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of Ontario

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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
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Wednesday 2 April 2014

Mercredi 2 avril 2014

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 2 April 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 2 avril 2014

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MPP SALARY FREEZE ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LE GEL
DES TRAITEMENTS DES DÉPUTÉS

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

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

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): When we last debated, Mr. Fedeli had the floor. He's not here. We'll continue the rotation.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Once again, it's a pleasure to rise in this House to speak on a bill. Today, we're speaking on a bill that's entitled MPP Salary Freeze Act, 2014. Now, I'm going to be the only speaker, so that people are aware, and I'm going to speak for just a few minutes. You need to know, certainly, that the NDP supports this bill at a time when families in this province are feeling very squeezed with increased gas rates, with increased hydro rates and with increases to their municipal taxes. We believe we need to do our fair share as well with respect to MPP salaries. But we're supporting this bill to actually move it into committee. We want to ensure that the Premier and ministers are going to be covered by this pay freeze as well, and that clearly isn't articulated in Bill 177.

We wonder, though, why this bill was introduced so late, and then suddenly it is such a rush to get it done. In fact, I think there has been a request for unanimous consent at least five or six times over the last week since this was introduced, which would have limited my ability and my party's ability to debate this issue, or for the PC caucus to debate the issue. We don't think that that is very parliamentary. We all have the right to debate issues in this House regardless of what the bill is.

I want to spend a few minutes talking about why I think this bill was actually introduced. I think it is a political channel changer. It was introduced at a time when we're talking about gas plant scandals here in the province. It was introduced as a way to change the channel, to show the government as being not as wasteful as they

are. I don't think it has anything to do necessarily with the MPP wage freeze. It was introduced as a purely political measure.

I've been here for three years, and the government has done nothing about executive and CEO salary perks, bonuses, car allowances, obscene severance packages—even for cause, let alone wrongful dismissals—in the publicly funded agencies. We have CEOs in this province in publicly funded agencies receiving outrageous salaries, perks and bonuses. I was actually laughing, and it's not a laughing matter—I was looking at some of the stuff last week when this bill was introduced, and it's almost like winning a lottery in this province if you get severed from a publicly funded agency where you were the CEO or a VP.

If we take Ian Troop, for example, I think he was hired and he was making \$500,000 or \$600,000. He negotiated himself a severance package that was equal to or more than that. He worked at his job for the Pan Am Games for, I don't know, a year or a year and a half, was severed, and with that package he ends up an instant millionaire. It's like watching that TV show on Saturday mornings: *How I Won the Lottery* and *What I Did with That Money at the End of the Day*. The NDP and our leader, Andrea Horwath, think that the government should actually be focusing on doing something about the caps on CEO salaries.

I want to just spend a few minutes—because for the viewing public, they'll see one of these terminations and severance packages in the news one day, and then they won't see it again for about a month, or two months, or a year. I just want to bring all of those together, the most recent ones, and make people aware of what's happening here in the province. According to the 2012 sunshine list—I reviewed the 2013 sunshine list this morning as well, and there hasn't been very much downward change in those CEO salaries. In fact, most of them are the same or have gone up a little bit, with some of the bonuses.

Tom Mitchell, CEO of Ontario Power Generation—let's go back to, I think, a week or two ago, when the Auditor General released a scathing report about that agency—made \$1.7 million in 2012, and a little bit more than that, I think it's \$1.71 million, in 2013. That's a lot of money.

Laura Formusa, CEO of Hydro One—another one of those agencies—made \$1.036 million, with a raise of over \$70,000 in 2012. The raise was almost twice the pay of the average Ontarian in this province.

The CEO of London Health Sciences made over \$600,900, including a raise of \$45,000. This is the same

CEO, I think, who is in the news today—and I'm sure we'll be talking about that at some point—who is cutting 100 jobs at London Health Sciences, nursing jobs and cleaning jobs. She's making \$700,000. That is the wage of seven nurses, perhaps, or 14 cleaners.

The CEO of St. Joseph's Health Care in London made \$470,000, including a raise of \$20,000.

CEOs at all major Toronto hospitals are making more than two times what the Premier of this province makes, \$418,000, which is the proposed cap.

In my neck of the woods, Kevin Smith—who was the supervisor of the Niagara Health System; he's now the CEO of the Niagara Health System, and he's also the CEO of St. Joe's in Hamilton—made \$721,000 last year; \$2.8 million over the past four years. Now he's also the CEO of the Niagara Health System, but I don't know what he's making in addition, for being the CEO of two hospitals in the province.

The CEO of OPG earned more by January 16 of this year than the average household makes in one year—one year. The CEO of Hydro One—it would take him until January 27 of this year to earn as much as the average person earns in this province.

0910

Mr. John Yakabuski: What about Phil Kessel?

Ms. Cindy Forster: I don't know about Phil Kessel. I don't know.

Last week when the member from Vaughan introduced this MPP wage freeze, he said that the opposition parties—the third party should be leading by example here with this MPP wage freeze. Well, our party doesn't want to follow your lead, because all we've had in our three years and prior to that are scandals with the Liberal government: a gas plant where you spent over \$1 billion to save a couple of seats during an election, that we're all still wearing; eHealth—a scathing report on eHealth, where you wasted \$1 billion of taxpayers' money, and still today, we heard at the LHIN review that not everyone is on an electronic patient file. Only around 70% of the patients in this province actually have eHealth files today. The CEO, Sarah Kramer, billed thousands of dollars for limousine rides, including one \$400 trip from Toronto to London, before she resigned from her \$400,000-a-year job in June. She was given a \$317,000 severance package and received a \$114,000 bonus after just 10 months on the job. As I said when I started, losing your job in a public service agency here in the province of Ontario is like winning a lottery.

In 2014, employees at eHealth will share \$2.3 million in performance bonuses in the wake of a court settlement that restored payouts cancelled in 2011. Former eHealth chief Greg Reed, who was forced to leave by the Minister of Health, to scrap bonuses in 2011—he left the agency with a severance of \$400,000, almost double the Premier's salary of \$210,000. And then we have Ornge and Chris Mazza: Chris Mazza received \$9.3 million over a six-year period, in addition to it being under RCMP investigation as we currently stand here today—no oversight or accountability from this government.

Then, last week, I think somebody had a question on Presto. The Presto card fare system will cost \$700 million to fully implement, and that will make it one of the most expensive transit systems in the world, the Auditor General said. When the member from Vaughan says we should lead by example, we won't be leading by your example.

I just want to go back to the fact that the government really is just trying to change the channel by introducing this bill and a number of other bills that have come forward in the last week or so. There's really only been a handful of bills with any substance, when I looked at the business before the House over the last week, that have passed or are anywhere close to passing in this House. The government has been spending its time doing things like appointing Sandra Pupatello to Hydro One—which doesn't lead by example when you're giving somebody a part-time job that pays \$150,000—and like hiding behind gross underestimations of gas plant cancellations.

Although we support this bill, I wanted to take this opportunity just to outline some of these scandals, some of the concerns, some of the issues that the government really should be spending their time addressing in this House.

I'm going to close now. I look forward to this bill coming to committee so we can have a look at it and perhaps make some amendments if they're required. I would suggest that the government go back and look at some of these other areas, and bring them forward. Bring forward some of the important bills that need to be addressed in this province, so that we're all here really doing the work that benefits the people who live in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions? The Minister of Northern Development.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you very much. I'm pleased to respond to the—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'm sorry. I did recognize the minister behind you.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Sorry. Anyway, thank you very much, Speaker. I appreciate the opportunity to say a few remarks.

