheque needs to be paid. It's time to stop the dithering.

Can the Premier ensure this Legislature today that there will be a 2014 racing season at the Fort Erie track?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Yes, there will be a 2014 season at Fort Erie. There absolutely will be. I understand there was a meeting yesterday, and I understand that there wasn't a resolution at that point, but there will be a season at Fort Erie. We are working with them. They know that we want Fort Erie to thrive. There will be a 2014 season.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This isn't just happening in Fort Erie. The future of Sudbury Downs is also in doubt because they can't get a straight answer from the Liberal government either. Fort Erie officials feel as though the government has waited until the last possible minute and are now retracting the number of race days, races, purses and commissions that could keep the Fort Erie Race Track operating.

The Premier promised action to save these tracks and save the good jobs these tracks provide. Is she going to deliver or is this yet another empty Liberal promise?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We are delivering. In fact, Woodbine, Mohawk, Flamboro, Georgian Downs, Western Fair, Clinton, Hanover and Grand River have plans in place. At Fort Erie, there is going to be a 2014 season and that process is in place. At Sudbury, Kawartha, Dresden, Hiawatha, Leamington, Ajax and Rideau Carleton, the negotiations are happening. Those plans are under discussion. There will be seasons, there will be plans, and we have acted on our commitment.

VIOLENCE AGAINST ABORIGINAL WOMEN

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Speaker, I've heard from people in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood about the issue of violence against women and girls in the aboriginal community. Scarborough–Guildwood—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You have to identify the minister, please.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Absolutely. This question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Scarborough–Guildwood has one of the highest off-reserve native populations in Ontario. We know that across Canada, the rate of violence against aboriginal women is almost triple that of non-aboriginal women and the rate of spousal homicide for aboriginal women is eight times greater than for non-aboriginal women. About 15% of aboriginal women report suffering from some form of intimate-partner violence, two and a half times greater than among non-aboriginal women. National data in Canada reveal that 75% of aboriginal girls under the age of 18 experience abuse, 50% of whom are under 14; sadly, almost 25% are younger than the age of seven.

Given the tragic reality of these statistics and the national scale of this epidemic, through you, Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell us what our government is doing to address this important issue?

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for asking about this very important issue. I and this government are deeply troubled by the rate of violence against aboriginal women. This violence must stop. Collaboration amongst all ministries and community partners is the key to ending the violence.

As the member rightly stated in the question, this is a national issue that requires a national strategy. I, along with my provincial and territorial counterparts from across Canada, made this clear to the federal minister at a recent meeting of the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group in Winnipeg. Furthermore, as chair of the Council of the Federation in 2013, our Premier made this position clear. Ontario supports the call by the national aboriginal organizations for a national inquiry.

The federal government, however, recently tabled a special parliamentary committee report into missing or murdered aboriginal women. I am disappointed that the report did not support the call for a national public inquiry.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Minister, for the work you are doing on behalf of the aboriginal community in Ontario. The people of my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood will be reassured to know that Ontario is showing leadership in our efforts to advance this important issue.

However, despite the federal government's assertion that they have already taken concrete action, it is clear that they have failed to respond to the call from national aboriginal organizations, provincial and territorial ministers, and the Council of the Federation. National aborig-

inal organizations like the Native Women's Association of Canada have expressed their continued frustration and disappointment in addressing this key issue in the aboriginal community.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, can you inform the House on what Ontario is doing to reduce violence against aboriginal women and girls in the absence of a national strategy?

Hon. David Zimmer: The special committee's failure to respond to the action call for a national inquiry is a lost opportunity. It's a lost opportunity to demonstrate real commitment to putting an end to all forms of violence against indigenous women and girls.

My friend Michèle Audette, who is the president of the Native Women's Association, had this to say: "I was shocked, I was mad ... to see how they gave [the report] that title 'Invisible Women' it's just like we're under the carpet right now," and they are not invisible.

1130

Mr. Speaker, these women and girls are not invisible to me. They're not invisible to this government. I can tell you that through Ontario's Joint Working Group on Violence against Aboriginal Women, I am working closely with all of the other relevant ministers, as well as many aboriginal organizations, to find ways to tackle this terrible issue. We will work to ensure a long-term strategy that includes initiatives to prevent violence, to better support victims, and we will—

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

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. Moments ago, the Toronto Star and the Ottawa Citizen revealed that David Livingston, the former chief of staff to Dalton McGuinty, gave access to outsiders to wipe clean 24 hard drives. They are pursuing a criminal breach of trust charge against the former chief of staff to the Liberal government that carries a penalty of up to five years in prison, for the \$1.1-billion gas plant scandal.

My question to the Premier: Can you confirm to this assembly and to the people of Ontario that one of the 24 computers was not that of yours while co-chair of the Liberal campaign?

Interjections.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Stick a cork in it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton, come to order.
Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Obviously, this is a very serious allegation. My understanding is that a couple of news outlets are reporting that a police search warrant alleges—so there's an allegation—that David Livingston committed a breach of trust for illegally wiping computers. That's all I know.

We have said all along that we would co-operate with the OPP investigation. We have done that; we will continue to do that. Obviously, this is a serious allegation, and it is exactly why we have to work with the police and answer any of their requests in complete co-operation with them. We will continue to do that.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew, come to order.

Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It is clear that this government has not been completely forthcoming with members of this assembly over the \$1.1-billion cancelled gas plants.

In fact, the OPP, in the Ottawa Citizen article, are alleging that during the transition period after McGuinty had resigned from office under a cloud of allegations over the cancellation of gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville, David Livingston arranged to get special computer access so that one user—

Interjection.

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

I'm going to warn the Minister of the Environment.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This is serious. They allowed an outsider to have access to wipe hard drives in the Premier's office during the transition period between Dalton McGuinty and the new Premier. The question I asked was very serious: Was one of them yours? Can you tell this assembly today without a question of doubt that you did not have any of your hard drives leaked or deleted?

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Huron-Bruce, come to order. The member from Durham, come to order.

Mr. John O'Toole: It doesn't matter—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Durham is warned. The member from Durham, you know the next step. Not another word.

Premier?

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

Hon. John Milloy: This is a serious matter, and I would—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Barrie, come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I would warn the honourable member, we have in this—

Mr. John Yakabuski: You should be apologizing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is warned. We're going to get through this without the interruptions.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: We have a system here where the police can investigate—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Cambridge, come to order. The member from Oxford, come to order. The member from Elgin-Middlesex-London, come to order. One more time and you'll be named.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: The police are looking into a particular situation. I think that all members of this House would agree that the best thing for members of the Legislature to do is to not speculate or comment on a police investigation and to allow the police to do their work. To stand here in this House somehow like a judge and jury and prosecutor—the fact of the matter is that we have some media reports about a police investigation. Let us allow the police to do their work.

In terms of coming forward with information, I would comment—

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

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Premier: Newspaper outlets are reporting that the OPP have alleged criminal breach of trust against McGuinty's chief of staff over email deletions in the gas plant scandal. When did the government learn of these revelations?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just got a note a few minutes ago saying that these allegations had been made. We have co-operated with the Ontario Provincial Police. We will continue to co-operate with the Ontario Provincial Police. There is an investigation ongoing. That is what I know at this point.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: We have asked before, and I will ask again: Should charges be laid, will the Premier support appointment of a special prosecutor in this case?

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

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I appreciate the theatrics, but we have a police investigation, and I think the members understand that when the police are looking into a situation, members of this Legislature, in fact, in many instances—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Are you serious? Your former chief of staff is going to jail, and you speak about theatrics? I've never seen a more corrupt government in my life.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean-Carleton will withdraw, and I call her to order as well.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Withdrawn.

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

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: Throughout the operation of the Legislature, there is a clear division between the work that we do and the work that law enforcement does. The fact of the matter is that we allow the police to undertake their work. We don't speculate. We don't jump to

conclusions. We don't act here like judge and jury. We allow the police to undertake their work, and I would caution all members on that side of the House that that's exactly what we should do. We should allow them to undertake their work and reach their conclusion and not try to interfere through questions in the Legislature.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of the Environment. Every year, hundreds of thousands of vehicles that were once fresh off the showroom floor with that new car scent have deteriorated to the point that they are old, obsolete and not serviceable. They become heaps, beaters, junkers. Many of these buckets of bolts shouldn't even be on the road.

However, Minister, end-of-life vehicles contain both parts that are still useful and hazardous substances that need to stay out of our environment. Although nearly 95% of all end-of-life vehicles generated in Ontario are recovered in whole or in part, there is recycling and there is recycling.

Minister, what is Ontario doing to ensure that end-of-life vehicles are properly and safely recycled?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you for an excellent question. As the member stated, end-of-life vehicles contain potentially hazardous materials that must be kept out of the environment and valuable materials that can feed our industries. About 600,000 vehicles are junked each year in Ontario, and most of them are processed to recover valuable used parts and for high-value metal recycling.

We want to ensure that end-of-life vehicles are properly managed to protect the environment and human health. That is why my ministry is proposing environmental standards for end-of-life vehicles and to regulate facilities that process them through the Environmental Activity and Sector Registry. We are consulting on standards that would ensure facilities that dismantle end-of-life vehicles do so properly, including removing and safely managing petroleum liquids and hazardous materials, such as the nerve toxin mercury. The standards are now posted on the Environmental Bill of Rights for public review and comment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Finance on a point of order.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Yes, a point of order: Once again, I seek unanimous consent that the question on the motion for second reading of Bill 177, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act, be immediately put forward without further 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): The Minister of Finance is seeking unanimous consent that the question on the motion for second reading of Bill 177, An Act to

amend the Legislative Assembly Act, be immediately put forward without further 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.

Do we agree? I heard a no.

The member from Simcoe–Grey on a point of order.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I seek unanimous consent that the sponsorship of Bill 5, An Act to freeze compensation for two years in the public sector, be transferred to the member for Nipissing.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Simcoe–Grey is seeking unanimous consent that the sponsorship of Bill 5, An Act to freeze compensation for two years in the public sector, be transferred to the member for Nipissing. Do we agree? I heard a no.

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

The House recessed from 1141 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I would like to welcome students in grades 5 and 6 from Rotherglen Meadowvale elementary school in my great riding of Mississauga–Brampton South. They are on their way into the Legislature. Welcome them to the Legislature.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker; very well done.

Every day we wake up in the safety of our well-built homes, enjoy the benefits of electricity and running water, and travel on roads built to last. Many of these services we take for granted are delivered by highly skilled, experienced and passionate tradespeople. These are the workers who ensure our daily lives run smoothly, and we owe them a debt of gratitude.

Over the course of the past years, the Ontario government has implemented policies linked to the College of Trades that are anything but a sign of appreciation for the work that tradespeople do. In my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Earl Leger, a hard-working tradesperson, was glad to see his son Devon follow in his footsteps and join the skilled trades as an apprentice. Despite an ongoing jobs glut, Devon found employment in Kingston after a lengthy job hunt. However, in less than two weeks Devon will lose his job for no other good reason than this government's job-killing policies.

The College of Trades is challenging the validity of regular trade licences and seeking an artificially high exam failure rate. Even though the employer is very happy with Devon's job performance, they will be forced to terminate him due to the new College of Trades employment-killing regulations.

Speaker, Ontario tradespeople have always been honest, law-abiding workers committed to the highest standards of safety, ethics and service. The College of Trades, by driving tradespeople out of business, is about to deprive us of the very foundation of our daily comfort and this province's success.

It isn't the tradespeople and apprentices that have to go; it's the College of Trades and this government.

HEALTH CARE

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a story today that speaks of two very different realities of life in my riding of Hamilton Mountain: a story of a system and a government that fail the people of this province, and a story of how our community can sometimes overcome those obstacles that come before us.

There's a resident on the mountain who suffers from a neuromuscular disease that has progressively affected his mobility, his speech and a portion of his brain that controls muscle movement. Due to this, he was forced to quit work in 1994 and has steadily gotten worse since then. Most recently he suffered a small stroke and has been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, which has confined him to his bedroom. He receives assistance from a PSW and his wife 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

For a medical appointment, they have to rent a wheelchair and a metal ramp to get him out of the house. The ramp requires two very strong people to wheel my constituent down the ramp safely. It's totally unsuited to their needs, but they have been denied funding for a more permanent ramp.

Fortunately, Carpenters Local 18 came to the rescue after hearing from Councillor Scott Duvall and another resident, Chris Ecklund. The carpenters will assist with building and installing a ramp, taking a huge burden off this family.

This is not the first family our community has rallied to help, and I know it will not be the last. Thank you to all involved for stepping up to the plate to take care of one of our own.

HEATHER ROBERTSON

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I stand in the House today to honour Heather Robertson, a renowned author from King township in my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham who passed away on March 19, 2014.

Throughout her celebrated career, Ms. Robertson received many awards for her work as both a fiction and non-fiction writer. Her first book, *Willie: A Romance*, won the Books in Canada Best First Novel Award in 1983. However, my personal favourite was her last book,

Walking into Wilderness, which is an illustrated journey that traces the history of the land and water trails between Lake Ontario and Georgian Bay. In fact, in 2013, it received the inaugural Ontario Speaker of the Legislative Assembly award.

Ms. Robertson's legacy reaches beyond her work as an author. She was seen by many as a beloved mentor. She was also a founding member of both the Writers' Union of Canada and the Periodical Writers' Association of Canada. Moreover, she was instrumental in ensuring that freelance copyright laws extend to electronic publication. Furthermore, Ms. Robertson served her community as president of the King Township Historical Society and as a member of the York Pioneer and Historical Society.

Heather Robertson's passing is a great loss for her family, her friends and her community. To the rest of us, she was a wonderful example of a life well lived.

ORANGEVILLE LIONS CLUB

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the Orangeville Lions Club, who are marking their 65th anniversary this year. This organization continues to make significant contributions to key projects that benefit the well-being of all residents in our community.

When it was chartered in April 1949, Lions Club members acted as our community's first crossing guards, ensuring students had a safer walk to school. Since that time, Lions' activities and projects have been instrumental in enhancing our quality of life. Whether it was providing the initial donation to build a new arena, constructing a pool, sponsoring sports teams or supporting our local hospital, schools and library—and, of course, their annual home show, happening April 4 to 6—the involvement of the Orangeville Lions Club members has ensured we live in a strong and vibrant community. I applaud every Lions Club member for their numerous contributions and their incredible commitment.

In the history of the Lions Club in Orangeville, there have been very few community projects that have not had a helping hand from a Lions Club member. Whenever a Lions Club gets together, problems get smaller and communities get better.

On behalf of all Dufferin–Caledon residents and the Ontario Legislature, I'd like to wish the Orangeville Lions Club congratulations.

BEACHES INTERNATIONAL JAZZ FESTIVAL

Mr. Michael Prue: Yesterday in the news, and today in this morning's newspapers, much was made about the fact that the jazz festival in the Beach was about to get some of its money reinstated. Unfortunately, I wish that were true. It is not.

Mr. Chillelli and his team met with ministry officials yesterday. No promises were made to reinstate the funding. In fact, the ministry staff was unable to explain why

the festival did not fall into the parameters of having more tourism here in Toronto.

The government today is speaking about a separate fund that is called the OMD. But, to paraphrase Mr. Chillemi, and I think he said it best, receipt of this grant has nothing to do with the issue at hand, the issue being the festival's non-receipt of funding through Celebrate Ontario.

It now appears to festival organizers and its supporters that the government has no intention of reinstating funding at whatever level for the festival for its 2014 season, and the issue remains outstanding.

We believe that what is good enough for paid performances, like those by Drake or by Maple Leaf sports or by anyone else who charges a lot of money for a ticket, should be good enough for a large, free, inclusive institution like the jazz festival in the Beach. This is not good enough to take it out of another pocket, because they had already been given that money. This is what this government is trying to do, and it needs to be exposed. This is not fair to the people of the Beach, and we do not accept what is written in the paper today.

HOLI FESTIVAL

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Last Sunday, I had the opportunity of attending the Holi celebration in my community of Mississauga–Brampton South. This Holi dinner-and-dance fundraising event was hosted by the Mississauga Churchill Meadows Lions Club.

Holi is the festival of colours—the colours of unity—and an opportunity to forget all differences and reaffirm universal brotherhood. Holi reminds us all that the winter is over and that spring is around the corner. It is about new beginnings, hope and optimism. It is also a time to catch up with family and friends.

1310

As we all know, Lions International is the world's largest service organization. Its members believe in the common good and serving others in need. I thank the president of the Mississauga's Churchill Meadow Lions Club, Pammi Walia; vice-president Rimple Thakkar; secretary Neena Sehgal and all of its members for their hard work and dedication towards improving the lot of humanity. Kudos to Mississauga Churchill Meadows Lions Club.

BURLINGTON EAGLES

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I've had the pleasure of speaking on more than one occasion at the Golden Horseshoe Hockey Tournament, hosted by the Burlington Eagles, Burlington's rep hockey club.

Thanks to outstanding performances from their squads in the past week, the Eagles achieved the historic feat of winning Ontario minor hockey championships across the board.

The atom AAA Eagles, under coach Jim Haslett, defeated Whitby to take the gold.

The atom AA Eagles, under coach Cam Cooke, trumped Markham to win their championship series.

The atom A Eagles, coached by Brian Sharpe, swept Orillia in three games.

The city's other atom team, the AE 1 Eagles, edged New Tecumseth to win their series.

The bantam AA Eagles took home an OMHA championship of their own after knocking out Belleville.

The peewee AE 1 Eagles, under coach Chris Chard, swept a six-point series against Stoney Creek.

These players have distinguished themselves both on and off the ice. The Eagles, along with community partners, collected more than 38 tonnes of food in the 2013 Gift of Giving Back Community Food Drive, with proceeds going to Carpenter Hospice, Halton Women's Place, Partnership West and the Salvation Army.

Congratulations to all, Speaker.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I rise today to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the opening of Canada's first subway line, the Yonge-University-Spadina line, which first opened for service on March 30, 1954.

At the time, we were leaders in building transit. The Yonge-University-Spadina line is the busiest subway line in Canada and the second-busiest in North America. It exists because past governments made investments that were needed at the time.

Not only have the city limits grown, but the population of Toronto has increased from one million to 2.5 million people, and the population continues to grow. However, our subway system has not adapted with the population influx. The previous government cut transit funding, filled in proposed subway lines and terminated subway lines without taking into account the growth of the city.

Our government has taken bold action by investing in the Scarborough subway and beginning construction on the Eglinton Crosstown, currently the largest infrastructure project under way in Canada, as well as the Union-Pearson express line, set to open in less than one year.

This government has shown leadership after decades of neglect in transit and infrastructure investment. We have recognized the need to find a more affordable and accessible way to get people around the GTA from work to home to play, and we are working to help Ontarians in their everyday lives. This is good for our economy as well as our environment.

FRANK STAPLETON

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to stand today and congratulate one of my constituents, Frank Stapleton, on receiving the Lieutenant Governor's lifetime achievement award for the conservation of Ontario's heritage. Frank is one of just 18 Ontario volunteers to receive this honour for the year 2013.

He was nominated by the municipality of Clarington, where he had served as a councillor at one time. As a

volunteer in support of local heritage, Frank contributed historic photographs and articles to many publications. These include a book commemorating the 150th anniversary of Newtonville Community Hall.

Frank has served as a Doors Open volunteer and organizer of walking tours in Clarington. He volunteers on many community boards and frequently serves as an auctioneer at fundraisers in support of local heritage projects.

Frank Stapleton is a fifth-generation resident of Newtonville, a village within Clarington. He is also well known in our community as a world-champion auctioneer, the proprietor of Stapleton Auctions, and a former municipal councillor, as I said.

Thank you to Frank and his family for all of their support of our community and of heritage generally.

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

PETITIONS

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole: My petition is from the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

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

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

“Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

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

“Whereas the lack of post-stroke physiotherapy offered to Ontarians between the ages of 20 and 64 is forcing these people to prematurely cash in their RRSPs” or other savings, and perhaps sell their homes to raise funds;

“Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory nature of current treatment practices.”

I'm pleased to sign and support this and give it to Justin, one of the pages.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

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

I beg to tell the members that I missed something that I needed to cover off before petitions. Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Haldimand–Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Energy—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I normally like to do these without interruption—concerning the high price of electricity. This matter will be debated Tuesday at 6 p.m.

My apologies.

Further petitions?

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas resident levels in long-term-care facilities are rising every year, with corresponding pressures on health care demands;

“Whereas aggressive behaviour and mental health issues are on the rise and represent a significant risk to staff and residents alike;

“Whereas facilities are not currently capable of dealing with the increasing number of extremely aggressive residents;

“Whereas not enough research exists with respect to aggressive behaviour risk assessment and management;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly take into consideration the considered recommendations of groups such as the Ontario Association of Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors, and allocate adequate funding and resources to long-term care for seniors.”

I'll sign this, and I'm going to give it to Caroline.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

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“Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

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

“In agreement whereof, we affix our signatures,” as do I.

I’m sending it to you via page Mustfah.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for improved post-stroke physiotherapy eligibility.

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

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

“Whereas current OHIP policies prevent Ontarians under age 65 and over the age of 20 from receiving additional OHIP-funded physiotherapy and rehabilitation after their initial stroke treatment; and

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

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

“Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Ontario Legislature to introduce and pass amending legislation and new regulations to provide OHIP-funded post-stroke physiotherapy and treatment for all qualified post-stroke patients, thereby eliminating the discriminatory”—very discriminatory—“nature of current treatment practices.”

I agree with this petition. I’m going to sign it, and I’m going to pass it to my page, Milana.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario 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;

“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 support the petition, and I give my petition to Calvin.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Mrs. Julia Munro: “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 implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types.”

As I am in agreement, I affix my signature, and give it to page Anthony.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Because the York-Simcoe one was so good, I’m going to add to it.

A petition to repeal Ontario’s breed-specific legislation:

“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.”

For the 1,000 or so dogs that have already lost their lives because of the way they look, I’m going to sign my name and give it to Divya to be delivered to the table.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: “A petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

“Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

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

“In agreement whereof, we affix our signatures,” as do I, and send it to you via page Zohaib.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mrs. Julia Munro: “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;

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

“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 Wynne government only aggravate the looming skilled trades shortage in Ontario;

“Therefore 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.”

As I am in agreement, I affix my signature and give it to page Nick.

HYDRO RATES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: “A petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

“Whereas this consideration of digital empowerment of members continues to be unresolved, on hold, under consideration and the subject of repeated temporizing correspondence between decision-makers and interested parties;

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

“In agreement thereof, we affix our signatures,” as do I, sending it to you via page Mustfah.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents of Durham, which reads as follows:

“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.”