I have high regard for the member for Welland, as I do for all members of the Legislature, but I do think that when one listens to the remarks that were just being made—I hope I'm not too offensive by saying I think it's a bit cute by half.

Certainly, in terms of the MPP compensation, the member suggests that this is being put forward as something that's just there to change the channel. The fact is, the member knows full well, when we put the MPP compensation freeze in place in 2009, it was something that indeed we felt was the right thing to do in terms of setting an example and obviously indicating to everybody in the province that we recognize the challenges other people are facing. We also feel that there's a need to take control of public sector salaries. That, of course, expires March 31 this year, so this legislation is required in order for us to be able to maintain that freeze.

If the member or other members want to suggest they want an increase, that they want that to happen, they should say so. The fact is, this is something that we feel strongly about, and I would actually tend to think the third party would agree with it as well. Don't forget, this also follows the accountability act, capping public sector CEO salaries. That's something important as well. You made reference as if that was not part of it.

The bottom line is that we are determined to take a realistic and a strong approach to eliminating the deficit. We are the leanest government in Canada with 15% of the budget going to costs and compensation. We must all do our part.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened quite intently to the member from Welland. She said right at the beginning she wouldn't be speaking for long. I was somewhat disappointed. There's so much to be said, so little time to say it.

But I would say this, that we understand you support the bill. I'd say it's sort of like an admission that the coalition government is in full effect. In fact, your leader—the other day when she walked out, I thought she had a special meeting with the Premier. I thought there was a secret meeting going on somewhere. But I know they're working hand in hand, and that's completely acceptable, I suppose.

But here's the real fact: Our leader, Tim Hudak, put on the table some months ago—I should say, through you, Madam Speaker, that we would like an across-the-board public sector wage freeze. Let's not tinker around at the edges. There are 107 MPPs. I would say that's probably an appropriate thing, to start with a wage freeze there. To make any significant impact, we've got to look at across the board.

What our leader said—he's put on the table the million jobs plan, and I think that is a reasonable goal that he could achieve if we could all get on the same page here. It's about the red tape. It's about the regulations. It's about electricity rates. It's about the mess they've made of this province in the time that they've had.

I know our member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will be speaking shortly, and I wait anxiously to hear his remarks.

We want this to go to committee. We want the public to get down to the bottom of it. In the climate of this budget, where they're increasing spending, by the reports in the paper this morning, by \$5.7 billion, at a time when they've got a huge deficit already—it's between \$12 billion and \$13 billion now. This idea here, a symbolic move by the Minister of Finance, is nothing more than a shell game. If he wants to do the right thing—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments? The member—you're not in your own seat.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Do I have to go back to my seat?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'll do it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Hamilton Mountain.

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you, Speaker. I think the member from Welland did an absolutely great job spelling out exactly how we feel about this bill as New Democrats over on this side of the House. We're more than happy to take this wage freeze, but we think that it has to be fair.

0920

When we're talking about CEO salaries—the prices that they're taking home as bonuses are way more than the paycheque that I take home; there's a problem with that. Like I said, I'm grateful for the money that I take home, because I know that most people in this province don't have an opportunity to take that kind of money home. So I know how blessed and how grateful I am to have that. But other people need to be looking in their own backyards, at what kind of money they're taking home. We need to make sure that ministers and PAs are taking pay cuts or freezes just the same as we are. We know that—

Interjections.

Miss Monique Taylor: Excuse me. We know that the Liberal government has made sure that every single one of their members is either a minister or a PA. We have ministers with no portfolios. We need to make sure that things are actually fair. Things need to be fair. When we're talking about fairness, when we're talking about transparency, accountability, let's make sure we get it right and that we're not just picking on people who—I mean, what are we talking about here? We're talking about increased hydro rates, increased gas rates—people can't afford it. In Hamilton, it's \$17 for Union Gas, and that's the low end of the spectrum. Enbridge has a 40% increase; Union Gas, \$17 a month. People are coming to me saying, "What am I going to do? I'm on a fixed income."

That \$17 a month means a lot to those folks. They don't seem to mean anything to the people on the other side of the House.

Speaker, when we're talking about fairness, we'd better make sure we get it right.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Welland has two minutes to respond.

Hon. Liz Sandals: No—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Oh, I'm sorry. The Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm determined. Now I'm going to get my comments in here. We'll eventually get it right. Thank you, Speaker.

Let me deal first of all with a couple of red herrings here. First of all, cabinet ministers, PAs, whips, the government House leader, opposition House leaders, whatever—all those various positions that people have—everybody is included in the wage freeze. There's no question about that. Everybody who sits here, whatever they are being paid, will have their wages frozen.

The second thing is that there has been a lot of conversation about CEO wages. In fact, we recognize that we

do need to address executive compensation for public sector CEOs. There's a different accountability act that addresses capping increases to executives in the public sector; that's a different piece of legislation. This piece is focused on MPPs in whatever capacity in this House they happen to serve.

Just to bring the public up to date, we did bring in an MPP wage freeze in 2009. It was a five-year wage freeze. It began April 1, 2009, and expired yesterday, or maybe Monday. So the reason this act is actually quite urgent is to prevent us from getting our April 1 pay increase that would otherwise happen, which is why we are trying to expedite getting this legislation passed so that in fact the additional five years, for a total of—

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: Thank you, Speaker. Maybe I'll just respond through you to the comments of the member from Guelph.

In fact, yes, the freeze ends April 1, but it's frozen anyway, so whether it's done on April 1 or May 1—it can be done retroactively. We've actually confirmed that, I think, with the Clerk's department.

What bothers me most about the introduction of the bill is that it was done so late and it was done in a way to try to make the opposition party and the third party—it was trying to squeeze us. It was to allow you to try to change the channel and put it on the opposition parties, when in fact you didn't bring it forward in a timely way. I think you did that purposely so that you could use it and say, "Well, the MPPs don't want a wage freeze," where, in fact, we certainly are prepared to take wage freezes in these tough times.

The other piece that I wanted to talk about, though, was the fact that the Liberal government has not committed, at this point, to what that CEO wage cap is going to be. I can tell you, Speaker, this issue of CEO pay scandals has been happening for many years. It happened before the Liberal government as well. I raised this issue once before in the House: A woman by the name of Eleanor Clitheroe, under the Tories—we're talking about Hydro One—was making \$2.2 billion in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and still today we have CEOs making close to \$2 million at Hydro One. So clearly this is a problem that hasn't been addressed, and the government needs to deal with it.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm pleased to speak to Bill 177 today. I want to thank the member for Welland for some of her comments. I'm always pleased to listen to what she has to say in this House. She is absolutely right when she talks about the way this bill was introduced. It's a Liberal channel changer; it's about a way of trying to say to the public, "Oh, look at us, the McGuinty-Wynne or the McWynny government, making such sacrifices on your behalf to wrestle down the debt and deficit in Ontario."

This a bill that—would it not have made perfect sense to sit down with the House leaders and say, "This is

something we're planning to do. This is something we'd like to bring forward. It specifically affects only the members of the Legislative Assembly"? The courteous thing to do would have been to sit down with the House leaders. Mr. Milloy would have said to Mr. Wilson and Mr. Bisson, "Look, this is something we want to talk about. This is something we want to introduce."

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: My friend from Kingston and the Islands—I can't say the minister of anything anymore, because he dropped his portfolio. He's the minister of an empty briefcase now. I like the guy, and I'm going to be sorry to see him go, because we've gotten along very well here for 10 years. He does like to interject when I am speaking, but I'm going to address his concerns here.

A lot of things can be accomplished by House leaders. In fact, this is something that would have been easy to accomplish, because we have said from the outset that we're going to support the legislation. But there are some things about this bill and this government that need to be said. They introduced this bill as somehow this is now the answer to the mess that they themselves have created. Do you understand how deep—I know you do, Madam Speaker; I'm not saying this individually to you. But I hope people understand how deep the hole is here in Ontario. It is something that would make Chubb Crater look like a pebble hole—the Chubb Crater up in Quebec, that big, massive—where the meteor struck some time ago, centuries ago? That's there, and it's one of the Canadian natural wonders that this struck the earth and left such a massive hole that it's still talked about centuries and centuries later. This is the hole.

This is the interesting thing, Madam Speaker: This bill says that wages will remain frozen—there is no deadline of 2019 in the bill. Wages will remain frozen for MPPs until two years after the budget is balanced. The way this government is going—with the help of the third party and my friend from Trinity-Spadina, God bless—and running the fiscal affairs of this province, we will never—I want you to write this down. In fact, it is being recorded in Hansard; I'm glad that this is going to be written down. This government, this Liberal McWynny government, will never, never balance a budget. They do not have what it takes. This government will never balance a budget.

0930

This province was in much better shape. If you take a look at what happened—5.6, whatever the number you want to talk about—think about 2003, and the natural things that had nothing to do with the government: two bouts of SARS; mad cow; and a blackout that we had nothing to do with, that originated in Ohio. That added up. You had half a year—this government had half a year to take the necessary fiscal steps to try to bring this back into balance. They refused; they did nothing. Under this government, we will never balance.

But I want to bring into perspective what we're talking about here. We're talking about a wage freeze for

members of the Legislative Assembly, which we support. But this is the net effect of it per year: about \$350,000. Now, I say to my friend from Welland, how long would it take those high-priced civil servants to earn \$350,000? That is the collective effect of this bill on the budget of the province of Ontario: about \$350,000 a year.

Yesterday or the day before, we just found out that this government is—you know that big hole I was telling you about? I guess “Chubb Crater” maybe isn’t the best description, because it shouldn’t be something that is so broad. It should be something that is so deep that the further you go down, the more unlikely it is that you’re ever going to be able to climb out of it.

In fact, our deficit is getting China-like, and I don’t mean like the deficit of China. I mean that we’re digging so far down—you know the old saying that if you dig deep enough, you’re going to come out in China? Well, that’s where we’re getting with this debt and this deficit. The debt is more than double that of California, and we’ve been led to believe that California is the face of a fiscal mess. Well, Ontario is twice that bad.

We have a Premier now and a finance minister who are going around bragging that they’re going to add \$5.7 billion to the spending of this province. They’re going out there, trying to buy the friendship of this group or that group, saying, “Well, we’re going to invest this in your issues, and we’re going to invest this in your issues,” hoping that when it comes down to ballot day, they’re going to be successful at the polls.

Ask yourself this question. If the Liberals are successful at the polls, and they’re adding \$5.7 billion in spending—this is their DNA. I think this is why people like my friend from Kingston and the Islands are leaving this place, because they no longer—and my friend from Sudbury; and Linda Jeffrey, former member—she is no longer a member, so I can use her name. Linda Jeffrey, former member, has decided to leave this place to run for mayor in Brampton. You see, Linda Jeffrey was always one on the fiscally conservative side of that side of the House. I believe that she looks at these numbers and she says, “You know what? I’ve got to get out of this place, because this party that I’m a member of is taking us deeper and deeper and deeper into the mire.”

I know my friend from Kingston and the Islands is leaving for that same reason. He can’t take it anymore. He’s not even interjecting, because he is so saddened by what his own government has been doing.

What we have said is, “Okay, you want to use this as an example? We’re fine with that.” As my friend from M Hamilton Mountain said, we make a good wage. We’re not starving on this side of the House; we’re not starving on any side of the House. We’re prepared to make the kinds of sacrifices that might help the fiscal situation here in the province of Ontario. However, making an example of MPPs is not changing the fiscal map in the province of Ontario. It is not changing the grid. We’re talking about \$350,000.

Here’s what we have said from the onset, Madam Speaker. We have said from the onset that if you want to

make a significant mark and do something that will be recognized as being more than symbolic, you have to apply a wage freeze to the entire public sector. That has to be broad based and across the province of Ontario, everyone who is a direct or indirect government employee.

Look, I appreciate the work that our public servants do, but anybody who says that they’re not in a fortunate group would be deluding themselves. They are in a fortunate group. They have, in most cases, significantly more job security than people in other sectors. In most cases, they enjoy a defined benefit pension plan. They have some tremendous advantages over the rest of the population.

If it is the government that has this debt and deficit, then everyone who is part of that government needs to also, as they have accepted the benefits of being part of government, whether they are in the legislative arm as we are or in the administrative arm as they are—if they have accepted those benefits, then is it not equally fair that they accept some of the responsibility as we try to wrestle this debt and deficit down?

I think the public service is probably ready to do that, but do you know who’s not ready? Do you know who is not ready to do that? It is Premier Wynne and the Liberal government, because they don’t want to face any of the negative pushback from those who may not buy into the plan.

If you were to implement an across-the-board public wage freeze, that would have not a \$350,000 impact but a \$2-billion impact yearly. As long as that wage freeze stayed in effect, a \$2-billion-a-year impact. Now that is significant. That is something that would help us get the deficit under control much quicker. I think the public has to understand that. It’s wonderful to go and say, “Look what we’ve done. We’ve frozen the wages of members of provincial Parliament.” Great. We accept that. But don’t try and say that this is now a manifestation of what is an austere government. Please—\$68 billion in government spending when this party came into power. I shudder to think what it’s going to be in the next budget, but if we’re talking \$5.7 billion of new spending, spending in this government is going to be over \$130 billion. So spending will have almost doubled.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services—he’s being facetious, of course. “Well, let’s cut.” If your spending has doubled, something is wrong. You’re not getting the bang for your buck. You’re not putting the money in the best places. You guys are spending money simply on the basis of trying to buy votes from this group or that group.

In fact, I look at the Ministry of Education as the minister sits there. Is education important? It’s the most important thing we can give to our children, but you have to manage the system. Is it not somewhat strange that we have 250,000 fewer students in the province of Ontario today than we had when the Liberal government took over, but we are spending \$8.5 billion more in education?

This government is—this is how they think: “Well, if you just spend more, spend more, spend more, you must be doing it right.” Well, if you only thought that way, as a family or as a business, you’d be out of business in no time at all. Whatever happened to spending wisely? Whatever happened to judiciously examining the expenditures and the revenues and asking, “Are we maximizing what we can get out of this program or that program? Are we maximizing what we can get out of this ministry? Are we maximizing what we can get out of this sector?” Or are we simply saying, “Oh, well, somebody over there said they weren’t happy. Let’s shovel in a little more coal”? Let’s just keep the fire going. Rev it up until it’s 95 degrees in the kitchen, because as long as we just keep putting more in there, everybody is going to be happy.