This petition is signed by Lynda Flintoff and Mary-Anne Keith, just a few of the constituents who signed the petition. I sign it and give it to Jane, one of the pages.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members’ public business such that Mr. Bisson assumes ballot item 1 and Ms. Horwath assumes ballot item number 32.

Orders of the day.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Wayne Gates: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should immediately move to reward job creators with a tax credit for new hires to alleviate the jobs crisis. Such a tax credit should include a reimbursement to employers for 10% of the salary paid to a new hire during the first year of employment, up to a maximum of \$5,000 per new hire, and be conditional upon businesses demonstrating that a new hire is genuine and provides on-the-job training.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: I’m glad we have this opportunity today to pass a motion that will help create jobs in our province. This motion will reward job creators with a tax credit for every job they create. A job creation tax credit will help small businesses and companies that are investing in our communities and creating jobs here in Ontario, not ones shipping our jobs overseas.

Too many people are losing hope of finding a job. Instead of offering change, this government insists the same old plan is working. We can do better. We must do better.

Ontario currently spends more than \$2 billion each year on an ad hoc mix of overlapping business support programs that are a hodgepodge of fragmented programs with unnecessary costs. That is according to the Drummond Commission on the Reform of Ontario’s Public Services.

Speaker, these programs are currently scattered across eight ministries and include no-strings-attached giveaways in the form of grants, loans, guarantees and tax breaks with little or no link to jobs.

Consolidating business support programs into a single fund will save \$250 million annually by reducing duplication and cutting administration costs by 25%, according to the government. The government has appointed three panels, conducted its own review and promised repeatedly in the last two years to consolidate business supports and reduce administration, but it failed.

The job creator tax credit motion I propose, that the NDP proposes, calls for action now to stop the waste and invest the \$250 million in annual savings that can be achieved by consolidating business support into a two-year job creation tax credit. The tax credit will support new jobs, not the replacement of previous employees. We will cap the amount an individual employer can claim at \$100,000 a year, creating a fair playing field so that many companies of all sizes will have access to the fund.

Our plan will increase the number of jobs available to everyone: men, women, new Canadians or young people—anyone who needs work. It would reimburse employers for 10% of the salary paid to new hires during their first year of employment, up to a maximum of \$5,000 per new hire. Businesses would have to demonstrate that the new hire is genuine, and they would have to provide on-the-job training.

People in Ontario are facing a jobs crisis. We need to take action now. This is one simple, practical step we can take now to get people working: Create a job, get a tax credit.

I represent the people of Niagara Falls, Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake and the surrounding communities. I know this plan will work in the Niagara region, where people are facing the highest unemployment in the province. We all know what's not working, and that's corporate tax cuts, which last year gave corporations \$770 million yet didn't create one job.

I'm asking this government to listen to the Niagara businesses. Speaker, as you know, I was just elected in the Niagara Falls riding on February 13 of this year. As MPP for the riding of Niagara Falls, which includes Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake and a number of other communities, I spoke with thousands of residents, and their number one concern was jobs—jobs for themselves, jobs for their kids and jobs for their grandkids.

In Niagara, during the by-election, I met with a number of employees from a lot of different sectors of the economy: tourism, wineries, manufacturing, print shops and many, many others. Every employer—not me—said they support a job tax credit for new hires, training and investing. We spoke with Paul Harber of the Ravine Vineyard in Niagara-on-the-Lake, who supported the job creation tax credit. He said the planned NDP job tax credit will help his business create local jobs and expand his business.

In Fort Erie, we have an opportunity to save 1,000 jobs—700 direct, 300 indirect—by supporting a long-term commitment to keep the Fort Erie Race Track open. That includes supporting this year's Year of the Horse Festival meet.

This targeted tax credit is needed in Fort Erie, as one of the heart-wrenching things during my campaign was to see what was going on in Fort Erie. Not just stores were closed, but entire plazas were shut down, a number of homes were up for sale and young people were looking to move away. Workers and young people in Fort Erie need an opportunity to work and live and raise

their families in Fort Erie, and this tax credit can help put them back to work.

We spoke to a number of tourism operators and hotel owners who supported a targeted tax credit that rewards job creators. This is another voice of small business that would help put people back to work.

We met with and spoke to a number of printing shop owners who were clear that the corporate tax cuts didn't create one job and didn't help their business. They say a targeted tax credit would help them hire more employees, and, again, put residents in Niagara back to work.

I met with manufacturers like SpencerARL, which is a real success story in Niagara, a company that started with 11 employees that decided to work with the city of Niagara Falls, the city council, the union, and the highly skilled workers in Niagara. Now they have grown to 280 employees.

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The CEO of ARL, Nebe Tamburro, has been clear that with a targeted tax credit, they would have been able to hire more people faster, train them sooner, and invest in more equipment. Nebe said his company needs leaders like everybody in this room, like all of us here today, to come together to protect and create local jobs and economic opportunities in the Niagara region and in the province. Nebe said that small business needs us to stand up for them. The job creator tax credit motion is the way to do that.

These examples from the by-election in the riding of Niagara Falls should show this government that this plan works for Niagara, which has the highest unemployment rate in Ontario. I want to say that it's not Wayne Gates and the NDP saying this. This is business after business after business that supports a targeted tax credit to create jobs.

Here are quotes from businesses across the province in support of a job creator tax credit:

Stephen Lake, CEO for Thalmic Labs, a venture-capital-backed technology company based in Kitchener: "Talent acquisition is a huge priority for Thalmic Labs at our stage of growth. An incentive like the one being proposed would be helpful for companies like us as we continue to build out our teams."

Sean Moore, CEO of Unconquered Sun Solar Technologies, a manufacturer of premium solar panels in Windsor, says this: "The NDP plan for a new job creation tax credit is a smart, simple idea that will help me grow Unconquered Sun Solar Tech. I would love to see such a policy put in place to help spur job creation across the province."

Vivianne Dupuis of Sutherland's Furniture, which operates a 25,000-square-foot facility in London: "The plan for a jobs creation tax credit is exactly the sort of policy that will help me grow my business. This plan will assist small businesses in growing their operation and, in turn, growing the local economy. It's great to hear Andrea talking about such a sensible plan. I hope it becomes a reality."

Economist Jim Stanford says, “The concept of delivering tax support to businesses, of any size, which deliver incremental gains on performance measures like capital spending or employment creation is economically sound, and could play an important role in stimulating new growth....

“Targeted performance-based tax credits are far preferable to across-the-board reductions in corporate income taxes, which transfer vast resources to businesses whether they expand their economic activity or not.”

Ontario has lost too many jobs. Where I come from, hard-working parents are facing the highest unemployment rate in the province. It's breaking their hearts to see their families separated by watching their kids move away to find work. People, young people, need jobs. The status quo isn't working. Corporate tax cuts are not working for the province of Ontario. We need fresh thinking. We need a practical way to help companies reinvest in Ontario.

Our workforce is one of the most skilled in the world—highest productivity, highest-quality health and safety. It doesn't matter what you talk about when it comes to skilled workers in the province of Ontario; you have them in every community in Ontario, whether it be in Niagara, whether it be in Barrie, whether it be in Windsor or whether it be in Kitchener. They are highly skilled, and what they want to do is go back to work and perform jobs and raise their families and buy homes, and enjoy them growing up in their home communities with their families.

This gives us an opportunity to put people back to work, so let's put people back to work. Let's give young people a fair shot at getting a job. It's time to take action. Businesses after businesses after businesses support the plan. They say that they will invest in job creation in Niagara; they'll invest in all the other communities right across the province.

It's time to take action. It's time to bring forward a job creation tax credit and put people back to work. It's a simple process: If you hire somebody, you get a targeted tax credit. Let's put Ontarians back to work.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I just want to remind all members of the House—I let this member go because he's new—we do not refer to people by their first name or last name but by the title of their riding.

Further debate.

Mr. John O'Toole: As a courtesy, I would have expected perhaps that the Liberals, the governing party, would have actually stood up and paid some respect to the remarks made from the member from Niagara Falls, Mr. Gates. However, the fact that no one stood—I did listen to his remarks.

First of all, I commend him on his first private member's bill. He came across during the election recently as very passionate and very supportive of union and union members in his riding, and I commend him for that. I think his intentions here are well intended as well, al-

though I would disagree with the strategy completely and unquestionably.

I guess if you look at the real issue here, and Mr. Gates would probably know this—the member from Niagara Falls—in 1994, when I was a regional councillor in Durham and having worked 30 years in manufacturing myself, the then-government of Bob Rae—I've never really understood if Bob Rae was NDP or Liberal or both or neither one of the above. I say this with all respect to a former Premier of Ontario: They had a failed plan, not unlike this plan, honestly. I forget what that plan was called, but I think it was an outright grant for creating a job.

That economic time is very similar to today because if you measure, we're looking at youth unemployment as being, depending on what age group, in the 20% range, technically, if you get down low enough. Once they get to 22, they've got, potentially, a university or college degree and are perhaps more employable. But for the hard to employ, it's an issue. That's the genesis of this idea. I'm not sure that it's a very good plan technically. It didn't work then, and it won't work now.

I think if you look at some of the things that would help—here's the false argument of this, with all due respect. This is important. You always flaunt around these terms, “the big, greedy corporate tax rate.” That's actually a false argument, because corporations only pay tax if they make money.

Right now, the government's reason for this deficit issue is that corporations are in big trouble. Almost all of them are, basically. Most of them are in consolidation. In fact, Kellogg's, Heinz and Caterpillar have left Canada—Ontario specifically—but we're still buying their soup and their tractors and their other products. But they're being made somewhere else, because they have a more competitive environment. Now, I'm not just trying to say it's trickle-down or any of that kind of simplistic stuff. The climate for investment here is wrong. Look at Research In Motion. Look at Nortel. Look at the auto sector itself. We have a significant problem here.

I'm going to put a couple of ideas on the table for the member for Niagara Falls, and these would be in a plan that our party and Tim Hudak has put forward. Let's listen. Let's not get hung up on ideology. This is private members' business. I'll just give you one example: To become more competitive isn't just cutting wages; it's cutting inefficiency. With inefficiency, a good way to do it is to modernize and capitalize industry.

I worked at General Motors as part of that team of people that looked across what they called a diagonal slice of the organization. Yes, we took out managers. But what we did was automate a lot of the work that was redundant, repetitive and often caused repetitive strain injuries and stuff like that. We automated almost all of that heavy lifting which caused high WSIB rates.

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What we propose is this: Allow industry and manufacturing to become innovative and increase the capital tax allowance. That is where they get to write off immediate-

ly their investments in capitalization, which in itself creates jobs for those people who create that software, the hardware, the equipment and potentially the training, in another setting, so that they can modernize the manufacturing environment. That's one idea.

The current government's tax on trades is a problem. If you could show me a value-added component to that, I would probably agree with it. What I would do, though, is this: I would give training allowances to companies that are in-house, on-hand, real experience for skilled-trades youth. Creating co-op opportunities that have a paid component to it through tax relief is the proper way to go.

Technically, these are all ideas that we have put on the table, and I think they're workable ideas. I've seen them in my 30 years of industry, running a department with 300 or 400 people in it.

Another one would be affordable electricity. We're paying other jurisdictions now to take our energy, because when the wind is blowing at night, our FIT contracts by this government, that hasn't got a clue, requires them to actually buy the energy. When we're buying the energy, we're getting energy off the grid by giving them to New York or Quebec—giving it to them. But we still have to pay for it, because you're still paying for that water tax, or the plant to create the energy. So we're losing it. We're paying for the production of it, but we're giving it away for free. We could actually use that energy more affordably here.

I think the simple solution is this: Create a climate that creates jobs. Do not think that government, either this one or that one, can create security and confidence of investment. If you trade some of your thoughts into looking and creating a climate for investment, you will achieve the goal. Governments can't run businesses. Look at what they're doing now in Ontario. They're scaring them away. They're not creating them.

Our last and easiest one is to ease up on the regulations—not soften them up. Make them workable, and not have duplication and waste.

I wish I had another hour. I commend the member for bringing it forward, and I wait to hear other comments in the discussion.

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: As always, it is an honour to stand in this place. I want to start off by commending and thanking our new member from Niagara Falls, Wayne Gates, who has, on his first opportunity, introduced his first motion, the job creator tax credit, which as New Democrats—

Applause.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Of course.

He was the jobs champion during the by-election in Niagara Falls, and he has certainly continued with that focus as an elected member in this House. I want to thank him and congratulate him.

New Democrats have spoken at length about our concept and our ideas to consolidate the tax regime in this

province and, essentially, to reform the tax code. That's what we're talking about today: to streamline and make more effective our use of tax dollars and tax incentives.

It's not strictly born out of our party. This comes from consultation with members of our community, folks in small and medium-sized businesses, those who we speak about each and every day as a priority in this House, who we know are facing enormous challenges. Whether they be global or regional in their design, we know it's tough out there for certain segments of business in the province of Ontario.

In identifying those challenges, we make the correlation to how we operate in this House, and what programs, what benefits we can offer and what type of effort we can put forward—to steal a line from the member of Durham—to make the climate a little bit better.

It is responsive to those inquiries. It is responsive to the demands from business for us to be more effective in our delivery. It's also responsive, maybe most importantly, to our constituents, to those taxpayers who are asking, begging, pleading for more transparency, more accountability and goals to be achieved through our efforts here. That's what this does. It sets quite a simple goal: If you create a job, you get a tax credit.

It perplexes me that the Liberal government can't understand that concept—potentially because they've defended and stuck to the status quo for so long in terms of broad-based corporate tax reductions, or sticking to unaccountable programs of tax relief when businesses take customers out for fancy dinners or buy box seats to the Toronto Maple Leafs to entice them. I don't know if that would be enticing these days, because the Toronto Maple Leafs certainly haven't had that stellar of a record, but nevertheless it is something that the average person out there doesn't understand—doesn't see the correlation.

What we're saying, as New Democrats—thankfully, through the good words of my friend from Niagara Falls—is that we're putting forward an intelligent, practical, balanced plan, one that has metrics attached to it that people want to see.

I listened intently to the member from Durham, who I believe was critical of this plan, referencing that it had been applied before without great effect. I don't know what exactly that was, but I can only surmise that the official opposition is in support of the current government's initiative on taxes, because they haven't proposed any reforms specifically on support for small businesses through any tax reforms. They've got time left on the clock; I would like to hear specifically why they're critical of a tax support mechanism that would reward job creators.

The criticism that I've heard from the Liberal government is simply that these businesses would have hired people anyway. Well, that's not true. If it were, what would they be waiting for? We would have seen massive employment. What we do know is that the tax regime that has currently been happening, that we currently live under, is low compared to other neighbouring jurisdictions, whether they be provinces or states.

We know that the result of that has not equalled massive employment. We know it has resulted in hoarding of cash reserves by corporations. Again, don't take my word for it, Speaker; take that of the former finance minister of the federal government, Jim Flaherty, who was very critical of businesses who were hoarding massive amounts of cash—in excess of \$600 billion—in the country. They are not spending those tax dollars that we have given them to incentivize growth and employment.

We see that. We listened to former Minister Flaherty. We listened to the former Bank of Canada governor—

Interjection: Carney.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: —Mark Carney. Thank you very much to my very, very attentive colleagues. Mark Carney said similar things: that this is a serious problem, and that if we are to stimulate or partner with business, we should have some metrics attached. What we all need to see are tangible jobs created in our communities.

It's one that is a point of frustration for many of the people in our communities when they see our tax dollars being given out in the form of grants, direct subsidies or just a direct cut to the tax rate—similar to companies like Navistar, who received direct subsidies to the tune of \$35 million and promptly left the community of Chatham-Kent, laying off, letting go or firing over 1,100 workers.

That can't happen anymore. If we are to be accountable, transparent and truthful with our efforts here in terms of tax relief, we should have some strings attached. That's what we're calling for. It's something that I think there is certainly an appetite, a desire, on behalf of Ontarians to see: that we take those initiatives.

This is simply one mechanism for the government to adopt. I cannot understand how they are so reluctant to implement such a common-sense type of program. It would, I think, give them a little bit more credibility than they have had on the file for so long.

Businesses in Ontario are ready to invest. I speak with them. We all speak with them each and every day. They are ready to invest in enhanced manufacturing. They are ready to invest in enhanced manufacturing. They are ready to invest in research and development.

1400

I'm meeting with a really special business owner tomorrow who is really bringing something that could potentially be revolutionary to our health industry, and I'm supportive of those initiatives. The focus from that business owner: Because she understands that good jobs in her community have a multiplier effect and provide a triple net benefit, she wants to hire, and produce and manufacture goods, in Ontario, in her community. That is her priority. We should be there, as a government, to identify those types of corporations, those types of companies, and assist them directly and make it a priority. This is what it calls for.

It's common sense. It's balanced, it's targeted and it adds value to our tax regime. Speaker, I can't understand why anyone in this House would be critical of it and not want to adopt it as soon as possible. But I have been amazed before at the reluctance of this House to adopt

commonsensical practices. I'll leave it at that and leave some time on the clock for my colleagues.

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

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, this motion, although well intended, will not serve Ontario's unemployment problem. First, the 10% salary subsidy would be gratefully accepted by employers who were going to create the new jobs even without the subsidy. Most new jobs would most likely be created by employers because their business plan requires more employees to do more work or new work at their growing businesses. In this case, new jobs would not be created because of the salary subsidy, and therefore the subsidy would effectively be wasted money.

Secondly, in the case where the 10% salary subsidy causes a new job to be created and the subsidy ends after one year, there is a high risk that many of these very tenuous jobs will end when the subsidy ends. Again, the subsidy will effectively be wasted money.

What this motion calls for is corporate welfare. Neither government nor private sector businesses should be in the business of corporate welfare. Corporate success, including job creation, can only occur where there is a successful business plan that will create profits and jobs. The best way for government to help the private sector create jobs is to reduce red tape, reduce energy prices and provide a competitive rate of taxation. In other words, government should get out of the way.

The Green Energy Act is unnecessarily driving up electricity costs. This is impoverishing poor and middle-class people, which means they have less money to spend on consumer goods. That results in companies reducing the production of goods, leading to fewer employees and more unemployment. It is a vicious cycle of failure.

There are 385,000 regulations in Ontario. This mountain of red tape, forms, applications, fees and wasted time creates big increases in administrative costs, which stifles business and kills jobs—more unemployment. Again, it is a vicious cycle of failure.

The huge government debt of \$270 billion, with a deficit of \$10 billion and an interest charge on the debt of \$10 billion per year, is bleeding taxpayers dry with increased taxes that are needed to carry this crushing, job-killing burden of debt. The government needs to get its financial house in order to demonstrate to potential job-creating businesses that the government understands that only when government reduces the size and cost of government and passes on the savings to businesses and taxpayers will businesses be incentivized to invest in Ontario and create jobs. Until then, we will continue to bathe in the glow of financial chaos and wallow in a cesspool of high unemployment.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Mr. Speaker, it is such a pleasure for me to stand in this House in support of my new colleague's motion before the House. Certainly he is a jobs champion. He has worked in his community for

many years to inspire investment. We actually toured a company when we were there for the by-election, in support of him, where the support, financial—and the collaboration and relationship-building that he has a strong record for in Niagara Falls proved to be very effective.

I think we're speaking from that position, and the job creator tax credit has proven to be, in other jurisdictions, incredibly powerful and successful in incentivizing investment. Just this past Monday, I was knocking on some doors of businesses in Kitchener Centre and talking to those jobs champions in our communities who have started their business. One was a fair trade clothing company; another was a young entrepreneur who started a flower shop, and we talked openly and honestly about the conditions of this job creator tax credit.

It's so simple. It does warrant a great concern that the government is not willing to look at it at all. We are not surprised that the Conservatives are not looking at it. For some reason, they're not in favour of an accountable tax credit, which has proven to be successful, which will create jobs and which will hold some accountability for tax dollars as you invest them in businesses. They're completely off script, and I'm not quite sure where they are these days.

In Kitchener, when I was talking to this young entrepreneur—she's in her first year of business—I talked to her about the terms and conditions of this job creator tax credit. I asked her, "What difference will this make for you in your business?" She said, "Quite honestly, this would allow me to hire somebody. This would increase my productivity. I could use them for marketing. I could do greater outreach in the community. It would make a tangible difference to me as a small business owner."

You know what? Small businesses and medium-sized businesses in the province of Ontario are looking for help. They are hungry for change, and they are looking for creative options, and they are looking for a partnership with the government. Right now, they do not see this government as a partner. They see them as an enemy, because the burden of taxation is so high, because the red tape is so high, because jumping through hoop after hoop after hoop just to get your business up and running in the province of Ontario is oppressive. They want some relief, and this tax credit provides them some relief. You create a job; you get a tax credit. We have dumbed it down. It is simple. Anybody can use it.

What we don't understand is why, in the spirit of a minority government, in the spirit of collaboration and co-operation, this Liberal government stands against this creative and progressive idea in their own ideology because they didn't come up with it, and we don't understand this, because they have taken so many of our other ideas. Why not a job creator tax credit to benefit the people of this province?

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

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is, as I always like to begin by saying, a very real pleasure for me to have the opportunity to stand in

my place today, as someone who is very proud to represent the wonderful community of Vaughan in this Legislature, to speak to this particular item.

Because I believe this is the first attempt of the new member, relatively speaking, from Niagara Falls at introducing something of this nature through this process, I do want to congratulate him for taking the opportunity. I am also a new member, relatively speaking, in this chamber, having joined on the same day as the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, who spoke just a second ago.

I did have the chance to hear most of the discussion or most of the debate that has taken place prior to my having the chance to stand up. I did want to say in particular to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, who spoke only a moment ago about her experience in her community, in terms of talking to business owners, small business owners etc. and others who are seeking assistance, seeking support from, I would trust, all levels of government, not merely the provincial government, with respect to creating increasingly opportunistic conditions for them to be able to continue to invest in their business—I will say, I'm not surprised to hear that people who demonstrate that degree of entrepreneurial spirit would be looking for assistance.

But I think we have to draw a very careful distinction around whether or not government should be supporting small business and all business—and absolutely, government should be. I think, over the last decade, we have demonstrated very clearly on this side of the House that that is something that's fundamental to our government's DNA and how we want to continue to move the province forward.

But I think we have to be very careful that for those who are contributing or investing their time, their energy, their resources, their enthusiasm, their entrepreneurial spirit, taking those risks—I think we have to be really careful, even when we have the best of intentions, and I will make the presumption that the new member from Niagara Falls has the best of intentions in bringing this item forward, to not inadvertently advocate for a mechanism or a device or a proposal that would actually be counter-productive.