0940

Well, it doesn’t work that way. It doesn’t work that way because sooner or later, you’ve got to pay the piper. We have a debt problem in this province that is becoming an albatross around the neck of anyone who wants to consider investing in this province. But this government doesn’t want to deal with it.

It’s funny. When Kathleen Wynne was elected the leader of the Liberal Party, she was running in that convention on a platform of wrestling the deficit to the ground in Ontario, because she saw that as the priority. She then became the Premier by default because Dalton McGuinty had left in disgrace and scandal. So she became the Premier by default, and now she thinks—by the way, Speaker, Premier Wynne thinks that she has no—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes, a point of order.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I love to listen to my good friend, but I would like him to speak on the topic. He’s attributing things that I’m not sure he’s allowed to do—

Interjection: Motive—you’re impugning motive.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: —too many motives. I would like you to refrain from doing that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I would remind the member not to impugn motive and obviously consider the importance of the bill.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I don’t think for any moment that I impugned anyone’s motive. As far as this being on the topic, this is a bill about the finances of the province of Ontario. If I can bring into focus the disaster that we are facing here as a result of this government, I think that is as pertinent to the bill as any conversation we could be having. I beg your indulgence on that score, Madam Speaker, because if this is what they want to do and this is what they’re portraying as somehow attacking, this is—they’re the ones who get up here and say this is the leanest government in history.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, that is extremely funny. I’m trying to show you, Madam Speaker, just how lean they aren’t.

A couple of years ago they talked about taking charge and working on the debt and the deficit, so they did put a freeze on senior management in the public sector. But as it turned out, 98% of the people affected received bonuses—98% received bonuses—which more than compensated for what would have been any kind of a cost-of-living increase to their wages. I guess my question is, what did those 2% do wrong? Madam Speaker, can you imagine being one of those 2% who didn’t get a bonus? Wow. I don’t want to read the employment evaluation on those folks, because it must have been some negative. Can you imagine? If 98% of the Toronto Maple Leafs were doing their job, we wouldn’t be fighting for a playoff spot right now; we’d already have locked it up. It’s just incredulous that they can somehow sell this. I don’t know if the public doesn’t pay attention sometimes because they’re so inundated with reams and reams of information that make no sense whatsoever. How can they not ask themselves how any organization can pay a bonus to 98% of its people? It just doesn’t make sense. Bonuses are paid for performance above and beyond the call of duty. How can 98% of the people achieve that? The bar is so low for these people that they have re-defined the game of limbo. You remember people used to go under that bar, the limbo? Well, I’ll tell you, these people could slide under it like a rattlesnake.

But anyway, now they come out with this \$5.7 billion in new spending. There are two things they’re trying to do here: (1) If there is an election, they’re out to buy the votes; (2) If there isn’t an election, they’re out to buy the NDP. There’s one of two things at play here. But \$5.7 billion in additional spending—here’s some of the things they’re going to do. Now they’re going to, after adding \$4 billion to the debt retirement charge to spend on other things, as Vic Fedeli was able to point out—Vic’s doing a great job as finance critic. In his Fedeli Focus on Finance, he has brought to light a number of the things that this government has been doing—I can’t believe that the time has almost run out. Now they say they’re going to take the debt retirement charge off in 2016. Well, we told these people in 2011 that the debt retirement charge, as far as the consumer was concerned, had already been paid.

But this is the way they do politics. It’s like boutique politics. “Oh, we’ve got to throw something like this in there. We’ve got to make these people happy. We’ve got to throw something in here, a little bone for this group here,” and the next thing you know, spending is right back where it was: out of control.

You see, the Premier got her hands on the door to that corner office a little over a year ago, and she don’t want to let go. She don’t want to let go. She loves the trappings of power. If it costs your children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren their future, she is prepared to mortgage that, and that is a shame.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It’s always a treat to listen to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, and he

didn't disappoint this morning, so I want to thank him for that.

I also wanted to comment that there were a couple of things he said that really struck a chord with me, and they struck a chord with the constituents that I represent in London West.

A lot of what we're seeing in this legislation is a PR spinning exercise. It's an attempt to deflect attention away from the financial abuse of public dollars that we've seen from this Liberal government, to try to change the channel by saying that we need to freeze MPPs' salaries.

Of course we need to freeze MPPs' salaries. The NDP agrees that this is important for MPPs to do when the people in this province are being squeezed. They are facing significant financial challenges, and we need to lead by example.

I hear from constituents in my riding who are on ODSP, the Ontario Disability Support Program, and their benefits are not being indexed to inflation. They are having to do more with less. They are seeing their costs go up as the amount of support that they get remains the same, and they are struggling. People in my riding are struggling with skyrocketing hydro rates. At the same time, we're seeing this symbolic, grand gesture with the MPP Salary Freeze Act.

We're not seeing the action that Ontarians expect from this government to go after CEO salaries. We have seen no action to cap CEO pay, and that's why having the debate on this legislation is important. We have to bring this to light.

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'd like to take a slightly different approach. I would like to ask a question, Speaker. How many members knew, or were interested in knowing, what they were going to make if they were going to be an elected member of provincial Parliament? I don't know about you, but for any office that I ever ran for, I didn't have a clue as to what we were going to make, whether it was a local office, a provincial office or whatever.

We are pretty well-paid in here. Let that be said. We're probably in the 1% or 2% or 3% of the highest wage-earners in this province, whether you're a backbench member, a cabinet minister or whatever. So let's get that out of the way.

This bill affects everybody in this House, whether you're the Premier or a lowly backbench member in opposition, in government or whatever. That's number one.

Let me talk about something else: the sunshine list. I am as concerned as you are, and have talked about this publicly, privately and openly for many, many years. There are way too many people earning way too much money in the public sector in Ontario in one way or another. It's incumbent on us that we do something about it. I don't know exactly how to do it. Yes, you've got your simplistic answers, but you and I know that these issues are much more complicated than that.

0950

This is a very simple bill and we should just get on with it and pass it. Salaries have been frozen for the last five years; they will be frozen for at least the next three or four years. We're doing quite well in here. I think we can get on with the business of dealing with the issues of this province by passing this bill as quickly as possible.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I have to say that the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke always brings a very energized and enlightened view of any bill that's brought forward here in the chamber. But I do have to strike home again and reinforce what the member said earlier. This bill is, again, inept in its ability to bring austerity to the province of Ontario and get Ontario back on track. I mean, \$350,000—that's the economic impact this bill is going to have on the so-called austerity measures that the Liberal government is bringing forward. That's one executive in the public sector. So they hire one more executive—which they will this year, guaranteed. You just have to look at the sunshine list and you'll see how many more executives are being hired in the bureaucracy—an over-bloated bureaucracy. It's a travesty.

People in my riding of Northumberland–Quinte West are struggling to stay in their homes with skyrocketing hydro bills. Their property taxes are going up. This government seeks under every rock, nook and cranny on how they're going to bring in new taxes and put it on the backs of the hard-working people, not just in Northumberland–Quinte West, but across this province. It's asinine what this government does.

Madam Speaker, I can honestly say, when I stand here and I represent the fine people from Northumberland–Quinte West, this government can no longer be trusted with the books here in the province of Ontario. We need to change this team. Tim Hudak and the PC caucus have put forward great ideas, and we're going to lead this—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I did enjoy the presentation made by my friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I equally enjoyed the passion that the Chair of cabinet put into his defence of Bill 177.

I just want to congratulate this government for having introduced this bill. It's a great bill. We need to remind the public that we haven't had a salary increase for five years.

Interjection: What about the feds?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm going to get to that.

What better way to do it than to introduce a bill so that the entire Ontario population knows that we have frozen our salary for five years and that we will continue to do so—because I suspect a lot of people don't know that, and we needed a bill so the public understands the passion, like the Chair of cabinet put into his defence of our freezing our salaries. I think this is really good.

The other thing the government could do is to introduce a bill to say, "By the way, we don't have a pension

and we need a bill to remind people that MPPs haven't had a pension since 1995." What better way to do it than to introduce a bill that people will get to know about? Because as you know, 97% to 99% of the public doesn't know that we don't have a pension, and they ought to know, and I think—I recommend this to the Premier and I recommend it to the Chair of cabinet, that we introduce such a bill.

And what else could we do? The Mike Harris regime cut 23 MPPs in 1998. They proudly did that so that people like me could represent 160,000 people, which is good, because this is a way of saving money and it's a way of me being able to represent more and more people. All this is good. Introduce yet another bill to do that. I think you guys are doing just great.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Point of order: I just wanted to clarify that there is a pension plan for Liberals. It's called political patronage appointments.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): That's not a point of order.

The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate the comments from the members from London West, Kingston and the Islands, Northumberland–Quinte West and, of course, my friend from Trinity–Spadina.

I just want to close by reminding people, first of all, that, as my friend from Welland said earlier, the Liberals don't want to talk to the bill. I understand that, because they've had their tongues cut out by the Premier, I think. But this bill, whenever it's passed, will act retroactively. Whenever this bill is passed—and it will be passed—it will act retroactively, so it will come into effect April 1 regardless of when it actually receives royal assent. So there's no issue about when this bill actually gets debated and when it gets passed.

My friend from Kingston and the Islands did talk about some of his thoughts on it, and some of them we share. The reality is that if you're going to get a hold of a burgeoning debt or deficit in this province, you have to take stronger steps than what we're taking here. This is a baby step. This is not even a baby step; it's a minuscule symbolic gesture. But as I said, it could have been done in such a different way. In the week that this Legislature was on a break, Minister Sousa goes out and makes this grandiose announcement: "By gosh, look at us, the Liberals. We're going to refreeze the salaries of MPPs for a further" indeterminate period of time. They used the date 2019, but the fact is, the bill clearly states that they will be frozen until two years after the budget is out of deficit.

Members in the federal House have continued to get raises. That's why we had to bring in this bill, because our wages are tied to the federal wage; 75% of the wage paid to a federal MP is supposed to be the salary of a provincial MPP. So they have unfrozen their wages—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Time is up. Thank you.

Further debate?

Mr. Michael Harris: It's a pleasure to rise this morning and add my—I was going to say two cents, but we'll just say zero cents—20 minutes, to Bill 177, the MPP Salary Freeze Act. I listened with great interest to my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for 20 great minutes on the things he had to say. I'll build upon some of those things.

We all have our part, in Ontario, especially as elected officials, to turn our province around and get our finances heading in the right direction. As the member so eloquently stated, we're really talking here about, what, \$350,000? That is really what the freeze would amount to. That is not going to get us out of the hole that they dug over the last 10 years.

I want to say at the outset that I'm supportive of this bill and supportive of the fact that our salaries will continue to be frozen. I didn't get into this for the money; I got into this to serve my community and represent the people of Kitchener–Conestoga. I've thoroughly enjoyed the last two years doing so, and I can assure you it's definitely not about the money.

However, though, our caucus has stated that we are committed to an across-the-board public sector wage freeze so that the burden is shared equally. Instead of the government's failed wage freeze, we've seen increases given out to eight out of every 10 contracts over the past three years. The government kind of tinkers around the edges. As we proved through their own internal documents, they've actually got no plans to balance the budget.

Look, when I go back to my riding on Fridays and on the weekends, I have an opportunity to meet with a variety of folks who come into my office, or I'm out in the community, whether it be at Tim Hortons or at the No Frills in Elmira. I had a mother in, with three autistic children. She said, "I cannot get the supports that I need. We're on a wait-list. Why? Because they say that we have no money in the province of Ontario to help my children."

But yet, come election time, the government, the Liberal Party, announces that they're going to move or cancel two power plants. Now, they said it would cost us \$40 million. The Premier said "Oh, look, it's just \$40 million." The Auditor General came out and said—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Harris: look, Glen, Minister, you should really read the Auditor General's report. She'll tell you that you could—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'll remind the member that his comments come to the Speaker, not individual members.

1000

Mr. Michael Harris: Sorry, Madam Speaker.

If the minister has a few minutes today, he should read the Auditor General's report on the cancellation of those power plants. He will read in there that it didn't need to happen that way, but they were so obsessed with getting it out of the public realm into arbitration so that folks, come election time, weren't disputing the legal ramifi-

cations of this, and they took the bargaining chips the government had off the table. They could have just run the course here and the permitting wouldn't have happened, and Ontarians wouldn't have been out a billion and one but they're out a billion and one. That's what the auditor said. Those are the numbers from the Auditor General. Don't believe me, believe her. He should read that report to get a good idea of exactly what she said.

It's mothers like that who come to me and say, "How could they waste a billion and one to save a few Liberal seats, and my children, who have autism, can't get the supports that they need?" And the list goes on and on and on.

I had the CEO of KidsAbility in my office just last week, Linda Kenny. She was talking about our young children who are heading off to full-day kindergarten and who have developmental disabilities. They have learning issues, some that have never even been identified yet. I think for every one student they know about who goes through their program, whether it be just general learning disabilities, accessory disabilities, obviously symptoms of autism—for every one child they're working with, there are two or three more they've never even identified, and this obviously takes resources to help these kids.

She talked about a young child who, at the age of three, couldn't pick up his spoon to eat. And you know what? I have two young boys. They're going to be joining us this morning for question period. Lincoln is about four months and Murphy, he's two. He's eating now on his own which is nice to see. But I thought of that young boy who, at the dinner table with his family, can't eat by himself.

She was talking about how they brought a specialist in. They were helping him walk through things on his terms, and through that help, he's now able to eat on his own, pick up that spoon, and use those utensils. It's things like this—when we see a billion and one wasted, it's sad.

So to talk about an MPP salary freeze—hey, I'm all for it. But we've asked and we've pleaded with this government to make it fair for everyone: an across-the-board public sector wage freeze for everyone. What would that save you? Some \$350,000 for this bill; \$2 billion if we treated everyone equally—and at the end of the day, folks just say, "You know what, why pick on me?"

I had a meeting with the local teachers' union on Friday and they brought up Bill 115: "They were picking on us." I think if you said, "We're in a pinch here. We've spent loose and recklessly over the last 10 years. We have a \$12-billion deficit"—roughly \$12 billion a year is spent on servicing our debt. People can't believe when you tell them health care, education—and what's the third largest spending commitment in Ontario? To service our debt. I mean, sending the money overseas so that they can build their roads, educate their kids and take care of their seniors and health care system? It's asinine, as the member for Northumberland–Quinte West just recently stated. Who would have even thought that? It's insane. It's like they don't even open up the credit card

statement at the end of the month to know how long that will take to actually pay back.