1410

My fear with respect to this exact idea, this exact proposal, given that it has been used in other jurisdictions and has not been successful in other jurisdictions with respect to the exact intent that it was designed to have at the very beginning of the process in those jurisdictions, is that it would, in fact, inadvertently hurt the provincial economy; it would, in fact, not give those small business owners—because, of course, small business owners, medium-sized business owners and large business owners are part of the broader fabric of our community, of our society—that it ultimately would not provide the relief or the support, unfortunately, that the author of this particular motion and other members from his caucus are suggesting that it would.

It doesn't mean that, conceptually speaking, the idea of providing support to those who have that entrepreneur-

ial spirit and who take those risks is not something that we should endeavour to do. It is, in fact, something we should do. I think the record will demonstrate very clearly over the last number of years that our government has taken that responsibility very seriously when it comes to making sure we provide the kinds of supports that will actually produce those meaningful, positive results.

I can think of one example: Just by cutting the Employer Health Tax recently, we've helped 60,000 small businesses across the province of Ontario. There are a number of other things that have taken place in this last decade, since 2003, that also provide meaningful support, that actually put business owners and entrepreneurs in a position where they can feel more confident about moving forward and hiring additional employees.

Speaker, I mentioned a second ago that this is a device that has been attempted in other jurisdictions. From what I've seen, from the analysis I've had the chance to do, I don't think that it has necessarily proved to be successful. Again, there is that gulf between the idea, the notion, the ambition of a proposal like this and exactly what the results that it produces are.

I think it's important for us to take a look at what other people who have seen this work, or who have seen this attempt to work, in their jurisdictions have had to say about this.

For example, in January 2010, a gentleman named Dean Baker, an economist, in *Time* magazine had this to say about a similar proposal, a similar idea: "Basically, you are paying companies to hire workers that would have been hired even if you hadn't handed out tax breaks."

From the Jobs and Prosperity Council report of 2012, and I'll quote again—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Just give them a corporate tax credit. That will do it.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: "It appears that the tax credit could be used to pay for jobs that would have been created without the credit..."

I couldn't help but overhear that the member from Trinity-Spadina brought up a completely superfluous comparison a second ago here in this House. I think it's unfortunate that repeatedly, in this Legislature and outside this Legislature, we see members of the NDP caucus trying to muddy the waters and trying to build up aspirations and help build up the hopes of people in a very crass political way.

Interjection.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I would actually encourage the relatively new member from Niagara Falls to follow the lead of his seatmate or his colleague, the member from Windsor-Tecumseh, who from time to time actually demonstrates that this is not supposed to be about crass politics alone, and to ignore the example and the advice of the member from Trinity-Spadina and some of the other battle-hardened members of that particular caucus.

What is most important to recognize in this entire discussion is that the Ontario Liberal government has a very clear plan for making sure the economy continues to move forward. We talked about it in last year's fall eco-

nomics statement. We talked about it in last year's provincial budget. It's a plan that is about investing in people. It's a plan that is about investing in modern infrastructure. And it's a plan about making sure that we do what we can as a government to make sure that our business climate is both innovative and productive and that it's working.

The good news about the plan is that it is working. It's producing positive results for the people of Ontario, be they small, medium, or large business owners or be they the employees that those businesses seek to hire or eventually will hire or, generally speaking, actually the economy itself.

I want to say to the member: Congratulations for bringing this forward. I do accept that it was done under the best of intentions, but it is deeply flawed and does not deserve the support of this chamber.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I think this is very insightful into some of the challenges our friends in the third party have in understanding the economy.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Do you want to have a serious conversation, or do you know it all?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask the minister to speak through the Chair.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The serious conversation is this: What is the problem? The biggest problem, as my friend from Vaughan pointed out, is a fundamental disagreement about what the nature of the challenge is.

The economy has shifted in the last 20 years from an economy in which production was the largest generator of wealth. The manufacturing sector, in the 1970s and 1980s and into the early 1990s, generated most of the employment. Production was the single most important activity in the economy that generated wealth.

In the 1980s, that started to change. I think we gave the example, which was Pittsburgh, of what we saw in Ontario.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: You told this story yesterday.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes.

So we've seen a shift. You see, in Pittsburgh, 300 people doing the job of 243,000, and producing more steel. Our challenge is a highly automated manufacturing sector that produces fewer jobs. More cars are being made, and fewer people are making them; more robotics, more capital-intensive, a more industrial-intensive economy.

In the recession of 2008-09, which we're just now coming out of, what is interesting is that 81% of the job losses were people who had high school or less. In fact, people with a trade or certificate, or a college or university degree, increased their employment in that global recession by about 20%.

The assumption of this position taken by the third party is that the problem of underemployment or unemployment is that there are not enough jobs, and the solution is that you have to subsidize employers to create

more jobs. The way you do that is you give them a tax write-off every time they hire someone. The problem is that the assumption is wrong and the solution is wrong.

The Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters—not our government; nothing to do with the province—are now projecting 1.3 million skilled jobs in Ontario by 2016. That's in 24 months. So you're going to have about 700,000 or 800,000 skilled jobs become available in Ontario. What is our government's view of the problem? That those jobs are not going to be created? No. Those jobs are being created, and the private sector is telling us that. As a matter of fact, the federal government, which is a Conservative government—Industry Canada—has put out those same numbers.

The official opposition talks about creating a million jobs. They're not going to create a million jobs; a million jobs are being created in the next three or four years no matter who is in government or what happens. The private sector is doing that; that's the private sector's job.

So what is the government's job? What is our view of the challenges? I say this sincerely, because I think that if we come to an understanding between our two parties, we can solve these problems. We added 160,000 positions to our colleges and universities. We created the College of Trades to take us from 17,000 people entering the trades to 30,000. We expanded the education system, added early childhood education and increased spending on infrastructure from \$1.4 billion to \$14 billion. All the economists are telling us that the problem is that jobs are being created—as Tom Zizys says, we have a problem of jobs without people and people without jobs.

So we believe that this—which is somewhere between \$1.5 billion and \$2 billion, if it was a successful program—would actually not solve the problem, because it doesn't make anyone more skilled; it takes none of those workers. What you'll be doing at best, if you have the American experience, is take about 92% of the jobs—80% to 90% of the jobs are going to be created anyway. So you're creating something that revenue experts call freeloading. You have a tax incentive that is not actually producing an outcome. You're using tax dollars, or wasting them, to subsidize an activity that's going to happen anyway.

So I think we should probably decide what the problem is. Our challenge is: How do we fill those 800,000 new jobs when 80% of them require university and college education and about 20% of them require a skilled trade?

We think that money should be continued into infrastructure—maintain the expenditure—put it into training, expand programs like the Second Career program and try to add more university, college and trades.

I have a great deal of respect for my friend from Essex. I think he will tell you that there are a lot of shortages in the skilled trades right now. We have shortages in agriculture. The new food economy requires higher skills.

1420

We respect the intention of what the third party is doing. Our economic analysis of the problem is different, and our solution—

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

Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Mr. Speaker, the member from Niagara Falls and I were both elected on the same day, just last month, so I feel certain camaraderie with him, and I would have enjoyed supporting his first private member's bill. Unfortunately, I find myself unable to do so. Providing a job creator tax credit is just not a serious solution to Ontario's job crisis.

This idea was actually reviewed by the government's Jobs and Prosperity Council, led by former RBC chief Gord Nixon. On page 23 of their report, entitled *Advantage Ontario*, the council rejected this idea as unrealistic, saying, "The cost may be significantly greater than what has been estimated since the credit would apply to all new jobs created in the economy, not just net new jobs."

Furthermore, the council noted that the tax credit could be used to pay for jobs that would have been created without the credit, and it may be difficult to target export-based jobs or jobs in more productive sectors.

Finally, the council noted that the increase in compliance and reporting costs for businesses and added complexity to the tax system would be material and the burden on businesses would be increased, particularly to small and medium business operators, meaning that there would be enormous costs on top of the credit. That means additional red tape and bureaucracy to give business an incentive to hire new employees.

It seems to me that the member from Niagara Falls and the third party caucus are intent on creating more barriers to job growth, increasing taxes and more government spending.

The Jobs and Prosperity Council concluded that implementing a tax credit would result in significant fiscal risk and may not achieve the desired objective most efficiently.

Ontarians deserve a genuine jobs plan, not unrealistic gimmicks proposed by the member from Niagara Falls and the third party caucus. Since the McGuinty-Wynne government does not have a jobs plan—

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

The member for Niagara Falls, you have two minutes for a response.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I'd like to thank the members from Durham, Essex, Carleton-Mississippi Mills, Kitchener-Waterloo, Vaughan, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, and Thornhill. I'll try to do this as quick as I can.

First of all, I can tell the members here what's not working, and that's corporate tax cuts. They're not creating one job—\$770 million on that.

You brought up the prosperity council. I can tell you that several of those CEOs who sat on that panel have

actively embraced outsourcing our jobs. When you take a look at the wording in that thing, a lot of them were weak words—“may,” “could,” “might”—so I’m not so sure that’s a good example.

When you talk about other areas where it hasn’t worked or it doesn’t work, I can tell you that officials in Ohio have a similar credit system in place which they said was a key factor in the decision by Heinz to invest in the expansion in their state. Even while they closed operations in Ontario—now, they haven’t closed the entire operation. They brought some jobs back, but close to 500 jobs were lost at Heinz. When you say it’s not working, it’s working in six states currently today, so I’m not so sure that’s an accurate statement.

I would like to make a comment on the member from Durham who talked about the Niagara Falls riding. I appreciate the kind words, but I want to be clear not only to the member from Durham but the entire House. You’re right: I’m extremely passionate. I’m a strong voice for everybody in Niagara Falls. I was that when I was a city councillor, being elected for the last three and a half years. It was always about jobs.

I’d just like to close by saying that I hope my colleagues can support my motion. Collectively, we have an obligation to work together for our communities. But, more importantly, our children and our grandchildren need hope and a future—

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

REDUCING GRIDLOCK AND
IMPROVING TRAFFIC FLOW ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 VISANT À RÉDUIRE
L’ENGORGEMENT ROUTIER
ET À AMÉLIORER L’ÉCOULEMENT
DE LA CIRCULATION

Mrs. Martow moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 181, An Act to require the establishment of an advisory committee to make recommendations to the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for the improvement of highway incident management / Projet de loi 181, Loi exigeant la constitution d’un comité consultatif pour formuler des recommandations au ministre des Transports et au ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels en ce qui concerne l’amélioration de la gestion des incidents de la route.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Before I was sworn in, I sat with one of my staff members and the Clerk, who is not here right now—Ms. Deller—in her office. We were going over my roles and responsibilities as the newly elected member for Thorn-

hill. I was elected just this February and quickly given my ballot date for my first private member’s bill. I’m happy to advise the House that my staff and offices are up and running, and here we are today in the House debating that first private member’s bill, Bill 181, the Reducing Gridlock and Improving Traffic Flow Act, 2014.

Before I start talking about my bill, Bill 181, I’d like to thank a couple of people who assisted me in crafting this. First off, I want to thank Ms. Susan Klein, legislative counsel, and Mr. Alex Beduz, who is my caucus’s senior legislative adviser. Both assisted with the drafting and refinement of the bill for its debate today.

I commute from Thornhill every day. I drive, and often I take the subway. The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, who is contemplating leaving the room but may not now, was—

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I have to go to the bathroom.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Sorry; go ahead. Nature calls, I guess.

Some \$640 million is being spent in York region on bus lanes, as he’s aware, and he offered to me himself to come and review the situation in Thornhill. After numerous contacts with his office, we have not received a date, and I’m very disappointed. I know he’s busy—we’re all busy—but it was his generous offer to me. I’m looking forward to setting a date very soon to visit the gridlock in Thornhill. What his government’s funding and planning in York region is doing to create worse gridlock, not better gridlock.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities pegs the average commute time at 80 minutes for those who go to and from work in Toronto. This is much longer than North American cities like Los Angeles, which has an average commute time of 56 minutes, Vancouver at 67 minutes and New York City at 68 minutes.

My own parents, in their 70s, love to travel. They did travel fairly light. They had to get out of a taxicab half a mile from LAX, Los Angeles airport, and walk to the airport to make their flight because of the gridlock. That was about 20 years ago, and do you know what? Toronto is heading in the same direction. We have a lot to learn from California. They’re getting their debt under control, and we need to get ours under control as well.

In the Ontario PC Party’s Paths to Prosperity white papers, An Agenda for Growth and Building Great Cities, we discuss different options to address gridlock in Ontario. To alleviate traffic volumes, we suggest conducting road construction and maintenance work overnight. As well, we mention that we will clear accidents quicker to avoid dead stops in traffic that cause gridlock.

Another option that we should consider is having garbage collection done on arterial roads overnight, as opposed to during the business day, to reduce traffic volumes for all road users, whether they are drivers, passengers, public transit users, pedestrians or cyclists. Just this week, I saw two garbage trucks at 9:30 in the morning on Avenue Road picking up garbage. The traffic was backed up, and I asked myself: Why can’t it be done

the way it's done in the downtown core, where the garbage is collected overnight? All of New York City—on the main island, garbage is collected overnight. We have to accept that we're a major metropolis and start acting like it.

Those of us who drive to Queen's Park sometimes encounter a minor accident. You have traffic in front of you slowing down, sometimes at a standstill, looking at this visual distraction. Traffic in the opposite direction cannot help but look at the incident, slowing down the commute for all. Unfortunately, not everyone driving on our roads knows and follows the rules. For example, drivers who are involved in a minor accident may not be aware that if the damage to their vehicle is minor and if their automobiles are still operable, they are to drive to a local collision reporting centre to advise of the incident. They do not require the police to be at the scene of the accident to take down a report.

1430

That is why one of the four items I would like the advisory committee to make recommendations on is: "Providing public education programs to improve driver behaviour in circumstances involving highway incidents."

If drivers are aware of how to address minor accidents and where the local collision reporting centres are located, this will clear our roads in a timely fashion and reduce the onset of rubberneckers—the traffic in the opposite direction who slow down to look at the incident.

Presently, if drivers see an emergency vehicle coming towards them to attend to a situation, they are expected to safely pull over and let them through. We, as a government, should establish public awareness campaigns for this type of emergency response.

Furthermore, the government can increase its awareness with respect to distracted driving campaigns and not limit them to the Compass signage network.

With this in mind, the committee should also look into reducing the time for appropriate authorities to detect and verify highway incidents, and to clear highways after accidents occur. Police forces could develop protocols to address their response to highway incidents for all types of accidents, and they can include performance standards for the clearance of highways; use of special teams to expedite their response, investigation and clearance; along with enhancing their investigative techniques to ascertain how the incidents occurred.

If the information is provided in a timely and accurate manner, those who work in traffic incident management can advise commuters of this occurrences and road users can make accommodations to address these incidents. It can consist of informing motorists with Compass sign systems on our 400-series highways or the installation of mobile message signs by the proper authorities in advance of an upcoming accident.

Furthermore, by addressing gridlock, we are working towards making Ontario's highways safer and more secure. All of us—commuters, passengers, first responders, municipalities and, of course, those of us who work

in the Legislature—have a responsibility in addressing gridlock. In June 2011, the Toronto Board of Trade issued a report advising that gridlock is the greatest threat to economic prosperity in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, estimating that it costs \$6 billion in lost productivity each year. As much as gridlock is an economic issue, it is also a social and health issue that needs to be addressed.

Time is a precious commodity. We're losing quality time that could be spent with our families, with our friends, maybe time that we could spend exercising. I think even our pets with looking a little sad these days. Mine sure is.

Interjections.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Exactly. And we're missing important appointments and important life events because of the worsening gridlock, not to mention businesses that can't receive their deliveries or get their deliveries out on time.

We should do better, we can do better and we will do better. What I am asking the Ministers of Transportation and Community Safety and Correctional Services to do with the passage of Bill 181 is to convene an advisory committee within 60 days of my bill receiving royal assent. This committee would be comprised of individuals and staff who are experts in traffic incident management to look at these four issues that I've highlighted in my bill and for review. Here they are:

(1) Providing public education programs to improve driver behaviour in circumstances involving highway incidents.

(2) Reducing the time for appropriate authorities to detect and verify highway incidents and to clear highways after the occurrence of highway incidents.

(3) Providing timely and accurate information about highway incidents to drivers.

(4) Enhancing the safety and security of Ontario's highways.

The advisory committee has eight months to investigate these concerns. When they report back to the respective ministers on their recommendation, each minister will have 60 days to advise the assembly of what recommendations we will implement.

We all have our own worst story about being caught in gridlock. The problem is that we don't have any overflow roads. We are beyond capacity on our highways, and alternative routes aren't even available.

I recall a few years ago having to call somebody to replace me in carpool. I gave myself half an hour extra to get from Sunnybrook, where I was visiting my mother, to Bathurst and Finch to do my carpool, and the traffic wasn't moving. It didn't matter which road I tried to take. There didn't even seem to be an accident. I couldn't hear anything on the radio. It was 3:30 in the afternoon. Carpool pickup was only 4:30 and I had to call somebody to be there for me. That's very stressful and I think that's affecting everybody's health, not to mention the fumes that people are breathing in. I want to remind people that if there are holes in the undercarriage of your car and

you're sitting in traffic, you could be getting poisoned with carbon monoxide.

Gridlock affects all of us, regardless if we drive, take public transit, bike or walk to and from our place of destination. I would like the government to look at this issue and hope that all members support my bill, Bill 181, the Reducing Gridlock and Improving Traffic Flow Act, 2014.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I will be supporting the bill presented by the member from Thornhill, and I'm quite eager to send it to committee for discussion and to have a whole lot of people speak to the bill. I think the objectives are harmless enough and positive enough.

When she talks about the report from the advisory committee and what it would do: public education programs for driver behaviour—it's hard to disagree with that; reducing the time for authorities to detect incidents and clear highways—I think that's a useful suggestion; provide timely and accurate information on incidents to drivers—I think that's good; enhance highway safety and security—I think those objectives are quite reasonable. But to present this bill as a bill that would ease gridlock, I'm not quite sure. I think it would be helpful, but I think it disguises many other problems that need to be addressed, and this bill doesn't address many of the real problems of gridlock.

Yes, there have been fatalities all over Ontario in the past years and it's sad, of course. We have made some progress, including the OPP safety program that directs resources to high-risk highway areas to reduce collisions, and so all that is good. Some efforts have been made to deal with some aspects of highway incidents, and there's more to be done, to be sure. I think this bill, by way of this expert advisory council to look at more of these things—I think that's okay. But this is presented as a bill that would reduce gridlock, and that's where I have some of the problemos around it.

You'll recall that my colleague from Timmins–James Bay and my other colleagues from Timiskaming–Cochrane and Kenora–Rainy River and others from the north have raised the multiple problems we've had around northern road maintenance and how many of these services were privatized by the then Mike Harris regime, God bless his soul. They thought that would be the way to deal with some of the problems of the north, but we realized over the years—at least northern members have realized—that when we privatized or contracted out snowplowing services, that caused many more problems than we ever anticipated. Of course, they privatized the dispatch patrolling, which created additional problems. Actually, the Liberals thought that was a good idea and they kept with it over the years.

It took our members from northern Ontario years to try to persuade this minister and previous ministers to deal with this problem of contracting out services. It was pointed out that not only have we not solved problems; we created and aggravated new ones.

Finally, in 2013, the Minister of Transportation took note, as if somehow by divine guidance, and they're going to be moving on it. But it took many, many years for our members to push a little bit every year until they heard us.

I just wanted to remind the member from Thornhill that they were the ones who contracted out this particular service, but I also want to point out that this bill doesn't deal with the fact that the Progressive Conservative Party wants to cut the LRT projects in the GTA, particularly Hamilton and Hurontario–Main in Mississauga. That's concerning, because those are attempts by those municipalities to try to get people going by building LRT.

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We're hoping the provincial government is committed to these projects. I'm not quite sure, in Hamilton, whether they're committed or not, but we hope they are.

These are attempts to move people along.

When the Progressive Conservative Party talks about their desire to solve gridlock by finding billions of dollars in government waste, good luck; I don't know where they're going to find these billions of dollars to deal with waste and to deal with other social deficits that they and the Liberals have left us with in health, education and our social services. They're going to find billions for transit to solve gridlock, internally? By divine intervention, I'm certain they will find it—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: God bless.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm not sure they're going to find it. I am profoundly concerned that if this is the way to deal with gridlock, we are in deep doo-doo.

I think that this bill is okay. It's good. We could be pushing it along. But all I ask the member from Thornhill to do is not to present it as a way to solve gridlock.

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

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Speaker, I'm happy to rise today to speak to Bill 181, An Act to require the establishment of an advisory committee to make recommendations to the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for the improvement of highway incident management. It's the first bill presented, as she's new to the House, by the member from Thornhill. I want to congratulate her.

Speaker, this bill seeks to improve road safety for Ontarians, and that is something we can all agree on.

I agree with the member opposite that gridlock is a problem in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. However, the solution to that congestion problem is not what is being presented today in this bill. What is a solution to that gridlock problem is what our government has presented by way of Metrolinx, which is the Big Move. This is the greater Toronto and Hamilton area's regional transit plan, which is designed specifically to deal with the growing problem of congestion in our region. It looks to build a comprehensive, efficient network of multi-modal transit, transportation and cycling to get our region moving.

In fact, the Big Move requires the support of the other parties opposite in order for us to move forward with the investments that we need to make in infrastructure, and I think that that is the focus that we should be having in terms of fighting gridlock and congestion.

That said, I do believe that road safety and the well-being of Ontarians is something that is also very important, and that's a reason for us to examine the merits of Bill 181 more closely.

This bill may address things that are already covered, and I think we need to ensure that we are not duplicating what the Ministry of Transportation has already done or is in the process of doing. The Ministry of Transportation has run numerous public awareness campaigns on road safety, and has very strict regulations on impaired, distracted and aggressive drivers, which directly contribute to the protection of people on our roads in Ontario.

One of the key components of the bill, as it is proposed, is public awareness and education. However, our government currently maintains several public awareness campaigns directly targeted towards safety on our roads. In fact, we work very closely with over 150 road safety partners from right across this province. I just today met with MADD, one of those partners, which has been working relentlessly on how to improve safety on our roads in Ontario.

Furthermore, for the past 10 years, Ontario has ranked first or second in North America in terms of road safety. Our government continues to improve on road safety conditions by introducing important legislation like Bill 173, the Keeping Ontario's Roads Safe Act, 2014.

But despite this, far too many Ontarians are injured or fatally injured every year on our roads in Ontario due to accidents. On average, one person is killed every 15 hours, and that is unacceptable. On average, a person is injured on our roads every 8.1 minutes.

That is why our government is willing to work with opposition members, our stakeholders, the OPP and the local police to make Ontario roads safe—and in fact, even with individual drivers. This government is committed to enhancing the safety and security of the highway travel in this province in order to improve the lives of all Ontarians.

Bill 181 goes on to ask that the committee established, should this bill pass, recommend ways to provide more timely and accurate information about highway incidents and reducing the time for appropriate authorities to detect and to verify highway incidents. I would agree with that, that we need to have the best information possible that is disseminated to drivers to ensure that we keep our roads safe. This bill should continue past second reading to the committee stage in order for us to analyze if these aspects of the bill—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Should it go to second reading? What do you think? Should it go or not?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It should go so that we can do the deep analysis—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I'd ask the member to speak to the Chair and ignore the comments from the other side.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter:—so that we can further analyze the aspects of the bill that are already in place and that are being addressed and look for where there are gaps that exist so that we can continue to have safe roads here in Ontario, ensuring that we work very, very closely with the Ministry of Transportation.

So I do support moving this bill along into the committee stage so that we can further do this examination, and, should it pass the committee stage, that we will ensure that we have a bill that indeed will have the desired outcome of keeping Ontario's roads safe.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a great pleasure to be able to rise today and speak on behalf of the member from Thornhill's bill. This is her first private member's bill and, I congratulate her on—I haven't done it officially. I congratulate her on her election, as well as so quickly putting her first private member's bill out. It can be a little daunting, I know, when you're learning the ropes, but congratulations nonetheless.

This is actually a bill that is something I talk about quite often on my journeys to and from Barrie. As many people know in this House, travel on the 400 is sometimes quite arduous, especially in the wintertime. There's a section of the 400 we call kind of the Bermuda triangle of the 400, where, between Highways 88 and 89, there are constantly accidents on a beautiful stretch of road that—

Interjection.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Sorry, the member from York-Simcoe's riding. This stretch of highway has this bizarre history of accidents on it for no reason. It's actually a clear strip of road that has no bizarre obstacles or anything about it, but there always seem to be closures on this road.

What I find interesting about this bill is its specific nature in dealing with incidents on the road. We're not just talking about highway safety, which is of course important, but we're talking about keeping traffic moving, which I think is the focus of this bill: to make sure that on our 400-series highways and other highways, especially in and around the GTA, we keep traffic moving. We know that a lot of times, a lot of our gridlock and a lot of the traffic is caused by people watching, rubbernecking, and accident investigations taking much longer than they need to take. In many cases, they take hours and hours.

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If we start to apply a little bit of pressure, if we start to make sure that investigators—the police—and emergency services are able to do their job properly but do it quickly—it is something that we need to focus on as well, to keep our economy moving, to keep people from creating more accidents through frustration and other things. This bill certainly addresses that in such a specific way that I think it makes it very unique.

We know that there's billions of dollars—I think specifically \$6 billion—lost annually in gridlock. Whatever we can do to make sure that we reduce the amount of incidents, for starters, but also make sure people know what to do when there is an incident on the highway, how they behave and the importance of moving along, maybe even modifying our responses, so that we keep our traffic moving, so that our economy can keep moving, so people can get home to their families or get to work on time and goods can get to market faster—anything that can make that happen I think is a positive thing. I think this bill goes a long way to making that happen, and I commend the member for her efforts to do that, because this is something a lot of people think about but not a lot of people put their heads to how to get it done.

When you look at some of the stats in North America, we have the longest commute times in North America. A lot of people think of LA when they think of gridlock; it's actually Toronto and the GTA that's got the most gridlock—80 minutes, compared to Los Angeles with 56 minutes and Vancouver with 67. So we obviously have a lot of work to do here. It's not going to happen through education alone; it's going to happen through awareness and it's going to happen through trying to modify our responses to these incidents as well.

With that said, Speaker, I want to leave some time for my colleagues to speak to this as well. I look forward to the debate and I look forward to supporting this bill when it comes to a vote today.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'm glad for the opportunity to rise and speak in the House on private member's Bill 181. The bill, of course, was introduced by the new member from Thornhill, and I want to congratulate the member on the introduction of her first private member's bill. This seems to be a good one.

I think we can all agree in the House that governments do have an important role to play in improving road safety at all levels, whether it's municipal, provincial or federal. I think Ontario has made significant changes over the years to improve road safety, things such as the mandatory wearing of seatbelts, mandatory use of booster seats, stiffer penalties for street racing, and banning handheld devices while driving.

You know, Speaker, in doing research on traffic injuries, I came across some very interesting statistics from the Traffic Injury Research Foundation. According to the foundation, one out of every two Canadians will be injured in a road crash during their lifetime; almost 40% of all traffic fatalities result from road crashes—actually, road crashes are actually the leading cause of death for Canadians under the age of 40; traffic collisions are the third leading cause of death in Canada; nearly one in every 100 people in this country will be killed or injured on our roads; and road crashes claim nearly 3,000 lives and injure 200,000 people in Canada every year.

Road safety is paramount. Our lives do depend on it. We have millions of Ontarians who take to our roads

every day. Everyone wants to get from point A to point B, and they want to get there just as fast as they can. We also know of the immeasurable pain and loss endured by crash victims and their families. I'll bet you everyone in this House knows someone personally or knows of someone who has lost a family member or a friend in a traffic accident.

I know one story that my constituents remember well: the traffic pileup on the 401 just outside of my riding of Windsor–Tecumseh in the early hours of September 3, 1999. It was a Friday in the long Labour Day weekend. I was a reporter at the time—a video journalist. I had my gear in the truck, but I had taken that day off, for an extra long weekend, so I wasn't called out to the story. A blanket of fog rolled in over the 401. Drivers kept going, unaware that they couldn't see where they were going when they hit that wall of fog—fathers, mothers, sons, daughters, aunts, uncles, grandparents.

What followed would come to be regarded as one of the worst accidents in Ontario's history. When the fog had cleared, 87 vehicles were either damaged or destroyed, 40 people were injured and eight people had perished. Survivors will never be able to forget the anguished cries and screams. The 87 vehicles involved were a mass of crumpled metal and burning plastic. It was a tragic scene, Speaker.

I know some of the victims, people who still bear the scars of that terrible tragedy. In fact, I had one of the survivors in my office just this week. I praise the first responders and the civilians who assisted those in need that day. You never really get over something like that.

Our first responders do a remarkable job of keeping the highways safe, and the member for Parkdale–High Park has been a relentless advocate for recognizing the contributions of our first responders and the elevated mental health risks they face in the line of duty each and every day. Her Bill 67, which provides presumptive PTSD coverage for first responders, passed second reading on February 27, and we thank her for her contributions.

Back to the bill, Speaker: I like the fact that it clearly delineates timelines. That mechanism will be worked out in committee. The OPP is involved in it, and that's a very good thing as well.

The committee will analyze highway incident management, develop a program to improve highway incident management and report back within eight months of the establishment of the committee. That'll be good.

I just want to shift gears quickly, Speaker, in the little time I have left.

The term “gridlock” came into being in the 1980s, when a guy I know by the name of Sam Schwartz, Gridlock Sam, coined it down in New York City. He was a former traffic commissioner down there. We hired Sam as a traffic expert—a gridlock expert—in Windsor during the Herb Gray Parkway construction project. The government of the day wanted 12 lanes of traffic, six in each direction—no bridges, no tunnels, no overpasses, no walking trails. Sam came up with a plan. Eventually,

after a lot of public pressure and public participation, the government accepted it.

Thank you to Gridlock Sam for his pioneering work, and thank you to Gridlock Gila for coming up with this private member's bill.

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

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Speaker, I'm really pleased to rise and speak on Bill 181, An Act to require the establishment of an advisory committee to make recommendations to the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for the improvement of highway incident management.

I would like to begin by congratulating the member on her first private member's bill. I have to say that I think it has been barely, what, a month? I know that in my first month, I was nowhere near being ready. I didn't know what a PMB was, never mind introducing one. So, well done.

I also want to let the member know that I actually happen to agree with her stated goal, which I read here: Reducing Gridlock and Improving Traffic Flow. How can you not? What's not to like about that? What I'm not so sure about, though, is the means.

I have to say, Speaker, that when I first heard about the act, I was a little surprised. I actually said to Ryan, "Are you sure this is a PC member's bill?" When I read the words "An Act to require the establishment of an advisory committee," this is the sort of thing that the party opposite has railed against repeatedly and has said it is a waste of time to have any kind of committee, any kind of consultation. It's refreshing to see that a member is bringing forward the idea that we need to consult and that we need advisory panels.

But I think there's a double standard here, because when we do it, it's all wrong. Suddenly, when I hear the members opposite bringing a bill forward on this topic and hearing them support it, I'm a little confused as to where they stand on the issue. Nonetheless, I'm pleased that they do think that there is a role for citizens' panels and there is a role for consultation with government.

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I am, I have to say, a little bit concerned when I read that the Lieutenant Governor in Council may, by regulation, prescribe remuneration and payment of expenses for committee reports. I'm all for citizens' panels, but I want some clarification as to whether this is remuneration just for their out-of-pocket expenses to come to our committee or if this is remuneration for their services, and what that means to the taxpayer. I look forward to hearing some clarification.

I have to agree with my colleague here, the member for Scarborough–Guildwood, as well as some of the NDP members who said that if our goal is indeed to reduce gridlock and improve traffic flow, is this the best use, is this the best way to do it?

I'm interested when the member opposite says, "Reducing the time for appropriate authorities to detect and verify highway incidents...." I want to know if this is

based on some empirical evidence. Is there a jurisdictional analysis that shows that the response time in Ontario is significantly slower than other jurisdictions? I'm not saying it is or it isn't, but I'm just looking for some context and evidence that show that indeed we need to do that, because perhaps Ontario is already on the leading edge on this. Or is it not? That sort of information would be most useful.

Again, as I said in starting, in principle I support it, but as always, the devil is in the details. I think context is always important. We have to view this initiative in the context that Ontario today has one of the safest road systems in the world. I think that I heard the member from Scarborough–Guildwood say as well that for the last 12 years Ontario has been ranked either first or second in North America for road safety.

Certainly legislation plays a role. We've recently brought forward some more legislation, the Road Safety Act, which looks to rein in distracted driving. But I think the single most important tool that all of us have to improve road safety is simply driver education. The reason Ontario has done so well is because government has partnered with associations like MADD and the CAA. Drunk driving comes down not just because you have a breath analyzer; drunk driving comes down not just because you get demerit points; it comes down because of education. This is something that we have done well, and the evidence is in the fact that we have for the last 12 years ranked either first or second in North America, keeping in mind that many of our roads in northern Ontario are in probably the toughest climate. It's not California with 365 days of clear weather. Despite having very rough terrain and weather, we have managed this very creditable safety as a jurisdiction, so clearly we have been doing a lot of things right.

So while I support the bill in principle, I think it would be nice to have some evidence to suggest that we really need to work further, that we as a jurisdiction are somehow falling behind in our response rates. But once again, I congratulate the member for trying. This is a very good topic to tackle, and I look forward to the rest of the debate.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure and an honour this afternoon to follow up on the remarks by our newly elected member from Thornhill, Mrs. Martow. Congratulations on a very thoughtful presentation. Your remarks this afternoon show that you brought the policy into reality, explaining your mother going to the hospital and you trying to catch your connections. It really does show that you represent the people as a voice for the people of Thornhill. Again, after such a short period of time, I find that in the House and in caucus your effectiveness is remarkable, and so quickly. It shows that you are a very professional woman. Welcome.

I think that quite quickly, in this short period of time, she summarized and established the need for a recognition that gridlock is a drag on the economy—as she states

it, \$6 billion. One has to ask oneself what the current government is doing, especially the Minister of Transportation—nothing but talk so far. Yes, they're putting money in. What government hasn't put money in?

But having the soft strategies is what she's bringing to the discussion. What she really wants to do is establish an advisory committee that would—I believe it's eight months in the bill itself—look into four particular issues. I think the fact that she categorized where she feels the best return would be for the investment of expertise and people's time is of value.

I can say that she started with the primary beginning of education and educating the driver today, the person behind the wheel—that's an important point of view—and looking at accidents and incident management. That's been looked at in other jurisdictions, and I think you referenced Los Angeles and how one time your parents had to walk to the airport from the taxi, the gridlock was so bad.

We have a report in our policy booklet. I encourage the viewer to get a handle on this. It's *Paths to Prosperity: Building Great Cities*. There's quite an important section in this book and I would just point it out, about getting around in other large cities and where Ontario stands. There are two very important recommendations in this that follow up very nicely on the points that the member from Thornhill is making. She talks about travel times to work and other functions in various large cities.

I thought the practical suggestions she brought forward are the kinds of ideas that are missing from the discussions I hear from the Minister of Transportation. Looking at New York City was one of your examples, of having the garbage collection in the commercial areas at night when there's no gridlock. What a novel idea. It's so simple. Why don't we just do it?

Accident reporting of minor events: There's not enough. Perhaps the insurance companies could follow up and put it in your bill that if it's a minor accident under \$1,000 or something, go to a reporting centre. Maybe they could even provide a better service.

It's that dialogue, that education, that's paramount in everything she's saying. That could all be incorporated into driver education, all of that information. But incident management, I think, is where she has the best advantage in her bill. I can assure you that I will be supporting it.

I will also comment on her contribution because, during her election, a great amount of time was spent on the gridlock question and about public transit. Our policies within *Paths to Prosperity* recognize the differences, and we will move forward with an aggressive plan for Ontario to lead again.

Thank you for your bill; it's a worthwhile read.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to stand and speak in support of Bill 181, the Reducing Gridlock and Improving Traffic Flow Act. Particularly, I want to applaud the effort of my colleague, the member from Thornhill. As others have remarked already today, she is newly arrived here at Queen's Park and here she is with her first

private member's bill. I think that around the chamber today, most of us would agree that this is certainly a timely thing for discussion.

Many of us are commuters. The member for Barrie talked about a section of the 400 that he drives through that's in my riding, and I certainly have had many, many hours sitting on the highways and byways in gridlock. I have witnessed roads that had exceeded their safe capacity decades ago. It seems like it's just getting worse.

It makes you feel better—not much, but a little better—when, as a participant in this gridlock, you estimate the kind of cost that would be involved. But when you see it written down, that it's \$6 billion a year, it gives you a sense of, “Well, it isn't just my imagination and it's not just my frustration. This is very real.” It discourages the economy.

I think in looking at the suggestion of this bill today, we need to look at: How do we get to this place? I already mentioned that roads have been over capacity for decades, and when we look back, it's interesting to note that when you look over the last 50 years, most of the infrastructure was done during the time of Progressive Conservative governments, and when we look at the kinds of things that limit us today, those are in fact the roadways that were put here 30 or 40 years ago, and somehow, despite the increase in our population, they are still there.

1510

I think one of the things about gridlock that doesn't get referred to often enough is the impact on air pollution. I would say that, regularly, my trip here is one hour longer than it should be, and that's assuming that the weather isn't too bad or that there hasn't been a closure. It's just simply volume. So when you think of spending one more hour every single trip than you need to, and your car is running—I rest my case. The idea that I could drive for an hour instead of sit for an hour would make a huge difference, never mind to the wear and tear on my car.

The other point she raised was the question of highway incidents, and in the moment I have I would just like to indicate support for the mechanisms that she has put in place here, because there are other jurisdictions who have beat us to the draw, so to speak, in coming up with efficient methods of getting vehicles off the road. In some cases, they are years ahead of us on this.

I think the notion that the member brings in terms of bringing people together who are experts—the OPP, the appropriate ministers—would create the kind of management and oversight that would lead to some significant benefits to come from such a bill.

So I want to congratulate the member from Thornhill and urge everyone to support this bill.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to first thank my caucus colleagues, the member for Barrie, the member for Durham and the member for York-Simcoe, for speaking in support of my bill, which is Bill 181.

I want to address some of the comments made by the other parties—also my colleagues, of course, in the room.

I'll address first, very quickly, the member for Windsor–Tecumseh. He brought up an important point, which is that the cost is much more than economical; the cost is lost lives, lost family members, and, of course, without sounding too jaded, the cost to our health care system as well. So we should consider that.

The member from Scarborough–Guildwood mentioned Metrolinx and the Big Move, and are we possibly duplicating, with this bill, other things? No, because this bill is not concentrating just on road safety; it's concentrating on the flow of traffic, getting people where they need to go, where they want to go—and goods and services as well. I had high hopes for the Big Move, but unfortunately, seeing \$640 million being spent on east-west bus lanes instead of getting the subway north on Yonge is a little disappointing, as you can imagine, to all the residents in Thornhill.

The member from Trinity–Spadina spoke very nicely; thank you very much. It's really about getting those collisions cleared quickly and educating people that they don't have to sit and wait for police officers if it's just a minor collision. Get off the road. The cost is too high for safety, because they're blocking traffic, as well as lost productivity.

To the member from Mississauga East, I would just want to mention that I believe it was last year that a Honda Civic sat on the 401 refusing to move even though there was a tow truck there, because the driver wanted to wait for his free CAA tow truck. I've already spoken to CAA in York region about the issue, and they agreed that they would like to be involved in this advisory committee to see if something could be worked out where other tow trucks could be reimbursed—

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you very much. Wait: One more point?

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

Pursuant to the order of the House dated March 26, 2014, the time provided for private members' public business has expired.

JOB CREATION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 82, standing in the name of Mr. Gates.

Mr. Gates has moved private members' notice of motion number 65. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We'll take the vote at the end of private members' business.

REDUCING GRIDLOCK AND IMPROVING TRAFFIC FLOW ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 VISANT À RÉDUIRE L'ENGORGEMENT ROUTIER ET À AMÉLIORER L'ÉCOULEMENT DE LA CIRCULATION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Martow has moved second reading of Bill 181, An Act to require the establishment of an advisory committee to make recommendations to the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for the improvement of highway incident management. 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 bill is being referred to—and I refer to the member to for Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Social policy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to social policy. Agreed? Agreed.

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

The division bells rang from 1516 to 1521.

JOB CREATION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Gates has moved private members' notice of motion number 65. All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Campbell, Sarah	Horwath, Andrea	Tabuns, Peter
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Taylor, Monique
Forster, Cindy	Miller, Paul	Vanthof, John
Gates, Wayne	Natyshak, Taras	
Hatfield, Percy	Prue, Michael	

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Hardeman, Ernie	Meilleur, Madeleine
Arnott, Ted	Holyday, Douglas C.	Milloy, John
Cansfield, Donna H.	Hoskins, Eric	Moridi, Reza
Chan, Michael	Hunter, Mitzie	Munro, Julia
Chiarelli, Bob	Jackson, Rod	Murray, Glen R.
Chudleigh, Ted	Jaczek, Helena	Naqvi, Yasir
Clark, Steve	Kwinter, Monte	Nicholls, Rick
Coteau, Michael	Leal, Jeff	O'Toole, John
Crack, Grant	Leone, Rob	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	Pettapiece, Randy
Del Duca, Steven	MacLaren, Jack	Qaadri, Shafiq
Delaney, Bob	Mangat, Amrit	Sergio, Mario
Dhillon, Vic	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Todd
Duguid, Brad	McKenna, Jane	Walker, Bill
Elliott, Christine	McMeekin, Ted	Wilson, Jim
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	McNeely, Phil	Wong, Soo

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 13; the nays are 48.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

Interjections.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INFRASTRUCTURE FOR JOBS AND PROSPERITY ACT, 2014

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 19, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): When we last debated this item, we had gone to further debate. It's the NDP's turn. The member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm happy to talk to Bill 141, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act. I want to start by saying that this is a feel-good kind of bill. I want to review the feel-good elements of it. When I first saw this bill, I said, what the heck is in it? It didn't appear as if it had much that was important. But then you look through it and you say, "Okay, let me review them one by one."

It says that all broader public sector entities must consider a special list of infrastructure planning principles when making decisions related to infrastructure. These principles include things like taking a long-term view—which is a good thing, by the way—and that decision-makers should take into account the needs of Ontarians by being mindful of demographic and economic trends in Ontario. Okay. That's good.

By the way, the idea of taking a long-term view of a contract when you give it out to the private sector is a suggestion that is made by the Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario. They've been saying this for a while.

Others have been saying it—people like the Vancouver Island Construction Association: "Our research demonstrates that the effect of project bundling on construction procurement is to unintentionally shut out small and medium-sized domestic contractors ... from competing, thereby reducing the pool of competitors to the very select few. It logically follows that the resulting reduction in competition leads to higher bid prices overall. This method of procuring construction generates a perverse result, and undermines the very foundation of the public procurement process."

That's one of the quotes that I want to speak to. It wasn't the exact quote I was looking for, but it speaks to the whole issue of taking into account the whole lifespan of the project when we assess the total value of a project. It's a good thing, and it's good that the government is listening to the Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario.

The second one is that the Minister of Infrastructure must periodically develop a 10-year infrastructure plan, providing a description of the government's anticipated infrastructure needs and a strategy to meet those needs. Each long-term infrastructure plan must be made public. Okay, that's good. I'm not sure how radical this whole thing is, but this is okay.

The government must consider a specified list of criteria when evaluating and prioritizing proposed projects for the construction of infrastructure assets. Criteria include whether the project fits in with municipal plans. Okay. It's nothing radical, but there you have it.

Subject to specifics in regulation to be developed, the government must require that architects and other design professionals relating to infrastructure be involved in the design of infrastructure assets. I say, yes, that's good. It's something that the Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario has been saying for quite some time. Finally, the government, through this minister, has decided to reflect their views in a bill, so that they bring them along and say to them, "We're on your side. We've got a bill that says we've been listening to you." That's good.

The government must require that certain numbers of apprentices be employed in the construction or maintenance of infrastructure projects, and that number would be prescribed in legislation. This is good, too. It's something that many of the construction trades have been pushing for, and that labour groups in general have been pushing for.

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So the minister has been listening, and I say that this is good. He's got a bill to reflect that, as a way of saying to the construction trades, "We're listening to you." But it's a feel-good kind of thing.

The final thing is, the bill provides the regulatory authority for the Minister of Infrastructure to establish a regulation on almost any infrastructure issue imaginable. The ministry must consult with relevant stakeholders before a regulation is made under the act—I say, okay; something you expect the government to do. But that is, in essence, the effect of the bill. There ain't much in it, which is why I wanted to make reference to each of the main points of the bill.

Ultimately not revolutionary, not radical, but it's an attempt to get the Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario on board, an attempt to get some of the construction trades on board before a possible election—dare I say?—because it could happen. So this is a timely bill. It may not even see the light of the day, but it's a good way to say to these people, "Look, I'm on your side. I'm listening. In case there's an election, please don't vote

against us. If you help us, we could get this bill through because we're listening to you."