We talk to job creators. They say, "Look, your province doesn't have their own financial house in order. That's too much of a risk, to come here and potentially shoulder their reckless spending on the backs of our investors." They just won't do it. Debt and deficits are a major and immediate threat to our province's ability to attract more jobs, as high taxes and user fees drive businesses out of the province.

You know what? I'll have to bring it up: I didn't have a BLT this morning—it sounded good. But yesterday we learned about the Liberal BLT, the budget-leaking team, and in there it talks about 39 announcements over the next 27 days to add \$5.7 billion in new spending. We're talking about \$350,000 this morning—really. Then we read of 39 announcements over 27 days, \$5.7 billion in new spending. It's crazy.

I was talking to my colleague from Durham, and we're going to miss him, whenever the next election comes. I know he won't be too far. I've been given great counsel, and the member for Durham has been a real mentor to me. I wanted to say this because I might not get another chance. As a new member, I came to Queen's Park, and I tell everybody, "If you want to learn how to do this job properly"—and I have enjoyed my opportunity as an opposition member to learn my role as an MPP. He's in the House all the time, and I'll tell you, the guy reads the bills thoroughly. He knows all the issues. So I've modelled what I have done by learning from members like the member for Durham. I know his son is now in Ottawa and he will have probably picked up a few of those things, too, and it will make him a great MPP. But I would like to thank the member for Durham for what he has taught me over the last two years. We will miss him for sure.

I wanted to get back to a recent announcement, last week. The Premier announced, after one of her ministers said that she was going to run for mayor of Brampton, that she wasn't just going to look to other ministers to fill that gap; she was going to actually replace her with not one but two people—two people. So the largest cabinet already—I think they outnumber the MPPs, cabinet ministers do. At a time when we're talking about an MPP wage freeze bill, she goes and she appoints not one but two people to replace one who is leaving. So what does that cost? It's an additional \$45,000, \$46,000 per MPP now to be a cabinet minister. You've got to go out and hire drivers in fancy cars. You've got to get staff. Not only that, but she kept the minister without—now, I did see him bring a portfolio into the Legislature this morning. I don't know what was in it. But she kept the minister without portfolio. Come on. What is going on here? People say, "You guys should take a wage freeze." That's fine. We'll do that; no problem. Then she turns around and she appoints two people to replace one, and leaves another one without a portfolio. I just don't get it, and I don't think people in my community of Kitchener–Conestoga get it either. Really, they just don't.

We're talking about the province's finances. I've talked about the \$5.7 billion in new spending. I just think it's important to go back to advice that they sought out from an economic expert in Ontario. His name was Don Drummond. I know they've forgotten about that guy. I still have the Drummond report in my office on its shelf. I don't know if the Drummond report is in any of their portfolios that they brought in this morning, but they should, when they get a chance, go back to that document each and every week.

Don Drummond laid out a list of things that the government could do to bring its spending under control. I want to give you 10 items from that list that he suggested that they do and which they've clearly ignored.

He said to reduce government spending in all but four ministries—all but four. So last budget, it didn't happen. Clearly, the BLT team has no intention of doing that going forward.

He said to make a clean break from corporate welfare to save \$2 billion to \$3 billion.

They're in Woodstock, I believe, today or tomorrow or this week, announcing hundreds of thousands of dollars for Sysco. Sysco is great food manufacturer—not a manufacturer, but I guess they deliver it across Ontario—a good employer, a huge facility in Woodstock, lots of good jobs. They're opening it this week. We congratulate them for coming to Ontario and investing there. But it's money for them after the fact. So don't swoop in and basically take credit for creating those jobs after it was a private firm that did so on its own.

He said to revamp the LHINs and break down bureaucratic silos in health care to save \$4 billion to \$6 billion. Health care being the number one expenditure in the province of Ontario, we have to address spending in health care, but clearly, that's not in this.

Scrap the \$1-billion Ontario Clean Energy Benefit. He said to modestly increase class sizes to save \$460 million. He said to eliminate 10,000 non-teaching positions to save \$600 million.

This is not me; this is Don Drummond, former chief economist to the TD Bank, somebody the Liberals had asked to put this together.

He goes on: comprehensive arbitration reform for government workers. I know my colleague from Simcoe-Grey put a bill forward on reforming arbitration, something that I know in my community of the region of Waterloo is so desperately needed, as salaries go up and settlements are given across the province that people just can't comprehend.

Significantly reform government worker pensions: I know, Madam Speaker, you've definitely worked on that in the past.

Use competition in awarding energy contracts. Whether it's in our own homes or—I toured a factory last week in Kitchener, and they talked about the fact that they were short \$1 million in predicting what their electricity spend would be last year—\$1 million. When you're looking at a global company that is headquartered in the United States, and they see that a plant in Ontario was \$1

million over budget on their hydro, they say, "What the heck is going on there? We might as well potentially move operations elsewhere." That's what companies have to consider. It's all about the numbers, the return on investment. Ontario has become an extremely expensive jurisdiction to operate in, but it's because of the reckless spending that we have seen over the last 10 years.

I think it's important that the Minister of Transportation is here. If he was listening to 570 News this morning, he would have heard a lead story on a critical piece of infrastructure in the province of Ontario for our community: Highway 7.

Look, I'll give you a bit of a history on this one. Highway 7 was promised in 2007. This is a road that has been long-needed for decades. So in 2010, the Minister of Government Services and the House leader came to the chamber of commerce and said, "We're out of money. We can't afford to do it. We just can't afford to do it." So they cancelled it.

Then in 2012, with a by-election happening in Kitchener-Waterloo, the Premier came to town and said, "Oh, look. Highway 7? It's back on. No problem; it's on, with construction to start in 2015."

Today, or yesterday, we saw, with the Liberal BLT team, that they're planning to come to Kitchener-Waterloo on April 18, I believe—that is probably now scheduled to change—to reannounce a recommitment, but construction won't start until 2016—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Speaker, just on a very small point of order: I do like the individual from Kitchener-Conestoga, but I do believe that he's wavering a little bit and getting beyond the scope of the bill. I'll seek your good guidance on this particular issue.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being nearly 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm pleased to welcome my family to Queen's Park today: Sarah, Murphy over there, and Lincoln on his first visit to the Ontario Legislature. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Good morning. It's my honour this morning to introduce Barb Holland, who is the chair of the Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board, here for OECTA day. Welcome, Barb.

Mr. Rob Leone: On behalf of the Ontario PC caucus, I would like to welcome Catholic educators to Queen's Park today. Many of us legislators took part in His Eminence Cardinal Collins's ceremony of the Eucharist today. Welcome, everyone, to Queen's Park.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd like to introduce Jo-Anne Thibodeau, mother, and grandmother Jannot Thibodeau; they, of course, are related to our wonderful page Milana Thibodeau Morris, who is serving us exceedingly well in this Legislature this week and in other weeks.

Mr. John O'Toole: I also would like to introduce advocates for Catholic education who I'll be meeting with later today: Marshall Jarvis, the former president of OECTA; Anna da Silva; and the Reverend Marcel Dampousse. Welcome to Queen's Park. I look forward to the meeting.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, I believe you'll find we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear buttons in recognition of Dig Safe Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister is seeking unanimous consent to wear the buttons today. Do we agree? Agreed.

Further introductions.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Speaker, another point of order: I believe you'll find that we also have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear ribbons in recognition of World Autism Awareness Day today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services is seeking unanimous consent to wear the ribbons for autism day. Do we agree? Agreed.

The Minister of Research and Innovation.