The real problem is that this government is completely committed to public-private partnerships, instituted by the Conservative Party, which now have a different name introduced by the Liberals because they wanted to put their own brand on it. So it's called alternative financing procurement, but it's the same—

Interjection: Thing.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —thing. I was looking for a nasty word. It's the same thing with a different name, one introduced by my fine Tory friends and the other by the Liberals to make it appear, by changing the name, as if it's something totally different. There is no difference whatsoever except the name.

I've got to tell you, Speaker: This Liberal government is completely committed—I quote from ReNew Canada Infrastructure Magazine, where the Premier says, "People have seen there is nothing to fear with AFP [alternative financing and procurement]. We're now expanding the AFP program. If not, the economy will stagnate." She is completely committed to the privatization of our infrastructure programming.

What she's saying is, public procurement doesn't work, and what she's saying is, public procurement is not the way to go. The way to go is to give it away to those big conglomerates to do the job, which is something this Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation is committed to. I quoted the Premier as a way of telling you that they're not changing direction.

Public procurement, for New Democrats, is the way to go. We believe in infrastructure spending. We do not believe that sending it to a private conglomerate will do the job.

The Eglinton Crosstown has been given away to a big conglomerate. They were going to have five bidders—or at least they were expecting to have five bidders. They only have two, and the government, through Metrolinx and Infrastructure Ontario, more or less said, "Two is okay." Normally you're looking for five big bidders. They're not there. You only got two bidders, and Metrolinx said, "It's okay." The minister said, "That's okay."

But you're giving it away to conglomerates. By so doing, you have critics such as the one I quoted earlier in British Columbia and this group called the Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario that said, "If we do this, we will be giving away \$500 million, wasted dollars that will go in the deep pockets of the conglomerates, and many of these small construction and design folks are going to be shut out."

Privatization means that when you shift the risk from public procurement and you shift it away by giving it to a private enterprise, what they do, in general, is put a high-risk factor that makes it possible for the private sector to have a better bid process because they put a high-risk premium to make it look good.

What that means is that we're giving away a lot of our own dollars—yours, Speaker, mine and the general public's. We're giving it away to the multinationals that go

you-know-where, in every possible pocket imaginable except yours, mine and the general public's. That's what P3s do. You're giving away the public's money to a private enterprise to do the job that government can do as effectively, if not cheaper.

Infrastructure Ontario should use the expertise they have gathered over the years and make sure that expertise is put in public procurement enterprise. That's what we need to do and that's what this bill doesn't speak to.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to follow the member from Trinity-Spadina. I just love his passion and how he comes around talking about this particular bill. I just want to remind the member opposite there are five components to the proposed Bill 141.

One piece I wanted to speak to is about the whole issue of skills training and apprenticeship. I would like to challenge the member opposite because, at the end of the day, we're all concerned in this House about youth unemployment and unemployment rates across the province. If this bill passes, we will be addressing engaging apprentices, and, in terms of construction, having that conversation about infrastructure projects. How can the member opposite not be supportive of this portion of the bill?

The other piece of Bill 141 is about long-term planning. Often communities say, "What is your government"—not just our government but previous governments—"doing in terms of infrastructure projects?" It is the right thing to do to plan long term so that we have long-term strategies, and not just about planning across Ontario but also funding those initiatives. Look at the traffic gridlock concerns every member has in this province. The challenge is that when we don't do proper planning, we have a challenge.

I encourage the member opposite to support the bill because we need to bring forward legislation to talk about infrastructure across the province.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I might say, on a Thursday afternoon, when many members have a break and head for the cottage or whatever they do—well, not a cottage today, but somewhere—to the ski chalet.

I know just how effective a speaker the member from Trinity-Spadina is. I'm here to compliment him on his remarks, not to agree with them. That's the subtle difference. Generally, I find him an inclusive person. But when you look at the details of the bill, in my view—our intention is to support it. I should be clear on that. But when you look at the jobs and prosperity record, there are more people leaving than coming. A lot of it has to do with no vision and no plan. They're actually in defence mode almost continuously here.

The Pan American Games should be a celebration. Indeed, it is a celebration. It's being mismanaged. There's just one example that will create economic activity within the province, within the country, perhaps, and rec-

ognize the future for Ontario—not just Toronto—as a place to be. But then if you look further just at the incidents today on the handling of that file and the last election file, where they had the two gas plants cancelled and there are two investigations—it's dragging all of us down.

I know the member from Trinity–Spadina was talking about infrastructure on Bill 141, but in that climate it's hard to be optimistic. It really is. It actually saddens me to think that so much could be done and it's not being done.

Our Ring of Fire, an opportunity to create prosperity for the indigenous people of Canada—they've walked away from it. There's no climate here for prosperity. This Bill 141—we need to talk about it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further questions and comments? The member for Trinity–Spadina—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Parkdale–High Park.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: We're close, Mr. Speaker, but we're not the same thing.

I just want to, first of all, commend the member from Trinity–Spadina. It's always fun to listen to him. It's not only passion; it's actually good research.

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Just to build a little bit on what he's saying: When we look at the private part of private-public partnerships—I used to have my own company; I know how companies work—there's nothing wrong with it, but you don't run companies if you don't expect to make a profit. The question is, where is that profit coming from, and where should it go? Really, what he's arguing is that that profit, when it comes to public infrastructure development, should really go back to the public that is funding it in the first place. That's number one.

The other thing that you find often with public-private partnerships is that the treatment of the staff and the payment of the staff is a little bit different too, because if we look at some of the examples where governments have given over their responsibilities—the way I would characterize it—to private companies, you'll see that the first things that go are the standards of pay, the benefits for the labourers. That's also part of private-public partnerships.

You know, tax dollars are precious. I think really very few people—perhaps a few people on this side, certainly in the New Democratic Party—see them as precious. They're precious dollars, dollars entrusted to us. They shouldn't end up in a CEO's pocket or in a shareholder's pocket that's not part of the public. Any profit that is made needs to come back here, and that's the underlying principle of what we're saying here. Nothing wrong with making a profit, nothing wrong with business, but don't make it at the public's expense; that's the point. And no company goes into a deal—no good company—unless they expect to make a profit. That's the logic here, and somehow the Liberals just don't see that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? The Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I did enjoy the comments this afternoon from the member from Trinity–Spadina. Unlike others in this House, I happen to be an optimist. I mean, there's no better place in the world to be than in the province of Ontario, and particularly my hometown of Peterborough.

I want to make a little plug here. Later today, I will be dropping the puck at the Evinrude Centre in Peterborough for the 40th anniversary of the Ministry of Natural Resources hockey tournament in Peterborough. It will be a great hockey tournament. People from north, south, east and west will all be convening in Peterborough at 7 p.m. this evening to see Mayor Bennett and I and the deputy minister, Mr. O'Toole—not this John O'Toole from Durham, but the deputy minister from MNR; I just wanted to clarify that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to return to the bill that is in front of us.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I will be dropping that puck for the MNR hockey tournament.

Now, to get back to Bill 141, this is an amazing piece of legislation, because one of the most important things in the province of Ontario is infrastructure. Just today, my colleague—our colleague—the member from Scarborough–Guildwood talked about the 60th anniversary of the subway in Toronto. Of course, Leslie Frost was the Premier at that particular time. Like us, he had a vision for the province of Ontario to invest in infrastructure, and of course, Mr. Frost was right next door to me. His riding then was Victoria–Haliburton, which includes the great community of Lindsay. So we're emulating the kind of vision that he had some 60 years ago today with our Bill 141 to provide a framework going forward, an infrastructure that Ontarians and indeed Peterboroughians count on each and every day to live, work and play, to do their business and get to where they want to go.

So this is important legislation. At some stage, it will be amended, I suspect, and then we can move forward for part of our brighter future right here in Ontario. It's a good bill. Minister Murray should be saluted for bringing it forward.

And, folks, get to see that MNR hockey tournament over the weekend in Peterborough.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I thank all those who have spoken, but I want to say to the member from Peterborough: This is not an amazing piece of work. It's not amazing. This is just an okay bill, and it's a feel-good bill designed to make some sectors feel good before an election. That's all it is.

The whole idea of infrastructure spending, for New Democrats, is important, and it is good to do. The question is how you do it, and this Liberal government is the most committed to the P3s, public-private partnerships. We're not against the private sector building, because whether we, the public sector, do it or whether we give it

away to a conglomerate, it's going to be the private sector. The question is, who manages it?

I argue, and New Democrats argue, that the public procurement management works better, and it's more effective, in my view, and it's cheaper for the citizens and the taxpayers of Ontario. It is not cheaper to do it the way the Liberals and the Tories have been doing it provincially and federally.

Infrastructure Ontario is completely committed to P3s. So is the Minister of Transportation, and the Liberal government, and, as I quoted, the Premier. They're all committed to this.

There is no independent group that can independently verify the value-for-money audits. They are all supporters of P3s, because they make a whole lot of money supporting P3s, from lawyers to consultants to everybody connected to this. There's a whole lot of pecunia to be made.

I'm telling you, the public sector procurement is the most efficient way to do it. If we do not do that, we're saddling the taxpayers with a whole lot of debt.

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

Mr. Ted Arnott: As we know, normally in debate, we go in rotation. After the New Democrats speak, there's a Liberal speaker, a government speaker. Unfortunately, no one stood up. I hope that they are participating in this debate this afternoon, although I gather that they are somewhat distracted by the events that transpired late in question period and the disclosure that, according to the Toronto Star, police allege that Dalton McGuinty's computers were wiped of gas plant info. Our colleague the member for Nepean–Carleton asked, I think, a very appropriate and pertinent question.

I gather that the Premier spoke to the news media this afternoon. Unfortunately, I didn't have the chance to see what she said.

Mr. John O'Toole: She wouldn't take questions.

Mr. Ted Arnott: She didn't take questions and went right back into her office, so it would appear the government is on the defensive—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I ask the member to speak to the bill that's in front of us.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Well, I agree with your interpretation in that respect, Mr. Speaker, but, of course, this comes back to an infrastructure project, which was the gas plants that were planned for Oakville and Mississauga. Of course, the government decided to cancel those gas plants. Those are certainly infrastructure projects, I think, by anybody's definition. We are discussing an infrastructure bill this afternoon, Bill 141. As you know, Mr. Speaker, those decisions seem to be of concern, obviously, to the people of Ontario, because there was a \$1.1-billion charge to the taxpayers and the ratepayers of Ontario for those cancellations. They appear to have been political decisions—at least, the government certainly has said that they were political decisions intended to support the Liberal candidates in those ridings. It is a very serious concern. I think people in Ontario would expect that we

would be discussing this issue in debate today. Certainly, that's what I wanted to start my comments with.

As you said, Mr. Speaker, we are debating Bill 141, and I want to respect your ruling in that respect. This is Bill 141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2013, to establish mechanisms to encourage principled, evidence-based and strategic long-term infrastructure planning that supports job creation and training opportunities, economic growth and protection of the environment, and to incorporate design excellence into infrastructure planning.

Our caucus critic for infrastructure and transportation, the member for Newmarket–Aurora, led off the debate for our caucus. In the context of this debate, he made some great points, I thought. He indicated that our caucus supports the principles advanced in the proposed legislation, such as:

- the need for long-term planning for infrastructure;
- that infrastructure investment should be prioritized, based on a specified list of criteria;
- that we should know the current state of all government-owned infrastructure assets; and
- that the government should publish, at a minimum, a 10-year plan setting out the anticipated infrastructure needs, with a strategy to meet those needs.

Certainly, the government would have us believe that this is a great bill.

I was looking at it again, just a few minutes ago, before I had the chance to speak to it. Reading the explanatory note, the bill indicates that, if passed, the government would be required to consider a specified list of infrastructure planning principles when making decisions respecting infrastructure.

Some of the principles that are outlined in the bill are:

- that the government should take a long-term view;
- that the government should be mindful of demographic and economic trends in the province of Ontario;
- that infrastructure planning and investment should take into account any applicable budgets or fiscal plans, such as fiscal plans released under the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act;

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- that priorities should be clearly identified;
- that there should be continued provision of core public services, like health and education; and
- that infrastructure planning and investment should promote economic competitiveness, prosperity, productivity, job creation and training opportunities, etc.

All of this sounds fine to me and I think would meet with the approval of my constituents in Wellington–Halton Hills, whom I am privileged to serve.

The second part of the bill suggests that the Minister of Infrastructure should periodically develop a long-term infrastructure plan setting out, among other things, a description of the current state of wholly or partly government-owned infrastructure assets, which would include the anticipated infrastructure needs for at least the next 10 years and a strategy to deal with those needs—again, I think that's a reasonable proposition—and that

“The government must consider a specified list of criteria when evaluating and prioritizing proposed projects for the construction of infrastructure assets,” which takes us to section 6 of the bill. Certainly, those are, I think, reasonable suggestions as well, including criteria for prioritizing foundational infrastructure projects: that there needs to be a long-term return on the investment and that it stimulate productivity and economic competitiveness, maximize tax assessment values and tax base growth, support any other public policy goals of the government of Ontario or of any affected municipalities, and provide a foundation for further infrastructure projects.

Again, I think those are reasonable things.

Part 4 of the bill: “Subject to specified limitations, the government must require that architects and persons with demonstrable expertise in and experience with design relating to infrastructure assets be involved in the design of certain infrastructure assets.” The bill would compel the government to “require that certain numbers of apprentices be employed or engaged in the construction or maintenance by the government of infrastructure assets,” and that “The Minister of Infrastructure must consult with potentially affected persons or bodies before a regulation may be made under the act.”

All of these principles that are outlined in the bill, I suspect, could be adhered to without the bill. The government, as a matter of policy and as a matter of its normal way of doing things with respect to infrastructure planning, could do all of this without Bill 141, I would submit. If I’m wrong in that, I would certainly look to the government side to point out how it is wrong. I don’t see why they couldn’t adhere to this as policy without having a framework in legislation.

We would also, as a caucus, point out the fact that the legislation fails to mandate any specific measures that would enable the practical implementation of the proposed principles, and that is a point that our critic, I think, made very clearly when he spoke to this bill at leadoff for our caucus.

Certainly in Wellington–Halton Hills we have a significant number of infrastructure projects that I’ve brought to the attention of the government over the last, in some cases, years. We have the need for a Morriston bypass—the project is called the Highway 6 Morriston bypass—south of Guelph through Puslinch township, where we have a logjam of traffic through the small community hamlet of Morriston a couple of times a day. When there isn’t a logjam, the traffic races through the community in such a way that it seems unsafe for the local residents. But when there is a logjam, it’s actually an economic issue for the province, Mr. Speaker. We have recently analyzed the economic cost of that logjam, and it is significant. If the project was prioritized and put on the Ministry of Transportation’s five-year construction plan, which is what we’ve been asking for for years, it would make a significant improvement to transportation in that part of Ontario.

It’s not just a local issue. The logjam happens to be in my riding, but if the project were built—when it’s built, I

should say, it will have tremendous benefits for a big part of Ontario, including Hamilton and the Niagara region. Really, it’s a regional project that needs to be built. I continue to call upon the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure to place this project on the five-year plan for construction for southern Ontario. We have the support—the strong support—of the municipality, the township of Puslinch and the county of Wellington, and we continue to put this forward to the government for its consideration.

In fact, I have a private member’s resolution which is on the order paper—it’s the very first resolution on the order paper—calling attention to it. I tabled that the day of the throne speech, actually, so it would be the first private member’s resolution on the order paper, and able to continue to have attention called to it.

I’ve also been informed by the Halton Catholic school board of the need for a new Holy Cross Catholic school in Georgetown. I’ve raised this with the Minister of Education many times. It is the number one priority for new school construction by the Halton Catholic board, and we hope that the minister would want to do the right thing and respect the decision that was made by the school board trustees to make this the number one priority and approve funding for this new school, which is desperately needed. I could go into great detail, but I’m running out of time. I’ve visited the school on a number of occasions and, believe me, they’ve made a good case. This is a priority that should be pursued.

I would also call attention to the fact that the government canceled the Connecting Link Program, which is a very important program for our small municipalities to assist them with the cost of provincial highways that go through built-up areas in our small municipalities. That’s a program that I think has existed since 1927, going back to George Howard Ferguson’s government, and was cancelled, I think, in December or January last year. We’re very, very concerned about that. I have a huge number of municipalities that need to see that program reinstated or an alternative funding stream created to assist them with the projects.

I see that I’ve run out of time. Thank you very much, Speaker.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it’s an honour to be able to stand in this House and respond to the member from Wellington–Halton Hills. I listened intently to his remarks. I always enjoy listening to the member from Wellington–Halton Hills. He’s always calm and collected, and he always brings a measure of talking about the bills and advocating for his community. I really appreciate that he does that.

He brought up a couple of interesting points that I actually agree with. When you’re looking at Bill 141—the major portions of this bill—you don’t need a new law to do this. Farm folks would call a lot of this stuff, like long-term plans, common sense. You don’t need a new law to do a lot of these things. You have to question

whether this has just been put forward so the government of the day has a nice thing to promote. An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act is so uplifting, but deep down in the bill there's not really much.

One point the member from Wellington–Halton Hills brought up that I'd really like to amplify is that this bill is talking about planning and 10-year planning. Was anyone in Wellington–Halton Hills consulted when the Connecting Link Program was cut? Was anyone consulted? This bill talks about consultation. Well, when the Connecting Link Program was cut at the same time in northern Ontario—it's a huge problem in many of my municipalities—no one was consulted. You've got An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, and, "Oh, by the way, one of your major road programs is gone. But feel good, because this is a nice title."

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

Mr. Monte Kwinter: The purpose of the proposed legislation is to establish mechanisms to encourage principled, evidence-based and strategic long-term infrastructure planning that supports job creation and training opportunities, economic growth, protection of the environment and design excellence.

The proposed legislation includes five key components:

Principles: a number of non-binding principles that everyone involved in public infrastructure should be following.

A long-term infrastructure plan: the requirement that the province table a 10-year plan in the Legislature, with the first plan tabled within three years and subsequent plans tabled every five years.

Project prioritization: requires the province, when evaluating and prioritizing infrastructure project proposals, to consider whether projects support plans and meet additional criteria, taking into account all capital and operating costs over the life of the relevant infrastructure asset.

Design excellence in public works: requires the province to involve architects or persons with demonstrable expertise and experience with design in new provincially owned and funded infrastructure projects.

Skills training and apprenticeship: requires the province to employ or engage apprentices in the construction or maintenance of provincial infrastructure assets.

The last two components require consultation with the Lieutenant Governor in Council and regulations before coming into force.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It's a pleasure to comment on the words of the member for Halton Hills—oh, and you have part of Wellington too, but Halton Hills is an important part. It's part of Halton, of course. It's an important part of his riding.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have important constituents in Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: He has some wonderful constituents in Halton Hills, as well, I could point out.

He mentioned the Morriston bypass. Driving along the 401, you see a backup on that highway going down into Morriston. It backs up onto the 401. Of course, you're coming on the 401 at—of course, nobody here would travel at more than 105 kilometres an hour, but coming along the 401, there are cars that do in excess of 120 kilometres an hour, and they don't expect to see cars stopped in that particular location on the 401. It's a huge hazard, and it has been that way for four, five or six years and this government hasn't done a thing.

Now they're talking. They're talking now, six years after these problems existed, 11 years after they've been in power here. Now they're talking about, "Well, let's plan. Let's develop a plan for the future."

It is so Liberal. Right now, we've got a million people unemployed in the province, and they want to plan, for 10 years out, as to what is going to take place in the province. There's nothing they're doing today to help the million people who woke up this morning—half a million of them have even stopped looking for a job, and there's nothing they're doing today to help these people, to generate some opportunity in this province.

If these projects were to start, yes, there'd be construction. There'd be construction jobs that people could go to, but there's no talk about starting these projects. This is all about planning these projects—some airy-fairy stuff about planning. For goodness' sake, that's not where the rubber hits the road. Let's get on with it. Let's get the people back to work. Let's make something happen in this province of Ontario.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: Again, I do generally attend here when I know the speaking order includes people like the member from Wellington–Halton Hills. What's most impressive is how he knows his riding: the potholes, the exits, the connecting links—all of those details. Most people don't realize that he drives around on the weekend, doing his own little inspection of the infrastructure in his community. I mean that quite sincerely.

He spoke of a Catholic high school that's been on the wait-list and promised—he represents his constituents better than anyone in this House, especially on this issue of infrastructure. I believe he's had two questions during question period—which is a very formal part of the procedures here—on his riding in the last week. I know I haven't had one. I've asked for a couple.

I often think this is a tribute to a man who represents his riding effectively. The member from Halton, as well, is a member who represents his riding effectively, generally, in a way that I think is effective as well.

The problem with this whole thing is that Bill 141 itself lacks a vision. In fact, the member from the third party actually said that there's no—John; I call him John. Anyway—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to refrain—

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm trying to look up the name here.

Interjection: Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John O'Toole: Timiskaming–Cochrane. He said that you don't need this bill; get on with the job. That's the issue that we're all trying to say here today. We're all anxious on a Thursday afternoon to do the right thing.

We support the bill only to get it to committee to check it out and see if it's even operable. From my point of view, there's more said than done, and this bill is evidence that the Liberal Party has no plan.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Wellington–Halton Hills, you have two minutes.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to express my appreciation to the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane, the member for York Centre, the member for Halton and the member for Durham for their kind comments—and their observations, as well—with respect to this important issue, Bill 141.

Yes, the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane was listening to my speech, and he agrees. I would again indicate my belief that the government could move ahead with an infrastructure plan; they don't need this bill. Certainly the member for Halton reiterated that point very effectively.

I would point out to the member for York Centre, who talked about the government's plan to have a long-term infrastructure approach, and again making reference to the Connecting Link issue, it's my belief that the decision to cancel the Connecting Link issue took place when the House had been prorogued, and in the interim between the departure of Premier McGuinty and the Liberal leadership convention. The decision appears to have been made around that time frame.

Municipalities, I know, have expressed concern all across the province to the Minister of Rural Affairs. I know that he's heard about this issue at the ROMA-Good Roads conference. A lot of municipalities are very concerned about it.

The town of the Halton Hills, for example, had a long-term infrastructure plan and does maintain a long-term infrastructure plan for the projects that they know that they need to do, and the cancellation of the Connecting Link Program threw that plan out the window. So, on one hand the government is saying that they need a 10-year, long-term infrastructure plan, but their conscious decisions, like the cancellation of the Connecting Link Program, throw the long-term infrastructure plans the municipalities have right out the window.

Again, the township of Centre Wellington has over 100 bridges that need to be maintained, and in many cases repaired. There are a number of them that are now closed. A number have load restrictions.

The bridge through downtown Fergus, the St. David Street bridge: The fact that they cancelled the Connecting Link Program puts our municipality in a terrible situa-

tion, because the bridge has to be done next year and it's going to cost millions of dollars. Unless the government does something, the municipality is going to have to pay the full shot and the local taxpayers are going to be on the hook for the whole thing. It can't be left that way.

Mr. Speaker, again, thank you for giving me the extra time.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: It gives me great pleasure to have the opportunity to speak to this bill that has been given the label the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act. What a grand title: Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity. I'm certainly in favour of that. Who wouldn't be in favour of jobs and prosperity? But after looking through this bill, I have to soften my enthusiasm just a little. I'm not sure it provides that pot of gold at the end of the rainbow that the title claims.

For decades, investment in Ontario's infrastructure has played a key role in shaping our lives and our economy. A developed infrastructure allows us all to live more fulfilling lives. It allows us to get more easily from point A to B, to travel the province as we need, as we feel the desire to accept everything that Ontario has to offer. It allows us to access the services that we need—health care, schools, colleges and universities—and it makes this province a desirable place to live.

A developed infrastructure also allows us to enjoy the comforts of home: water supplies, utilities and drainage. A lot of these many of us take for granted because they've always been there. We need to remember just a couple of things.

Mr. John Vanthof: Mr. Speaker—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order, the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Mr. John Vanthof: I don't believe we have quorum.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can the table verify if we have quorum?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker. I was just talking about developing infrastructure and how important it was, and how we, in a lot of places in this province, take that for granted.

I was just getting to the point that not everyone in Ontario is able to enjoy the same benefits of this developed infrastructure. Northern and rural areas still don't have a supply of natural gas, for example. We've heard horrific stories of poor water supplies, particularly in some of our First Nations communities. We know that our infrastructure is not equally developed across our province, and we need to remember that.

We also need to remember that our infrastructure needs to be properly maintained. I know that at this time

of the year, especially after the winter we have had, it is the worst time of year to evaluate things. But a drive over some of Ontario's roads just now is a stark reminder of the importance of maintenance. When we thud through those potholes and the wheels hit the ground and the suspension in your seat sends a huge crunch up your back, it's not hard to think about the importance of infrastructure and maintenance.

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We know that's true for all infrastructure, not just roads. It needs to be kept in the best condition possible if it is to serve us well.

This bill talks to the need for infrastructure planning to take a long-term view, the fact that we need to look not just at our present needs, but what our needs will be well into the future. I have no quarrel with that, none at all, but I would hope that it is already happening.

That investment in infrastructure is important to us in terms of how we live our lives daily. Those same reasons influence a company's decision to invest in Ontario. When they are trying to decide whether or not to set up shop or expand their operation here in Ontario or to go elsewhere, those companies look at many of the same factors that we look at as individuals. They want to know that they can move their goods around. They want to know that they can get supplies when they need them. They want to know that they have access to a stable, educated, healthy workforce, and of course, they would like to know that they can power their operations at a reasonable, competitive cost, but that is one thing that they are definitely finding increasingly hard to get due to the spiralling cost of electricity.

Investment in infrastructure is essential to the well-being of Ontario and its population. It improves our accessibility, our mobility and our productivity. It makes our lives better, and it makes Ontario a more attractive place for companies looking for a home. But investment in infrastructure goes beyond that and is a spur to our economy. It puts people to work, often in good-paying jobs, and those people spend the money they earn. They pay taxes. They buy goods and services from other businesses, supporting other jobs and offering a further boost to local economies.

To get back to my original point, yes, I agree that investment in infrastructure can lead to jobs and prosperity if it's done right.

Many in the construction industry have been raising concerns about the shift to bigger alternative finance and procurement projects, AFPs, more commonly known as P3 projects, and the bundling of traditionally financed projects. From this bill, it's hard to know if we're doing it right, because the bill doesn't get into many specifics. It talks a lot about regulations, about putting mechanisms in place to deal with concerns and not about what actually will be done.

One of the aspects of the P3 projects is that they are so big that they greatly limit who might bid for them. They can be worth billions of dollars, and they attract major international bidders to Ontario. The Construction and

Design Alliance of Ontario has voiced concerns that these big international companies, often from Spain in particular, are bidding with the support of subsidies from their own federal governments. They're squeezing out Ontario-based companies and, as a result, we're losing some of the positive effects of infrastructure investment that I mentioned earlier. Instead of staying in Ontario and stimulating our economy here, profits are being taken offshore and some of the job creation goes overseas. High-end service jobs at the head office along with the support and administrative functions that go with them—when you are talking about contracts in the billions, these can be a substantial loss to our local economies here in Ontario.

One of the main arguments made in favour of P3s is that they reduce public sector risk by passing the risk on to the private sector. This supposedly means that the potential for government cost overruns is reduced, but let's be clear here. This is a situation where a private business is assuming a portion of the risk in a given project. They don't assume the risk free of charge. That's not a gift that they give to the people of Ontario in return for the pleasure that they get from building things for us—no way. They're in business, and they're in it to make money. There's a cost to us for them assuming those risks. The problem is, we don't know what that cost is. We don't know if it's an accurate cost. The benefits of P3s are tied to there being a reasonable price for that transfer of risk, and we don't know if it's there.

P3s are being sold as decreasing the debt for future generations, but that assertion has to be seriously questioned. Auditor Generals regularly criticize the level of transparency and public reporting of the P3 projects they have looked at. That is cause for concern. Why is there an apparent lack of information coming from these projects? What is there to hide?

New Democrats have long had a problem with the government's P3 approach to infrastructure, and we hoped that maybe that was a bit displaced, and that this bill would deal with some of those issues that have been raised by various construction stakeholders—but it seems not.

Let me talk briefly about the issue of apprentices, which this bill touches on. As a province, we need to encourage people into the trades, to get an apprenticeship. As people start to decide what they are going to do with their lives, what they want to do when they grow up, they need to understand and respect the value of learning and becoming proficient at a trade. Our unions in the construction industry do a great job developing apprenticeships within the trades, but more needs to be done.

I'm really happy to see that this bill addresses the need to engage apprentices.

Here's what it says in section 8 of this bill: "The government shall require that such numbers of apprentices as may be prescribed are employed or engaged for the purposes of the construction or of the maintenance by the government of infrastructure assets." There is that problem again of the lack of detail that makes it difficult to

really pass judgment on this bill. How many apprentices are they talking about here? “Such numbers of apprentices as may be prescribed”—it would be good to have some idea of what the government is thinking here. How will they set that number? How will they ensure that those numbers are met?

As I said in the beginning, Speaker, this bill offers a grand title, but as they say, the proof is in the pudding, and this bill only offers the starter course.

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

Mr. Steven Del Duca: I do not know where to begin with my two minutes, having had a chance not only to listen to the most recent contributions to this afternoon’s debate, but to have had the chance, as well, to listen to some of the folks who came before, discussing this very important piece of legislation that our government, through the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, has brought forward, Bill 141.

When I said I don’t know where to begin, Speaker, it’s because I am taken aback, I am shocked, and I’m sure the people who are at home watching intently this afternoon from my community of Vaughan and from places like Scarborough–Guildwood and Oak Ridges–Markham and Etobicoke Centre and so many others are equally shocked to witness the spectacle that the opposition parties are putting on here this afternoon.

For 11 years, after years and years and years of governments of all stripes, including Conservatives and NDPers—the fact that those governments, when they were in power, did nothing to support the importance of infrastructure investments in this province. After 11 years of our government spending billions of dollars to put people back to work, to restore and revitalize crucial public infrastructure—to sit here in this place this afternoon and to witness the spectacle of the folks opposite telling us that this bill, Bill 141, is not ready for prime time, that it requires more details; to have watched the leader of the official opposition, Mr. Hudak, and members of his caucus vote against budget after budget after budget before they read it, before they looked at it—budgets that contained significant investments for infrastructure. To sit here today and listen to members from that caucus try to lecture us and tell the people of Ontario that there is somehow a new spin they can put on this, is just something that shocks me.

We need to pass this legislation. It’s important to keep the economy going, and it’s important so that we can continue to revitalize our crucial public infrastructure.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: It’s a pleasure to provide a few questions and comments. I want to thank the member for Hamilton Mountain for her comments.

I can’t let the member for Vaughan get away with some of his remarks without saying how shocked I am that this government would orchestrate a press conference this afternoon with the Premier and that she would come out, make a short prepared statement, not take any

questions, with the bombshell that was released in the media today by the Toronto Star and the Ottawa Citizen. I just think it’s ridiculous that the Premier would even come out—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order. The member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, the member, pursuant to standing order 23(b), is nowhere even close to the subject being debated.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you for that point of order. I’d ask the member to speak to the bill.

Mr. Steve Clark: You know, I appreciate that the new whip wants to make sure he earns his extra cash as a whip. He’s very astute in the standing—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order?

Mr. Steve Clark: I was giving you a compliment, before you stand up—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Mississauga–Cooksville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Streetsville.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you, Speaker. Pursuant to standing orders 23(h) and (i), the member for Leeds–Grenville can also not impute motive or make an allegation against a member. The member should really just speak to the bill; it’s a lot—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you for that point of order. I’d ask the member for Leeds–Grenville if he would just—questions and comments to the bill.

Mr. Steve Clark: I’m trying to compliment him that he understands the standing orders, and he’s still taking up the majority of my time. I’m sorry, Speaker.

Again, I want to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for her comments. I wish I had an additional two minutes to get some more comments on the record without frivolous interruptions.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It’s a pleasure to rise after the member for Hamilton Mountain. She did a lot of research, and stood up here and delivered a really well-thought-out analysis of what this bill does and doesn’t do.

Quite frankly, this bill does what a number of other Liberal bills have been doing lately. Every single day, a bill is announced—just about. If the Liberals sat for another 11 years, we couldn’t debate them all. They really are more public relations announcements than they are bills. This particular public relations announcement, of course, is directed at a group that the government would hope to have on their side, were an election called.

I understand it’s difficult. It’s like discussing something when your house is on fire and not mentioning that the house is on fire. It’s very difficult to discuss this bill that looks at infrastructure—and I mentioned the bill—

without being very much aware that a criminal investigation and serious allegations have been brought against the Premier of the province. The house is on fire, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Once again, a question and comment on the debate on Bill 141, which deals with infrastructure, has nothing to do with the subject that the member has been discussing. I would ask if the Speaker would enforce standing order 23(b).

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you for your point of order. I ask the member for Parkdale–High Park to restrict her comments to the bill that's in front of us.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I would ask the Speaker, though—I just lost about half of my time. With all due respect, sir, you should stop the clock when somebody stands up on a point of order.

Anyway, just very quickly, we've spoken about how we feel. The member from Hamilton Mountain did a wonderful job. I wish I had more time. Unfortunately, it was stolen from me, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's a pleasure to stand and make a few comments in relation to the remarks by the member from Hamilton Mountain. I'm glad to hear at least she had some positive comments, related especially to the apprenticeship issue.

Part of the reason why we need to get this bill to committee is so we can have that more fulsome discussion, and it would be very pleasant to see this debate completed on that kind of positive note.

When I look at Bill 141, I just think about what this means for the people in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, one of the fastest-growing areas of the province. Infrastructure is absolutely crucial. When I look at this, long-term planning, a 10-year plan—what could be more sensible? When I look at the guiding principles we have, the type of consultation with public sector organizations—so we can plan and we can prioritize and make sure that we address the needs of our constituents.

So when I look at this, it makes a great deal of sense. This type of provision of promoting design excellence in public works—wouldn't it be a wonderful thing, in this world-class part of the province, the greater Toronto area, to make sure that we not only have useful infrastructure, but potentially world-class infrastructure as well, whether it be in our universities, our hospitals—all of our public buildings? It's extremely important that those kinds of design principles are established as well.

I think it's about time we got this bill along the legislative pathway, and I urge all members of this House to support this very important bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Hamilton Mountain, you have two minutes.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'd like to thank the members from Vaughan, Leeds–Grenville, Parkdale–High Park and Oak Ridges–Markham for participating in the debate and having comments on what I had to say.

I have to say that we really have had a lot of bills come before us with very little substance, and this is certainly right on track with what is happening here in the last few months that we've been sitting. We're seeing bill after bill come before us, and they're all little bits and snippets of little things that have been talked about for years but there has been no action.

The member talked about the importance of infrastructure. Well, of course, we're all saying we know how important infrastructure is. I know that my municipality would love to have some more infrastructure dollars to deal with the major potholes we see happening. We're in almost a crisis for potholes in our municipality, and municipalities just don't have the ability to keep up. So when they talk about substance, maybe they're going to put more money into municipalities to help with infrastructure. I don't see that in this bill, Speaker.

I heard the member mention she was happy to hear that I talked about the apprenticeship issue. Yes, I did mention it, but I don't think she was listening. I was questioning what was actually being said in the bill about apprenticeships. We're questioning the numbers; we're questioning what they mean when they're talking about apprenticeships in this province.

This is something that we all know we have a problem to face. We know that money has to go into infrastructure. We know we can no longer watch the 11 years of crumbling continue to happen. We look forward to other bills coming forward, and hopefully they'll have extra snippets that will help improve this bill.

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

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It is my pleasure to rise this afternoon to take part in the debate around Bill 141, the proposed Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act.

I would first like to commend the minister for bringing this forward. Well-developed infrastructure plays an important role in our economic potential. If planned and executed in a thoughtful and deliberate manner, balancing attention between designs and the inevitable bottom line, these projects can produce the greatest possible benefit for this and future generations.

I support the fundamentals set forward by the minister in Bill 141; namely, that Ontario has a need for long-term planning when it comes to this province's infrastructure. The proposed legislation would mandate that the government should publish, at the very least, a 10-year plan that lays out project infrastructure needs along with a strategy to meet those needs.

It's vital that we take the long view. These are large and technically complex projects that can also become politically and financially tangled. As someone who has spent the past year working very closely on this file, I think it's easy to appreciate why the minister has taken a keen interest in this particular matter.

I certainly am inclined to agree that infrastructure investment should be prioritized based on specific criteria. I would also agree with my colleague the member from Newmarket–Aurora that it would also be helpful for the people of this province to have a better understanding of the age and condition of all government-owned infrastructure assets.

The member from Durham, who is always a very eager listener and thoughtful speaker, also made a good point earlier in debate when he flagged the need for digital infrastructure in rural Ontario. This is another point where the bill before us would perhaps benefit a bit more in the way of definition. It is a notable dynamic between urban and rural communities, because the two have different assets and challenges, and it's not entirely clear how we will find common ground for even-handed planning. Once more, this is something that will hopefully be resolved to our shared satisfaction as this legislation moves forward.

Any conversation about strategic investment stands to be vastly improved by the availability of data, evidence and a formal framework for evaluation. It will help to reinforce the public's trust in government—something that has been substantially eroded in recent years.

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This pool of transparent information should also help policy-makers, legislators and the public get a better sense of why decisions are being made and offer them the assurance that everyone is sharing in the benefits. Even if it doesn't remove the cause for complaint—and as long as roads produce potholes, that's likely to be the case—it should at least improve the quality of debate.

The more we can remove emotion and partisan calculation from the picture, the better. This, in turn, improves the odds that the ministry will be able to divorce its investments from the push-pull of the government of the day and make principled, cool-headed investments that best benefit the people of this province.

I know that this is something the government hinted at doing with Metrolinx: creating an independent agency capable of delivering big-picture, long-range thinking, developing a plan and coordinating what we have come to know as the Big Move. Of course, the ministry later brought out the choke chain and brought the agency to heel, which was formalized in the 2009 Metrolinx Act. Even the best intentions can sometimes meet with unforeseen complications somewhere down the line.

Had the current minister been in his role all those years ago, maybe we would be reviewing a 10-year plan rather than talking about the need for legislation to get us to the starting blocks. This hints at one of the soft spots in Bill 141. The proposed legislation does not appear to mandate any specific measures that would make possible the implementation of the valuable principles it seeks to champion.

Speaker, Ontario Liberals had three ambitious pieces of legislation passed in 2006, three bills that arguably dovetailed with one another but which have each been set adrift from their early ambitions to varying degrees. The

bills are the Metrolinx Act, the Greenbelt Act and the Places to Grow Act. It's easy to see the three of these as components of a single concept which is thematically similar to Bill 141—namely, they were brought forward out of a concern to be proactive about the demographic changes that we as a province will face in the future and which will dramatically alter the way we think, work, live and play in Ontario. There is a huge number of infrastructure issues throughout Ontario, and most, if not all, municipalities are facing a huge infrastructure deficit that needs to be addressed, and addressed substantively going forward.

This bill sets out a three-year timeline to even get to a 10-year plan, which may be understandable. Relative to the scale of an undertaking such as the Big Move, what is being proposed here seems much more ambitious, if also open-ended and light on details. Where rapid transit planning was concentrated in the GTHA, public infrastructure is, of course, province-wide. Those living outside of the GTHA will rightly want to know that their demands are being taken as seriously as those elsewhere.

The minister is to be commended for looking beyond the here and now. Whether history will bear out his hopes that Bill 141 will only be fully appreciated 15 or 20 years down the road remains to be seen. I do know that the minister is not afraid to be blue-sky at the expense of practical detail in the legislation before us this afternoon. I also know that the minister's passion on this portfolio is rooted in his love of infrastructure and architectural history—except maybe for the Eaton's on Portage.

The minister, in the past, has expressed his admiration for one of his distant Liberal forebears in cabinet, highway builder and prominent Hamiltonian T.B. McQuesten, who was responsible for infrastructure such as the QEW during his time in office, as well as the creation of the Royal Botanical Gardens after he retired.

McQuesten lived in a changing time, but he also lived in a somewhat different era from ours, which might have helped speed the process. There was not as much need to workshop ideas or have extensive public consultation, not as much need for endless panels and endless reams of consultants' reports. There were more real town halls and fewer cautious pollsters measuring the public's mood before politicians were willing to take a stand.

The old way managed to leave us with legacy structures of impressive stature, in part because government showed leadership. Society as a whole also lived in a more compact footprint. Society's population had more clearly defined limits, and the public trusted those in authority to do the right thing by them.

Where we were once a population defined by obedience and faith, we are now a society defined by freedom and skepticism and small print. Consider the girth of the building code today, or the maze of zoning regulations. Along with this, think of the relative costs and availability of materials, and the abundance of skilled labour and specialized trades.

In short, I am not convinced that the difference between the so-called “golden age” and today is simply a

matter of standards and collective self-esteem. Can government invest valuable infrastructure dollars more wisely? Absolutely. Will that kind of approach produce better results for the people of Ontario? No doubt. Will the road forward be smooth or straightforward? That is more doubtful. All the same, this is an important conversation to have, because the long-term viability of our communities, and the health and stability of our economy, rides on the outcome of this.

Again, Speaker, I am encouraged to see the minister bringing this bill forward. I am in favour of the basic premises, but there are obviously a number of things that need to be answered.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Clearly the Conservative Party and the member from Burlington support this bill, as do we. I did say to the minister—I'll repeat it—that this is fluff. This is a feel-good kind of politics, particularly for the Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario, before an election. It's all good.

I outlined point by point how, for the most part, I have absolutely no disagreement with these things. We should send it to committee for discussion and bring a number of these players to speak to it. I'm convinced that the majority of these people who are affected in some small way will come and say, "This is great, Minister," and then hope for the best.

The real debate for me, while the minister is here, is around the P3s—public-private partnerships. The real debate is around the Liberal name for this, and that is "alternative financing procurement." The debate is around whether it works best for taxpayers.

I know that the minister and his Premier are committed to P3s. I quoted the Premier on this, and quoted how gung-ho they are, because they lead Canada in P3 projects. They lead Canada, and they're happy about it.

This bill is an attempt to bring in the critics, to say, "We're listening to you. We can make it better," which is the comment that the minister has made in committee, which I'm assuming he'll make here as well in a two-minute response—and that is to say, "We can do P3s better, and we're learning." I'm saying, if you're learning, make it better through the public procurement process, which makes it cheaper and more cost-effective for the public than the P3s.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I want to commend the member for Burlington on a thoughtful speech. I sometimes get frustrated with members opposite, because their reading of the economic record of this government relative to any other jurisdiction, I think, is somewhat unreal and inaccurate.

But I say that this is one place where we agree, as a matter of fact. Where the official opposition and the government agree is on alternative financing. The member points back to the Liberal governments of Hepburn and McQuesten. You could go right up to George Drew, the

last Premier of Ontario—Premier Drew is one of my favourites, because he spent 2% of the GDP—it was the last time we spent the equivalent of \$15 billion worth of infrastructure, which is 2% today. The equivalent amount was under Premier Drew. Premier Drew left office, if you go out there, in about 1969, which was the last time we actually had a full-time—there's no government of any party, until about four years ago, that actually made that level of expenditure. Maybe later people from the third party could explain to those of us in the Liberal and Conservative caucuses why they have such a problem with AFP, which is so accepted in Britain. The Labour government in the UK brought it forward.

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I'll give you one example. The member for Trinity-Spadina has a lot of teachers who live in his constituency. The difference is, there's this thing called the teachers' pension fund. The teachers' pension fund owns high-speed rail and the rapid transit system in London. As a matter of fact, it's managed by a Canadian, Michael Schabas. It's all Canadian money. So what's happening is, the pension funds of Ontario teachers and others and public sector workers are building high-speed rapid transit and subways in the UK, but not in the communities they live in. Mr. Speaker, we think AFP is a good model to get pension dollars working here.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: It is a pleasure to get up and make some comments on the member from Burlington. I know that she's having a tough time, struggling to be here today. I commend you for your perseverance despite your illness.

But I echo some of her concerns, and certainly this bill attempts to address some real concerns that there are with infrastructure. I know, coming from a municipal background myself, that there are some severe infrastructure deficits that municipalities are struggling with. Anything the government does to address some the infrastructure woes that we have is welcomed. Certainly, creative ways to do it are probably the only way we can get through this without breaking the bank.

Whenever we can do a public-private partnership of any sort, by any name, to help mitigate some of the capital costs and to help finance these in a creative way, we all win. I think the public actually wins in this situation. Sometimes we get it done more efficiently and faster, and certainly with a whole different style of doing things. It takes a little bit of courage to be able to have that sort of creativity.

I'd like to see more of that in this bill. It's a pretty broad bill, I think, that maybe is a good way to get the foot in the door and maybe open the door for some other more substantive change that we'd like to see in the future, because it is broad. It does leave a lot of questions out there.