Hon. Reza Moridi: It's a pleasure to welcome to the Legislature executives from UCB, a leader in the pharmaceutical industry. Joining us here today are Jeffrey Wren, Jim Smyth, Hervé Lilliu and Robert Tam. Please join me in welcoming them.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to introduce to the House today William Stephen, senior historian of Rondeau Provincial Park and author of the mega-book *Rondeau Forever*, dedicated to the heritage Rondeau cottage community. By the way, Speaker, he was a contributing author to your Speaker's Book Award.

Also, I'd like to introduce Barry Fraser from Chatham, Bob Shepley from Huntsville, and Keith Graham. Thank you, gentlemen, and welcome.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome today Mary Lou Mackie, the executive superintendent of the Waterloo Region District School Board.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I would also like to introduce Catholic educators. I have James Ryan, president of the Catholic teachers; Marino Gazzola, president of Catholic trustees; and the entire Catholic education partnership, including Andrew Donihee, Colleen Landers, Anna da Silva, Elizabeth Crowe and Pat Daly. Welcome.

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm so pleased to welcome the chair of our Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board, Patrick Daly, to Queen's Park today. Welcome.

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: Please join me in welcoming the grade 10 class from John Cabot Catholic Secondary School from my great riding of Mississauga-Brampton South. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's my pleasure to introduce, in the west chamber here, Rida Ali. She is a student from the University of Toronto and she is here to witness the theatre this morning, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thought it was question period.

Further introductions? The member from Scarborough-Guildwood.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: It's my pleasure to welcome Liz Stewart and Jo-Ann Davis, who is the chair of the Toronto Catholic District School Board, and I'm pleased to have you here today.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think a lot of people have been introduced already, but if there's anybody here from the Catholic trustees or the Catholic teachers who haven't already been introduced, I would like to say welcome to everybody who is here from our valued Catholic education system.

But I do get to reintroduce Marino Gazzola because he's from Guelph. I'll introduce him as the chair of the Wellington Catholic board.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just noticed Colleen Landers all the way from the city of Timmins, who is here, I imagine, for the same reason, but is also acting on a whole bunch of other things. So whatever you're here for, welcome.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'd like to introduce Moji Agoro, my legislative assistant from Blackburn Hamlet, a graduate of Ottawa university, and from the great riding of Ottawa-Orleans. Moji, would you stand up?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'd like to introduce to this House a great number of students from Holy Name of Mary College School in Mississauga. They haven't arrived, but we welcome them to Queen's Park as they're waiting out by the door.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery members of the steering committee for the Macdonald Project. The purpose of this project is to commemorate and celebrate Sir John A. Macdonald, Canada's first Prime Minister. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests to the Legislature today. Thank you very much for being here.

For those who might not have had an opportunity to see this, in the main foyer is actually the display of the bust that has been asked by the committee to circulate around the province of Ontario, so welcome and thank you again.

The member from Leeds-Grenville on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: Recently the government House leader accused the member from Nipissing of a breach of privilege. This was regarding the release of financial documents to this Legislature.

Yesterday, the chair of the Standing Committee on—
Interjections.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm not finished yet.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It doesn't matter. As a matter of fact, that's precisely why I'm standing. I've made a ruling on that. Thank you.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. Given the OPP ITO's multiple references to David Nicholl in his alleged role as head of the Ontario public service IT department with respect to the deletion of emails and the destruction of hard drives in the former Premier's office, in particular his poor judgment and his gross insubordination to Peter Wallace, the cabinet secretary, and his disreputable orders to his staff, does the Premier agree that Mr. Nicholl should step aside as head of the public service's IT department until the end of the OPP investigation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the member opposite understands that there is an investigation ongoing. We learned of allegations last Thursday about a particular individual who was staff in the former Premier's office, and I really believe that we should let the investigation unfold.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?
1040

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: There are clear passages and exchanges that put Mr. Nicholl's impartiality in the OPS at risk. For example: "[A]fter the meeting on Jan. 30, Mr. Nicholl met with Thom Stenson, manager of information technology services for Cabinet Office, and Rolf Gitt, a senior analyst, and told them to ... give Mr. Livingston administrative rights to the computers. Mr. Nicholl told them the request came directly from the Premier's office."

But "Mr. Stenson told police he had never" heard of "such a request in the 27 years he worked for the" OPS "and that such a request is usually reserved for IT personnel." He said, "That was an unusual request and uh I don't think that's" been "done anywhere...."

Further, "Mr. Nicholl told police that Mr. Hume told him on Jan. 31 to go ahead and provide the access to Mr. Livingston. Mr. Hume does not recall the conversation or granting the approval."

Finally—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —Wendy Wai, the person at the centre of this scandal, said, "Mr. Nicholl gave me [some] sort of access but I didn't know anything about"—

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: —"what to do with it." These revelations are damning. Will you—

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the government House leader is going to want to speak to some of the details, but I will just say again, there is an investigation ongoing, and it is very important that all of us in this House, I believe, allow that investigation to unfold as it should. We have taken extraordinary actions to open up this process, to make sure that there was a committee in place with a scope that was able to look at all of the issues involved in the relocation of the gas plants. That

was something I took on, I committed to. I have done that. There is an investigation going on. We need to let it unfold.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Premier, it is clear that this individual, Mr. Nicholl, has put his own personal and his friend David Livingston's political interests beyond that of the public service. There is, I think, a very clear line between being loyal to the public service and having integrity within the province and actually giving unfettered access to a rogue hacker to get inside the Premier's office, as this individual clearly did and as the OPP ITO clearly demonstrates.

I am asking the Premier to be responsible today. I am asking her to put the people first. I am asking her to do the right thing and have this individual step aside until the justice committee completes its work and until the OPP concludes their investigation. That is the right thing to do. Will you do the right thing or will you continue to do what Liberals do best and try to hide from the public?

Interjections.

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

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I think we all enjoyed that episode of Nepean–Carleton CSI, but the fact of the matter is, there is an OPP investigation going on, and I think we leave it up to the OPP to conduct that investigation. If the honourable member wants to take a look at the court document that she's quoting, I would direct her to appendix D, "Involved Persons." There is one person that the allegations, which are not proven, are directed against. That's the former chief of staff of Premier Dalton McGuinty. Other people involved that she's raising today—let's look at the list. We have the member of provincial Parliament for North Bay, the member of provincial Parliament for Cambridge, the member of provincial Parliament for Toronto–Danforth. The point being, there is a long list of individuals that the OPP have spoken with to reach a conclusion, which is in this document, something that has not been proven yet against the former chief of staff.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm beginning to hear some heckles that I find very, very dangerously close to unparliamentary, and I will call the person on it the next time I hear it. You cannot say indirectly what you're not supposed to say directly, and it's not going to happen.

New question.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. There are a number of similarities between how you handled the gas plant scandal and how you handle other

people who challenge you. You and your cabinet said the gas plant cancellations would cost \$40 million, but the Auditor General said it was \$1.1 billion. You and your cabinet said, "We have all the documents," but the privacy commissioner said documents were destroyed by Liberal operatives. Now the OPP tells us that 24 computers were wiped clean right in your own offices.

When our leader, Tim Hudak, and our energy critic, the member from Nepean–Carleton, called you out, you ran to the lawyers to silence them. You don't want people to know the truth—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities will withdraw.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And you will also come to order.