I do share the member's concerns about long-term viability of infrastructure. It is critically important that we have an infrastructure in Ontario throughout the prov-

ince that works for everybody and is maintained in a way that doesn't jeopardize its future. In other words, it's one thing to build it; it's another thing to make sure that it's maintained over a period of time. Because we have the real issue, like I said, with municipalities and the province making sure that we do keep it maintained.

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 comment on the remarks from the member from Burlington. I see her often when I'm having breakfast in the morning. She's a very early riser—a very sunny personality.

I enjoyed the member's remarks, but I have some criticism for her caucus members, because she can't be feeling that well today, and that she has to work today feeling as rough as she does—she deserves a medal for that, because she's not up to her normal self.

But she did bring forward some very balanced remarks, and I don't think anyone in this House is—we have different levels of how effective we think this bill is, but I think we are all in favour of this bill going forward. We all know how important infrastructure is to the whole province. The member from Burlington brought forward that there are different levels and different expectations from infrastructure throughout the province, as there should be. You won't hear people in my riding talking about a subway, because there's just not enough people. But people in my riding also have definite needs for infrastructure, and that's going to be one of the hardest things, and has been traditionally one of the hardest things, to balance and will continue to be so.

So, in closing, thank you for your remarks. You really toughed it out to be here today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Burlington, you have the honour of two minutes.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you to the member from Trinity–Spadina, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation and the member from Barrie, and for the kind, sweet words from the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

As I mentioned earlier, and as hardly needs to be mentioned, Ontario's infrastructure deficit is very real, relatable and, of course, non-partisan. I doubt there is a member in this Legislature whose offices here at Queen's Park and in their riding are not bombarded with concerns about the problems that loom today as well as those that lurk just over the horizon. As such, a piece of legislation such as Bill 141 is probably destined to find a certain amount of traction and a room full of receptive ears.

There seems to be fairly broad agreement on the need for action on this file. There is also an eagerness for government to map a way forward that not only takes into account the best interests of all people and communities in Ontario, but also shows itself to be doing so fairly and evenly.

The promise of transparent decision-making that is as free as humanly possible from political influence is the

ideal. Can this government deliver on that promise? That remains to be seen. It will certainly be no small task. It will first have to rebuild the public trust left shattered by scandal after scandal. The minister may want to conserve his energy.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour once again to be able to rise in this House and put some words on the record regarding Bill 141, An Act to enact the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act, 2013—that's certainly a mouthful. Before I really begin my remarks, I'd like to commend the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, because every time I've been in the House to discuss or listen to remarks on this bill, usually he's here. I think that's a very important thing, because it's good to hear from the minister. I think that's a good thing.

Having said that, he made a remark today in private members' public business regarding the importance of education. Specifically, he mentioned agricultural education and how they want to bring more education out to the regions. I hope that those remarks help Kemptville College. As a farmer, Kemptville College is very important, and I hope that you are on their side, advocating for them, because you said that agricultural education is important, and it truly is, and that's a place where it's happening.

But let's get back to the bill. I'm just going to go through some of the things the bill is supposed to do and provide some comments. All broader public sector entities must consider a specified list of infrastructure planning principles in making decisions related to infrastructure. These principles include things like taking a long-term view, and decision-makers must take into account the needs of Ontarians by being mindful of demographic and economic trends in Ontario. That makes sense. Taking a long-term view—I think all municipalities would understand that, because they have to take a long-term view. Business people would understand that; homeowners, everyone would understand that. Instead of looking at the province's infrastructure, if you're looking at a house, you've got to think that your roof is probably going to need to be fixed or replaced in 10 years. That's what this bill is talking about, only in a much broader scope.

Here again, the Minister of Infrastructure must periodically develop a 10-year infrastructure plan providing a description of the government's anticipated infrastructure needs and a strategy to meet those needs, and each long-term infrastructure plan must be made public—once again, good, common-sense stuff. We should have a 10-year plan. I used to be on a hospital board; they had a 10-year plan. That's common-sense, bread-and-butter stuff. It gets a little bit touchier here, because they need three years to develop it.

Although maybe we don't have an official 10-year plan now, we have a long-term energy plan. We have lots of long-term plans. It's a big job, but I'm not sure—the government has been governing this province for 11

years. It's going to take three years to develop a plan. I don't know how big of an issue it is, but it's an issue.

1650

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's almost ready.

Mr. John Vanthof: Okay. Then why would it have to have in legislation that you need three years to develop it, Minister?

The next one is that the government must consider a specified list of criteria when evaluating and prioritizing proposed projects for the construction of infrastructure assets. Criteria include whether the project fits in with municipal plans, etc. Again, that's bread-and-butter stuff the minister must consider. That's good long-term planning, right? For long-term planning, you have long-term objectives. Those objectives would be pretty clear.

But here's one part in the bill where I have a problem, or I think our party has a problem, but I have a specific problem with it. Let's see if we can find it in the bill right here. It's under "additional criteria."

"The minister may, subject to the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, develop and issue additional criteria required to be considered under subsection (1)," and, "before issuing criteria under subsection (2), the minister shall consult, in the manner that the minister considers appropriate, with any persons or bodies that the minister considers appropriate given the content of the proposed criteria, including any potentially affected ministries, crown agencies or broader public sector entities."

Once again, that sounds okay, but if you really think that through, at any time in the planning process, the minister, for whatever reason, could change the rules. He could say, "We're five years in and we're developing new criteria." All the consultation—it doesn't matter, or they pick who does the consultation.

I'll give an example of where that has happened in the past. On another planning process, Places to Grow and, basically, the northern growth plan—and if you're aware of the northern growth plan, I believe it's a 25-year plan for the growth of northern Ontario. It went for four years of consultation, and northerners took this very seriously. I was president of the Federation of Agriculture and went to Thunder Bay to speak to this. We took this very seriously. In the preamble of the plan from 2011:

"Transportation infrastructure, including roads, rail, air, and waterways, connects communities within the north to one another and to the rest of the world. Northerners often need to travel great distances to access work, education and health services. Northern businesses need to be able to reach markets around the world. For northern Ontario's remote communities, winter roads and air transportation are vital lifelines for fuel, food, basic amenities and access to education, health and emergency services. An integrated, long-term transportation plan is needed to maintain and enhance the north's transportation infrastructure and to improve connectivity among" the people of the north.

Great. In 2011, after years of consultation, you came up with that?

What happened in 2012? They announced the divestment of ONTC without talking to anyone. Basically, they threw the plan out the window, and the very same thing could be done with Bill 141, based on this. We could go through this whole consultation process, the 10-year plan, and at any point—I'll give you another example, Speaker. The long-term energy plan: How many gas plants were built? This is a long-term plan. Nineteen? Twenty? Two, at the very last minute—this wasn't part of any long-term energy plan—were moved. They were moved for political reasons, and we all know what's happening with that. The very same thing could happen here. We have this great 10-year plan. We could all spend years developing it, and for whatever reason, the minister of the day could, if you take this bill seriously—because he or she also picks the people they consult with. If you take the gas plants that were moved, we don't know who the minister or the Premier consulted with, but the decision was made, and they are obviously not very proud of that decision. They were spending a lot of time covering it up. But the same thing could happen with this bill.

Some of my colleagues have spent a lot of time talking about the P3, and that's very important. But this is, to me, equally important because that clause gives the minister of the day almost unlimited power. That throws the planning process out the window because that brings it right back to what the planning process is trying to avoid: It brings it back to the political process. At the end of the day, if the minister picks the players, if the minister picks the criteria, if the minister picks when the decision is made, then that makes the whole planning process suspect. In this day and age of how untrusting people are of government, with good reason, I think that's a part of the bill that we have to look at very, very closely, because it renders the rest of the bill basically moot—that's the first time I've used that word in the Legislature. If the minister can change at any time, with this part in the bill—the minister can change the criteria at will. He can change the rules of the game at any time. With those cases, there are going to be people and places that aren't going to be treated correctly.

The whole goal of the plan is to make sure that the infrastructure is not divided evenly, but equitably. If you can change the rules in the middle of the game, you lose that equilibrium, and we're very concerned about that.

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

Hon. David Zimmer: I just want to speak briefly to this. I want to make three points having to do with Bill 141.

First of all, there are three really important elements in my mind.

One, it contemplates long-term planning, and by that I mean that the Minister of Infrastructure is going to table a 10-year plan. That 10-year plan is going to be tabled within three years of the legislation coming into effect, and then subsequent long-term plans are going to be filed or updated every five years, so we're in it for the long game.

Second, the bill lays out certain guiding principles, and I want to just go through a few of those guiding principles:

(1) the demographic and economic trends and fiscal plans;

(2) advancing the use of new technologies—because that's important in this day and age—practices and innovative partnerships; and

(3) protecting the environment.

The third point, in my view, which is very important, is what I'll call project prioritization. Long-term infrastructure planning: In addition to reaching out a long way for the planning of it, you've got to have some priorities. When you go through the bill, here are the four priorities:

(1) the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe;

(2) the transportation plans under the Metrolinx Act, 2006;

(3) the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan;

(4) the municipal water sustainability plans under the Water Opportunities Act.

This bill is thought out. It has the component of long-term planning, it has the component of guiding principles, and it has the component of prioritizing what we need. In this way, Ontario will get the best infrastructure, on a long-term and ongoing basis, that we can possibly develop.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: As usual, the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane always brings to bear how he genuinely feels about the world. He was so polite, talking about the member from Burlington, who was ill this afternoon and stayed to comment on this bill while the Minister of Transportation was here.

I was surprised at the minister's response to the member from Burlington, that he didn't apologize. I don't like to be mean, but I don't think he was very nice to the member from Burlington the other day.

I'll go on to comment on the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, who also remarked on how the member from Burlington wasn't up to her normal high standard. When he talked about the issues within his riding, that's where the tire hit the road or the pavement, so to speak, in the lingo of this particular bill, Bill 141. I can only say this: I pretty much endorse his concerns, but his solutions remain questionable.

They don't realize that there's no—in Dalton McGuinty and Kathleen Wynne's Ontario, they have run out of money. They have doubled the debt. The deficit's over the hill. They have squandered billions and billions of dollars. Now we find out there are 27 disk drives that may have been part of the—I don't know. I'll go back to that.

1700

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: See? They don't want—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member from Mississauga–Cooksville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Try again.

Mr. John O'Toole: Stop the clock.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: Streetsville. Thank you very much, Speaker.

Pursuant to standing order 23(b), I would ask that the Speaker be a little more vigilant in enforcing it and ensuring that members either speaking or providing comments stay on the topic of the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you for that point of order. I'll ask the member to speak to the bill, please.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much. Now, I just say, in getting to the specifics of Bill 141, that, earlier today, this afternoon, our new member from Thornhill, Mrs. Martow, had a private member's bill which was endorsed in the House. It very much relates to Bill 141 because what it was for was to establish an advisory committee to make recommendations to the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services in the province of Ontario. I would ask in this public forum that he do the right thing: try to build relationships here. Let's seal this relationship and adopt Bill 181.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: A pleasure always to follow the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane—always does his homework. I think what is most moving about his speeches on whatever topic is, his focus on the north, and rightly so. He brought forward the fact that although we, for example, in Parkdale–High Park are very concerned about the air-rail link and its electrification, they in the north are concerned about having a train at all. So again, we go back to the unevenness of the infrastructure spending, perhaps.

The other issue he brought forward, and I believe he's the first person to do so in this debate, was the incredible power that this bill vests with the minister. Of course, we should all be concerned about that. If indeed we want transparent government and we want democratic government, we've got to have checks and balances. Vesting in one person a great deal of power is never a good thing. We do it way too much in our parliamentary system, in my humble estimation, and anything that does it even more is not warranted. So I thank him for that, because that was a new insight that he brought to the table, for sure.

Certainly, this is the kind of thing we should be looking at in committee. As we've said before, we as New Democrats are supportive of moving this forward to committee. I say again, it's going to take another 11 years, it seems to me, to work our way through all the bills that the government has introduced, but so be it. They seem to be, to me, very short on substance and very long on public relations value, but I'll take my own time to talk about that.

Again, thanks to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane. Thanks for doing his homework, and thanks for always being a stalwart when it comes to defending the interests of northern Ontario.

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

Hon. John Milloy: I'm just going to make a very obvious observation. I think there's certainly a consensus here in the Legislature that this is an important bill and that it is worth having further consideration at committee. We have had many, many hours of debate, and I would urge members that perhaps it's time to wrap up that debate and send it to committee so that we can go on to the next stage.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to thank the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, the member from Durham, my colleague from Parkdale–High Park and the government House leader.

I would like to start with the comments from the government House leader and from my colleague from Parkdale–High Park. I think over today we have uncovered a few issues that haven't been uncovered in this House, and, yes, they should be looked at in committee. But on an issue like this—infrastructure is one of the most important issues in this province—I don't think that we can shortchange it for discussion in this House.

I would like to come back to, and it's very important, the part about the planning process. Once you develop a good process and once you develop a good plan, you have to stick to the plan. If you're making a fence and you have to move one post a foot over, that's not the end of the world in the farm world, but if you have to move the whole fence because you planned it wrong, that costs you a lot of money.

It's the same here. We're going to use the example of the long-term energy plan. If all of a sudden at the end of the game, for reasons that have nothing to do with energy production, you cost the taxpayers of Ontario \$1 billion—that same thing could happen with this because if you look at the criteria, you can change the rules in the middle of the game or at the end of the game and cost the taxpayers, who work very hard, cost families, who work very hard for their living, and because of too much power in certain places, their money is wantonly spent. Especially when you're talking about bills that have big names about long-term plans, you'd better make sure that the regs are in place and that they're actually done correctly.

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I've actually read quite a bit of this bill. I share some concerns that have been expressed earlier, but there's actually something I want to touch on to do with infrastructure in rural Ontario.

I, like the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane, come from a rural area. We both have farming back-

grounds. There are some issues in rural Ontario that are being slowly addressed, but they're not being addressed at the speed we think they should be addressed.

I looked at the definitions in this bill. One of them is the definition of infrastructure. If you look at section—what section is it here? It says that “infrastructure” is any prescribed physical structure or facility.

Recently, I was at a meeting in Owen Sound, in the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound—a very nice museum they have up there. We had a meeting with the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus. Their concerns are some of the concerns that have been expressed here today. Certainly the Connecting Link Program was a big topic, and why they would pull the plug on that and do it without much consultation; it just happened. It surprised everybody, and we're still having issues with that.

I can understand some of the angst with this bill, that a government can do things without consultation, although the bill speaks of planning 10 years ahead or so for infrastructure projects.

One of the things that came out of this meeting in Owen Sound was about infrastructure for high-speed broadband. We're at a disadvantage in rural Ontario because of the space and whatever else, although some companies are trying to address that. We live in a society where we can get information just like that, and I think you know that, Speaker. In rural Ontario, one of the things that happens in our small towns—they usually have one big business that employs a lot of people. As we've seen what has happened in Leamington, especially when Heinz was closed down, although some of the jobs are being brought back—it devastated that town.

What we are trying to do in rural Ontario is not only trying to keep the business we have, but also entice business to come to rural Ontario. One of the reasons they cite as maybe not wanting to move to these areas is connectivity. They don't have the high-speed Internet that they require to run their businesses.

Our students are also faced with this issue. They don't have equal access to these resources versus people in urban areas. We also have a problem with school enrolment that continue to decline, so rural schools are closing.

1710

We believe that if we can keep industry in rural Ontario and make people want to come to Ontario, more kids' schools will have less of a chance of closing. However, our population is shrinking in rural Ontario. That's a fact. That is what's going on right now, and it's getting very difficult to keep community centres open, to keep libraries open and the like. Also, the population of those who live in rural Ontario—our average age is going up, which is another concern; we aren't replacing them with younger folks.

The western wardens came up with an idea, in consultation with some consultants, of strategies to reverse the downward trends that I just spoke of. This does a couple of things. They want to position rural areas to prosper socially and economically. They want to press upper

levels of government to intervene and provide resources. It's going to take a tremendous amount of money to put the infrastructure in place for a broadband system to service rural Ontario, but I think the benefits are there, if it's planned out properly. There are companies that are interested to get involved in it that will certainly help our rural people.

Let me tell you about grain farmers, for instance. They make their money, a lot of the time, trading in the Chicago futures market. You've got to have that pretty quickly, because those prices could change in a hurry. Our beef farmers and hog farmers trade on the same market, so we have to have access to high-speed Internet services. Now, it's not bad—I mean, it's coming, but sometimes it's not reliable. Some of the systems used are systems that use satellite dishes or towers. However, you get a good ice storm or something that comes along—and by the way, we had two ice storms out my way this year, not just one, and unfortunately the government is not going to help us out with the cost of that. But anyways, when things like this come along, when snow gets on the satellite dishes, it blocks out the signals so there are companies out there that are working on putting fibre optics in. This is something that I would hope—and again, if you look at the bill, it's difficult to tell just exactly where the government's definition of infrastructure is, so I just thought I'd take the opportunity to talk about broadband in rural Ontario.

Last night—and those of you who don't know about this—we had a really close hockey game where we took on the dental association. One of the first things we did—and I see one of our star goalies sitting across the way over there—

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: But, anyway, what I'm getting at, the reason I brought this up, is because when we walked into that arena, and as part of the arena's infrastructure—if I could be so bold to put it this way—we looked for defibrillators. What do people look for in arenas now, especially people of our rather mature age? We look for things like defibrillators. We also made sure that somebody was around who could read the instructions and understand them in case one of our players ran out of air, or gas, or however you want to put it. But that's something people depend on. That's what people expect at these arenas, stuff like that. People in rural Ontario would certainly want to make sure that the government knows their expectations; broadband would be one of them. Certainly, maintaining our roads and bridges that we have in rural Ontario is very important to us.

A community in Wellington North just found out about a bridge on the Connecting Link. Now they have to come up with fixing this thing. They don't have the resources to do that. The government has put it on their plate, the municipal plate, but they retain ownership of this bridge, so they are asking them to pay for something they don't own. Now, I wish the government would buy me a car that way. I'll buy the car if they would pay for it. That would be kind of great.

But this is what's going on with the change in the Connecting Link system right now, that rural Ontarians—in fact, all Ontarians—are getting asked to pay for something they don't own, and that's not fair. Now, if the government would say to the municipality, “We'll trade assets or whatever, so that you can own these things,” that may be a different story, but they are not going that far, and we don't feel that's fair.

By the way, Speaker, after we found our defibrillators—we only lost by one goal, in case anybody was interested, a 7-to-6 score.

I do believe that with the proper implementation of some of these things, certainly rural Ontario would be more successful. It would help it be more successful in the future.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: As I see it, the member for Perth–Wellington and the Conservative caucus have two options. One is to publicly stand up and give the Liberals a big hug, but it has to be sincere. You just can't play and pretend. So you all get up and you do this. Or the other option, which is equally good, is to stand up individually and collectively and say, “Look, we started the P3s. We're better than you, and you're copycats.”

This is how I see this thing unfolding, because you have to stand out, you have to distinguish yourself a little bit, and you have to say, “We were the party that started this, and the Liberals merely copy what we've done.” You have to tell them, “Look, we're tired of Tories in a hurry. We're the real Tories.”

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Yes, you are.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm speaking for the Liberals. “And when the Liberals take our stuff and make it their own, we just don't like it.” That is how I see it. I could be wrong, and maybe the member from Perth–Wellington has a third option that I didn't think about. But those are the only two that I could come up with, and it would have been nice to have had a third option.

So to repeat, the first is to hug them and say, “We are brothers and sisters,” or “We're cousins,” or simply say, “You guys are just not good Tories; we are the real Tories. Step aside, and we'll do it for you.” Those are the two options.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Scarborough–Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: I listened to the debate on the proposed Bill 141 very attentively. It's very interesting that the member from Perth–Wellington injected some conversation about the hockey game, and then my colleague from Trinity–Spadina talked about love.

Anyway, at the end of the day, I hear that the opposition party does support P3 and the proposed bill. I also know that during the NDP government they also had P3. Unfortunately, it wasn't that successful.

So let's get on with this particular bill and have further conversation in the committee, because at the end of the day, the fine-tuning or the discussion, getting the community involved and having this conversation, is better

done through the committee. I encourage everybody to move this on to the committee so we can have further conversation.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: You know, the longer this bill is debated, the more I find myself wondering what the purpose of this bill is. I mean, we're going to have this glorious plan—of course, we're not going to do anything for three years. The province is in desperate shape, and we're not going to do anything for three years, but they're going to have this glorious plan.

If we've never had this plan before, how did the 401 ever get built? And the 400, the 404, the 406, the 402? How did those things ever get built without this plan? How did all the colleges and universities, and the buildings on those campuses, get built without this plan?

1720

They got built by a government who planned these things themselves, who looked to the future, did their job, rolled up their sleeves and did what was necessary to make Ontario the great province that it once was. This is like forming a new panel.

Brock University wants a new building; it desperately needs a new building. They have 40% of the cash. They've had it for a year and a half. Has this government done anything? Not a thing. They're going to stand to lose some of that money if this government doesn't do something, and this government has done nothing.

Now it needs a new piece of legislation to make this go forward. I'm beginning to think that this whole bill is just designed so that you can politicize the infrastructure of this province, you can direct where it will go: to the seats you want to win, and the seats you now hold. I'm beginning to think that this bill is a bad piece of legislation.

The House leader talked about how we've maybe debated this bill enough. Well, we've debated this bill for about nine hours, and I'm starting to change my mind on this bill. I'm starting to see through where the Liberals are going with this bill. I'm starting to think it's a bad bill to support. That's what I'm starting to think, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: To the member from Halton—I know we are speaking to the comments from the member from Perth–Wellington, but just because he stood up—I'm not so sure that it's a bad bill, but it is a public relations announcement. It's a fluff bill—let's be serious—and we know what it's designed to do. It's designed to appease some stakeholders in the run-up to an election.

However, there are some points to be made about infrastructure. I think this debate is a chance to make them. The member from Scarborough–Agincourt and other Liberals have stood up in this House and basically argued against the parliamentary system. The parliamentary system is a system of debate, and the member from Halton raised a good point: In the process of debate, you actually learn something.

The process is that you're supposed to listen from the government side, and we're supposed to put forward ideas that you listen to, which is what I believe we are doing—both parties on this side. That's the process. It's called democracy. It's of course a lot faster for a minister just to run off and do things without ever checking with the opposition at all; I don't think that's the kind of government we want.

She also mentioned the government of Bob Rae. I always find this strange, that the Liberal government constantly refers to the government under their leader Bob Rae in a negative way. I really have had no dealings with the man myself, but he was the leader of the federal Liberal Party. To denigrate him the way they do constantly is, I think, passing strange. I would simply say that.

Getting back to the infrastructure issue, which I will be speaking to in-depth—or at least for 10 minutes—in a short while: There are lots of things to be said about infrastructure, and lots of infrastructure that hasn't been done. For example, let me just throw this word out there: housing. Wow. This is a government that has completely abandoned the housing file.

There's more on that to come. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Perth–Wellington, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I listened with interest to the comments from the members from Trinity–Spadina, Scarborough–Agincourt, Halton, and Parkdale–High Park. I would just like to address some of the comments that were made. If there's anybody that's had a group hug with the government over here, it's been the third party. They've been doing that for two and a half years—

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: If you've had a group hug with the Liberals, check your wallet.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Yes. But anyway, to the member from Scarborough–Agincourt, this is the way we do things. We debate things in this House. That's the way our system is set up. I understand that it could probably get pretty tedious, because you people just don't really want to be here on a Thursday afternoon, but that's the way things are done here.

Interjections.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: That's just the way, and I appreciate the comments from the member from Parkdale–High Park for bringing that up. This is the parliamentary system. This is the way things work.

There are different issues all over the province that have to be addressed. It's too bad that this bill wasn't more specific because I agree with the member from Halton: What is the purpose of this bill? I wonder what the purpose is. Is it something to distract us from things that are going wrong with this present government right now, which they don't want to be out in the press or whatever? I don't know. That's the issue with this bill. That's why I brought up the infrastructure business with broadband, because, in the definitions, you could probably put anything under the infrastructure label.

It's very broad. It's not a bill that should draw a lot of attention to it. It should, but it doesn't. Anyway, it's going to be interesting to see how this bill progresses in the House.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always a pleasure, and it's always a privilege, to stand in this House to speak on behalf of the people of Parkdale–High Park. We're speaking about a bill on infrastructure by, of course, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. It's too bad he's left, because I wanted to give him a bit of a shout-out around another bill that he brought in, which is the drive-safe bill, and for including my bill in that, the one-metre rule. So I wanted to thank him for that. I haven't had a chance to do so.

I wanted to go back to a time when I was first elected, almost eight years ago, three elections ago—astounding—when a group came to my office. They were the Ontario Sewer and Watermain Construction Association. At the time, I was the housing critic and also the infrastructure critic. They made a very good point, and it became a kind of metaphor for me of the problems with political process, certainly under this current government. They said, “You know, there's always money to fix the pothole or, God forbid, the sinkhole, but there's never money to reconstruct the sewer system.”

In a sense, that's what's needed. Politicians and governments tend to think in election cycles and not in terms of a long-range plan of what's best for the province of Ontario and Ontarians. That's the problem. The problem is, it's the quick hit. It's the ribbon-cutting of today and not the long-term problem of tomorrow for a couple of good reasons, but for one very good reason: It costs more to do that, to do the hard infrastructure work of, part by part, replacing all the sewers, for example, in a city the size of Toronto. It's far easier, even if it's more expensive in the long run, to fix the pothole.

That's, I think, the message of the bill. I don't think it's going to happen because of the message of the bill, but it is the message of the bill: long-term planning.

I have a very good example of the problem in my own riding, in Parkdale–High Park, and that is the air-rail link. Here you have a train that runs from Pearson down to Union Station that, because they want to get it done fast, by the Pan Am Games, is going to be diesel.

Despite boards of health and environmental assessments to the contrary, it's still plowing ahead as a diesel train that will be running 10 times the number of trains in 2015. As much as we have tabled a motion—our member from Davenport tabled a bill just recently, “Please make it electric by 2015”—the government will have none of it. Why? It costs more in the short term. But in the long term, my argument, which I hope the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure agrees with, would be that it actually costs more to think short term than it does if you actually think long term and do it right the first time.

I guess that's why I find this somewhat odd. The same Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure who wants

us to think long term, 10-year plans, is going ahead—and, by the way, Metrolinx is mentioned here—with the air-rail link with such a short-term mentality. Not only is it diesel with a promise of maybe electrification someday, but it also doesn't stop so it can serve the people of the ridings it passes through. It's literally a kind of taxi service for wealthy tourists to get them from Pearson to Union Station and back. But what about all the people who desperately need transportation in the city of Toronto, who would love to use that? Why doesn't it segue into the TTC structure and actually carry people to work and back for an affordable price? Why doesn't it do that? Short-term thinking. You know, short-term thinking, the immediate political hit; in this case, I think they are taking the hit—but short-term thinking instead of long-term planning.

1730

We've already talked about the problems with private-public partnerships, the so-called three Ps, or whatever you want to call them.

By the way, just to the point, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure talked about the Labour government. Well, you know, my friend from Trinity–Spadina here pointed out to me that the Labour government is running away from P3s.

If you want to know what those who advocate public-private partnerships think about the reality behind them—I think this is a very good quote. This is from Larry Blain, president of Partnerships BC. They want more public-private partnerships, and he says, “Public sector comparators”—remember, of course, the sell is, “We can do it more efficiently; we can do it cheaper in the short run. You don't have to run the risk; we'll take the risk. It's all wonderful.” That's how sales work. It's always wonderful. This is a quote about how he really thinks. He says, “Public sector comparators won't do you much good anyway, because I can make the public sector comparator as bad as we want to, in order to make the private sector look good.”

There you have it. There you have somebody being honest. You can't fault him for that. He's being honest, and we all know this is sales. This is sales.

What, in fact, we find—and if we think only for a few minutes about this, we will know that people don't go into business if they don't plan on making a profit. The question is, where does the profit come from? Does it come from the public purse or does it come from the market? The problem is with public and private partnerships, which is what the Liberals are doing and which is what the Conservatives did—if they would have their druthers, they would privatize everything because, again, it's short-term thinking, the quick hit. “We'll get money if we sell off this asset or sell off that asset. We'll sell off the LCBO.” That's my friends to the right here—a quick hit but a long-term loss.

Unfortunately, this government feels the same way. Sell off assets, even if they make you money, because a quick hit now gets you through the next election cycle. This is, I would say, very cynical.

To again come back to my example, which I think is the most telling one, of the air-rail link—and it certainly means a great deal to people in my riding, not only my riding but Davenport, Trinity–Spadina, York South–Weston. The same minister, who refuses to even consider electrifying by the time the Pan Am Games start, and perhaps, yes, the little bit of extra money that it takes, would rather see the quick hit. Get those trains running, even if the athletes, by the way, don't take them; they'll be taking other means of transportation. Get it done fast. Again, who cares? It's cheaper this way, and yet, long-term, it's going to cost a great deal more, not only to electrify because you have to do the same thing twice, but in health—the health of our children who have the smallest lungs breathe in the diesel in the worst way. There are 65 schools along that air-rail link.

So the same minister who is doing that short-term thinking—fast, bang, political thought—is bringing in this bill. It leads one to be a little cynical—one can't help it—particularly when it's not a bill of great substance. Of course, it's also delivered in such a crowded field of Liberal bills being announced every day that, even with another 11 years, as I've said, Mr. Speaker, we couldn't get through them all. But the Liberal answer, "Oh, let's just not debate anything. Let's just not debate anything."

I mean, come on. "Let's just send everything to committee right now." What? That's what we are paid to do. We are elected to come here to actually question what they do. There's a lot of questioning of what they do going on right now. I might mention a certain matter. I'm sure somebody will stand up if I mention it. But anyway, I won't go there. There's a lot of questioning going on right now, but that's our job—our job is to hold them to account, and you hold them to account through debate. That's called democracy. So we are not going to just send every bill to committee without debate. That's not what we do, and that's not what we were elected to do.

But let's use as an example the air-rail link: Let's do it right the first time. Let's put that little bit more thought and a little more money into it to save money in the long run. Let's think 10 years about the air-rail link, I would say to my friend the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. Let's use this as an example. Let's electrify by 2015. Let's do it right the first time. Let's get it done, and then I will have more belief in the substance of this bill that calls for long-term infrastructure thought; then I'll take it seriously.

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

Hon. Michael Coteau: It gives me great privilege to speak to Bill 141 today, but before I do that, I would like to introduce my good friend Shafiq Qadri Jr., who's joining us here today in the Legislature.

I think there's some merit in looking at our infrastructure needs here in the province of Ontario over a long period of time. I think it would be beneficial for this province and the residents of this province if we took infrastructure and we thought about our needs over a 10-year period. Then we could take different elements, dif-

ferent needs within societies, for example when it comes to our jobs strategy, and align those future needs of young people when they get into skilled trades and infrastructure, and tying them together.

Recently, in my constituency office, I had an organization that came to see me, and they talked about how we can link transit in the province of Ontario, in the GTA, with the local needs of jobs. You take a community like Flemington Park, which is a community that I was brought up in, and you have the TTC coming straight through, and over the next 10 years, we're going to see that infrastructure developed. Why wouldn't we align our college courses, the architects, university and people in skilled trades with those types of infrastructure needs?

I think if we have a 10-year plan, we could really look at how to align those skill gaps that exist with job opportunities, and that's going to happen through our colleges, our trades and our universities. We need to do some preplanning. So I'm 100% supportive of preplanning. I think 10-year plans would work well for this province so we can ensure that jobs here in the province of Ontario, those jobs that young people need, are aligned with our infrastructure needs. I think this is one of the ways that we can work with universities, colleges and apprenticeships to ensure that young people get the opportunities when we spend money on infrastructure.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: Again, today, we have been entertained by some very entertaining speakers—I'll say it that way. The member from Parkdale–High Park is a professional speaker in the respect that she's a member of the clergy and is used to giving sermons, many of which are quite good. In this case here, this was not one that I agreed with, but she spoke very eloquently towards Bill 141.

The member from Halton spoke in a response just a few minutes ago and, I think, made a very substantive comment when he said that after listening to so much debate, he was beginning to have second thoughts about this bill. He saw in one of the sections, perhaps, that it could be a tool, an instrument that could be used in a political way to manipulate the priorities of municipalities. Again, this reinforces the idea that, first of all, members on the government side have been trying to shut down the debate—our democratic right—but when we listen to the debates in the afternoon, we do hear different perspectives. I think, in the end, we all benefit from listening and learning about alternatives.

Now, we know, clearly, that the NDP are large supporters of the government—we understand that. But they disagree on one part here. They disagree on P3s. Well, I put to them and their responses, how do you finance things? The government does not have a box with money in it to build bridges and hospitals. So how they finance it is the question, and what they pay for it. What we are saying is that there are options, like using public sector pension funds, which can guarantee them a rate of 4% or

5%, to help build that infrastructure using public tax money, which is pensions, or they could go to a bank.

1740

You've got to look at how you finance these things, but how you operate them is a more important question. I think that needs to go to committee. Even though it's the right idea, we've got to have a longer-term plan for the type of economy that we need for Ontario. Right now, there isn't one.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, it was a great speech made by my colleague from Parkdale–High Park, a great 10 minutes to listen to, and I would emphasize one of the points that she talked about. I want to emphasize that what this bill does is okay, because it's in part a response to the attacks on the government and their appeal, desire and eagerness to sponsor P3s. That is the major problem. Part of the major problem is the Windsor–Essex parkway—and you know the story around the girders, one of the major disasters as you give these conglomerates from out of the country the power to manage these projects.

The other big problem is the Crosstown LRT on Eglinton, which is going to be given away, this \$4-billion project, to another huge conglomerate. The Construction and Design Alliance of Ontario is saying, “If you do that and when you do that, we are going to be giving away \$500 million of the public's money.” In his desire to appease these groups, the minister has introduced this bill.

This is about P3s. That's what we really should be talking about. You've got to finance them one way or the other. We're saying public procurement is cheaper. That's what we should be doing. When we hand it off to the private sector to manage, what you are doing is saying, “We are happy to give away taxpayers' money to the pockets of the private sector.” That's what Liberals have been doing.

This is the major problem that we should be debating, and we wish we had more time. The member from Parkdale–High Park has raised other issues for which we need more and more discussion.

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

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Speaker. I just want to talk about two points today. The first is, what I'm hearing from the opposition for the most part is why we should be debating. But nobody is questioning the merits of debate in a democracy. What we are questioning is the lack of content. I have not heard anything new in the last one hour that I haven't heard before. In the 10 minutes that the member from Parkdale–High Park spoke, she spoke for eight minutes about the merits of having a debate. How does that forward this bill or make this bill a better bill? If you really have ideas to make it a better bill, put them forward. I am not hearing them. All I'm hearing is, “We want to talk about it.” Well, give us some ideas.

The other thing I want to talk about is what happens when a party loses its fundamental values. We are seeing the NDP as Tories in a hurry. They don't want any taxes, but they also don't want the private sector. How can you not want taxes but at the same time not want P3s, unless you are in the business of printing money? This just shows they're absolutely not ready to govern because they can't square the equation.

I would support them completely if they said, “We don't support P3s. It should be funded through government taxes.” Hey, go ahead. Stick to that. Raise taxes, and if Ontarians want to elect them, that's fine. But to be disingenuous and on the one hand try to say, “Oh, we are against taxes,” and on the other hand try to say, “We are against public-private partnerships”—it's just not possible. It's an example of what happens when you move away from your roots. I certainly am puzzled and baffled by this logic.

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Just to the points made by the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville, she missed my discussion about P3s. I've had a business. I know business is in the business of making money. We don't want business making money at the expense of taxpayers: That's basically the message.

But even further than that, my point, which obviously was missed by some across the aisle, is practise what you preach. We have a transportation minister who has just tabled a bill on infrastructure and the necessity of long-term planning—so he says—when, in fact, we have a very clear example of short-term thinking and spending as little as possible, even though the cost, long-term, is going to be much greater, and that is the air-rail link from Pearson to Union Station.

If the members opposite are not familiar with it—I know that the member from York South–Weston is certainly familiar with it, because that's the major demand of five different communities where transportation and infrastructure is concerned. In that case, in this instance, he's not practising what he preaches, and that's what I'm saying.

To others who have raised other questions, yes, P3s—of course, that's what this bill is really about. Is it about electioneering? Absolutely. Should we have long-range planning? Completely so. But it's just hard to take seriously when its real intent is public-private partnerships on one side, and it's not being put into practice by the very same people who are proposing it on the other. Those are the points, those are the very simple, straightforward points that, one hopes, get across. Certainly they get across to the people in my riding and certainly they get across to the people in York South–Weston, and certainly they get across to the people in Davenport.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's a pleasure to stand up and speak to this bill. I actually do have a couple of things

that I'd like to propose, even as possible amendments to help build this bill to make it into a better one, and I think it is well worth the time to debate this so that we can have that sort of discussion.

I have the benefit of having worked in municipal politics prior to coming to Queen's Park, as have my colleagues from Durham and Leeds–Grenville, and it gives you a unique perspective, I think, a micro-perspective, if you will, on infrastructure and what happens if we don't maintain our infrastructure properly.

We support some of the basic principles of this bill that are advanced in some of the legislation. There are a few things here that I think are important to mention. One is the need for long-term planning and infrastructure. This is something that seems to have fallen through the cracks, simple long-term planning for what we're going to do into the future with our infrastructure. The difficult and the wonderful thing about infrastructure is that it can mean just about anything. It can mean anything from schools to parks to sewers to roads—you name it. These are all the things that we need to make our communities grow and thrive, and if we don't have a sustainable infrastructure in our communities, everything falls apart. To have a long-term plan for it, not just to build it, but to maintain it—that's a critical element that this bill actually begins to address that I think is interesting.

Infrastructure investments should be prioritized based on a specific list of criteria. This also is very important, to make sure that we're not just randomly building infrastructure, that the infrastructure is being built in such a way that it is prioritized, so first things first. I know that there's a development right near me, where I live, in Barrie, where the city has actually been able to mandate infrastructure going in before the development goes in ahead of it. We have seen this happen in other places in Barrie, a very fast-growing community, where the infrastructure was built after the commercial development was built, and it caused mayhem in Barrie for quite a few years. The infrastructure that was built afterwards wasn't even adequate and had to be redone again—and we're talking about massive, highway-based infrastructure—because of a lack of long-term planning, both municipally and provincially. That's a critical element that this bill begins to address that I think is beneficial.

We should also know the current state of all government-owned infrastructure assets. When I talk about maintaining our assets and maintaining our critical infrastructure to keep us moving, it's important to know the state of it and to understand what bridges need to be fixed and when, what roads need to be fixed and when, and what sewers underneath those roads need to be fixed and when. Many of us who are in this House and who have actually served municipally will be aware that sometimes you go and fix a road—how many times have you seen this?—only to realize that the sewer underneath it, because sewers and water infrastructure generally run underneath roads, needs to be fixed. Because it wasn't prioritized and it wasn't identified, you end up tearing up a brand new road that was just paved only to fix the

infrastructure underneath it because you didn't prioritize it properly. That is a huge waste of money, and it happens all too often.

1750

The government should publish a minimum 10-year plan setting out the anticipated infrastructure needs with a strategy to meet those needs: That kind of speaks to everything else, I think. That's an all-encapsulating sort of catch-all that I think is important. Now, what isn't addressed specifically is how that's going to get done.

When we talk about infrastructure, even talking as a former city councillor in the city of Barrie, I know that the city of Barrie took at least two years to actually get an inventory of its infrastructure and then be able to prioritize it properly. It took a lot of money and a lot of resources to be able to do that in a way that was effective, and then the payoff comes.

I think there needs to be a recognition that there is a lot of money being attached here, because we all know that Ontario's infrastructure is much larger than any one municipality. It's a huge challenge to undertake and it needs a specific plan to make it happen, and it would be better to see that in this bill. Right now, it seems like more of a dream and a wish list than it does actually a practical plan.

The legislation fails to mandate any specific measures that would enable the practical implementation of these proposed principles, and I see that as a bit of a flaw. There are some proposed amendments I'd like to see, such as a mandatory province-wide asset management program. The legislation should mandate that an asset management program be implemented that would provide an up-to-date inventory of all existing provincial and municipal infrastructure assets and the relevant state of repair of those assets. That goes back to the point I made originally. That really means we need to know what we have and the state of what we have, and then the priorities of how we keep that stuff up to date, because right now many municipalities—I think probably just about every municipality in Ontario, maybe even in Canada, Speaker—suffer from an infrastructure deficit, which means that we're paying far more to maintain our infrastructure at a point where it's growing and we're adding to it.

This is a critical problem for municipalities, as it is for the province, and if we don't prioritize it and cities aren't given a sustainable model to be able to maintain their infrastructure, especially from the province, we run into some serious trouble in the next several years. We see this happening in Toronto, with crumbling infrastructure and water mains breaking in the summertime and in the wintertime, causing huge damage. That's a result of not knowing what infrastructure you have and the state of it, and just letting it go, and then it costing a lot more money to fix it after it has done the damage. So it's a critical element to any bill, and I'd like to see this addressed more specifically in the bill.

The bill summary: We talk about long-term planning. The Minister of Infrastructure would be required to table

a 10-year plan in the Legislature. The first plan is to be tabled within three years of the legislation coming into force and subsequent plans tabled every five years.

Certainly, it's a worthy attempt at long-term planning, and I think we've seen several elements here of failure in long-term planning. One that was mentioned by the member from High Park is the ARL, the air-rail link between Pearson and Union Station. Proper long-term planning in infrastructure is long overdue, especially in this project. Nowhere is it illustrated better than in this debacle, which is what it's turning into. This has been talked about for years, for decades, the air-rail link. It's something that we needed, something that we wanted, and something that will help get the economy going.

With the Pan/Parapan American Games coming in 2015, the government has decided to rush the project, at a significant cost, and yet we haven't been able to find out what that exact cost is of rushing to be ready for the Pan Am Games. It's a potential double spend, to electrify the diesel train that's going in right after the games. The promise here is, "We're going to rush to get it done and make sure we have an air-rail link going between Pearson and Union, and then we're going to electrify it afterwards, because that was our original intent anyway." This could come at a cost of hundreds of millions of dollars, somewhere between \$500 million and \$900 million, potentially. This is a huge expense, the cost of rushing it, and it's the result of a lack of long-term planning. It's a great example of the need for long-term planning, which this bill, to its credit, addresses.

We also have found that there's a lack of updates. When we request updates, we're met with redacted information on the website. We have no idea of what it will cost, especially as the games come closer and closer. By the way—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can I ask the member to bring that back to the bill that's in front of us?

Mr. Rod Jackson: Absolutely, Speaker. I'm speaking exactly to a major infrastructure project here. I think it's well within the bounds of the bill.

Electrification of this massive infrastructure project has been committed to by the minister right after the games. However, we have zero intention to actually do it, because we know there's no money. Speaking on one hand and not doing it on the other hand is something that we see a lot from this government, actually. The need for long-term planning, as this bill would point out, would effectively deal with this.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I have been patient with the member wandering way off the topic of the bill, but he is also imputing motive to a minister of the crown. That would contravene standing order 23(h). I would ask that he come back to the bill and not impugn a minister of the crown or impute motive.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Barrie can resume. I would ask you to speak to the bill.

Mr. Rod Jackson: Sure. I am happy to speak to one of the largest infrastructure projects that this government has undertaken.

In any case, long-term planning, which is one of the first elements of this very bill, could have helped this problem of electrifying, after the fact, this major infrastructure project at all. Speaker, with due respect, I couldn't be speaking to this bill more clearly.

"(2) Guiding principles

"The province and broader public sector organizations, such as universities, hospitals and municipalities, would consider key principles when determining infrastructure plans and investments, including the following:

"—demographic and economic trends and fiscal plans;

"—advancing the use of new technologies and practices and supporting innovative partnerships between government and industry; and

"—protecting the environment and considering the impacts of severe weather on infrastructure."

All too often, infrastructure decisions are based on election time. Every party, every government, has been subject to this stress at election time, or even for lobby efforts, so there's a need to be more accountable, for a more accountable process based on need. We've seen this with this government, certainly, with gas plants, and even potentially with the announcement today of an RFP process for universities.

So there is a need for this bill. We know that it addresses such a massive piece of the budget of the government and means such a great deal to all the municipalities and all of us who travel the roads and even flush our toilets. It's a critical piece that needs more substance, and I'd like to see more real amendments made to it in committee.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands adjourned until Monday, March 31, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1757.

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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, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McDonell, 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	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Brampton–Springdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

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Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Steven Del Duca, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Rick Bartolucci
Laura Albanese, Rick Bartolucci
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
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Catherine Fife, John Fraser
Monte Kwinter, Jane McKenna
Rick Nicholls, Peter Tabuns
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial des services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
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