Carry on, please.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: You don't seem to want people to know the truth or for us to get to the truth. My simple question, Premier: What is it that you're hiding?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the Minister of Government Services is going to want to comment, but I want to just say that when I came into this role, I said that we were going to open up this process, we were going to have all of the questions that were being asked answered, we were going to provide documentation. And that's what we've been doing.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Oxford, come to order. The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Beyond that, we have changed the rules around document retention, around training of staff. We have opened up this process. We have worked with communities to change the rules around siting energy infrastructure.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: We have done what I said we were going to do, and we have gone beyond that. I am happy any day to debate matters of truth, to look at the facts and to have those discussions. I welcome that debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, I'm sensing a pattern here. During the gas plant scandal, you knew one thing but told the public the opposite. Now you're trying to silence our leader, Tim Hudak, and our energy critic. When the member from Aurora exposed that your government had lost control of Ornge, out came the lawyers from high-profile Liberals. When I disclosed the financial mess you've gotten us into, you came after me with what have been proven to be false accusations, as confirmed at the estimates committee last night.

Now, several hard-working, conscientious people have come forward because they're tired of being used as

political pawns, and you go on a witch hunt. Premier, this is not something a witch hunt or a scapegoat will solve. You will do anything to protect yourself. I ask you again: Specifically, what is it that you're hiding?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm very proud of the fact that the Premier sought legal advice, because the facts are very, very clear. We have a court document that was released last week, which contains very serious allegations, yet unproven—I think we all have to be very prudent—against an individual over some activities that happened under the former Premier's watch and under the former chief of staff's watch. When the Leader of the Opposition tries to claim anything different, he is not saying it based on fact. I am very pleased that the Premier of this province would call him out on it.

You know what? I encourage the honourable member to look at the court documents and see the case that is there. He will realize the error of his ways. We certainly look forward to an apology from him and for them to cease and desist with what they're bringing forward.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, you just claimed to be new and different. But after lawsuits, false contempt threats and witch hunts, it's clear you've changed. You now will do anything to protect yourself. On a personal note, I would have expected this sort of partisan scheme from former Premier Dalton McGuinty. No member of the civil service should be put in a situation where they are asked to do the pre-election promotional work of the Liberal Party. By being involved in this scheme, you, Premier Wynne, have squandered any benefit of doubt you may have once had. There's a pattern here of delete, destroy and deny. We saw it through the gas plant hearings. We're seeing it through the two OPP investigations. We're seeing it in your Pan Am debacle. We saw how you handled the two finance fumbles.

Premier, I'll ask you again: What is it that you're hiding from us?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Be seated, please. Thank you. The members will come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: The member has the gall to talk about denying. You know what? Perhaps he should look at one section of the court document I'd like to quote to him here. I believe it's a sentence on line 153. It begins, "In June 2011, Greenfield South Power Corporation began the construction of the power plant in Mississauga. In September 2011, a provincial election campaign began and the Liberal Party of Ontario promised to cancel the construction of the plant in Mississauga if they were elected. The Ontario Progressive Conservatives and the

New Democratic Party also made similar promises if elected.”

On October 6 “the Liberal Party won the provincial election.” They “won the seat in Mississauga.”

Now, wait for it, folks. “Even though”—

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: Wait for it. “Even though they made the same promise during the election, the opposing parties accused the Liberal Party of cancelling the power plant only to secure a seat in Parliament.”

1050

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. The Premier may have showed up yesterday, but she failed to answer many questions. I guess there’s a reason it’s not called answer period, Speaker. I’m hoping she can do better today. Can the Premier tell us what services Peter Faist was providing to the Liberal Party up until last Sunday?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said yesterday, the individual about whom the leader of the third party is talking was someone who did provide services—occasional services—to the Liberal Party up until Sunday, when we discovered that he was still providing those services. He had not been providing services to my office or to the government, Mr. Speaker. Those services had ended in January 2013.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier has argued that Mr. Faist is not under investigation and there’s nothing unusual or suspicious about the fact that he was paid by the Ontario Liberals as recently as last week. If Mr. Faist was doing nothing wrong at all, if nothing wrong was being done, why was he then suddenly fired this weekend, Speaker?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I have attempted over the last couple of days and last Thursday, when these allegations were first made, to simply make it clear what we know and what we have done. The fact is, last Thursday, when the allegations were found, we did an internal investigation. There were allegations about one individual who was the chief of staff in the former Premier’s office. When we discovered that this man, this company that had been involved providing services in the former Premier’s office, was still providing services to the OLP, we terminated that relationship. That happened on Sunday.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, then I just want to make sure, will the Premier at least tell us specifically whether his alleged role in the illegal destruction of gas plant records was a factor in his termination on Sunday?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To be clear, the allegations were made, and they centre on the chief of staff of the former Premier, Mr. Speaker. We have said that repeatedly, and the leader of the third party knows that that is what is in the documentation. We determined that this

company was still providing services periodically to the Liberal Party, and that relationship was terminated. The police are doing their work, and we need to let that work continue. We need to let that investigation, we need to let that process, unfold.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier as well. Police records indicate that government staff were concerned—they were concerned—by David Livingston’s attempts to wipe computers clean with the alleged assistance of Peter Faist. Did any staff raise these concerns with the Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I wasn’t the Premier at that point, Mr. Speaker. There was another Premier; there was a former Premier. The former Premier was in the office when—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The allegations, as the leader of the third party knows, are centred on the chief of staff of the former Premier. That person did not work for me, has not worked for me and has not been in my office since I took office on February 11, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, last June, when the privacy commissioner first raised serious concerns about the illegal deletion of emails and computer records, the Premier said she’d fix the problem, yet the Premier also says that she was as surprised as anyone about allegations in the OPP documents nearly six months later. If the Premier was taking steps to fix the problem, how then is it possible that she’s never heard one single thing about an unauthorized individual roaming the halls and accessing people’s computers?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, let’s be clear: What I did was I took the advice of the privacy commissioner, and we’ve taken a number of actions to make sure that document retention in this government is as it should be. We sent a directive—I sent a directive—to all political staff. We developed mandatory training programs. We appointed chiefs of staff accountable for record-keeping. We improved archiving requirements. My office worked with the Integrity Commissioner and the Information and Privacy Commissioner. The accountability act would prohibit the willful deletion of records. That is the action that we have taken.

I will just say that on June 13, 2013, Dr. Ann Cavoukian, who is the Information and Privacy Commissioner, said, “I have commended Premier Kathleen Wynne’s government’s approach to dealing with this issue, referencing the staff training program she instituted and the memo circulated by her chief of staff.”

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, people have heard promises of change and accountability from this Premier, but for families stuck with the bill for this scandal, the

song remains the same, unfortunately. When I said I wanted the Premier to show up for work, I assumed that she would actually do her job and answer some straightforward questions.

Does the Premier expect anyone in Ontario to believe that over an entire year, not a single human being—not one single person—raised the issue of Mr. Livingston or Mr. Faist or the activities that were going on right under her nose?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the chief of staff of the former Premier was the chief of staff of the former Premier; he did not work for me.

I just want to let the leader of the third party know what Dr. Cavoukian has said. Again, she's the Information and Privacy Commissioner. On July 26, 2013, she said, "I think on a go-forward basis, the government really is looking to change things. The government is dedicated to opening up access to government data."

That is what we're dedicated to. That is why we have made the changes that we have made. That is why we will continue to make the changes that will hold us accountable and will provide the opportunity for the public and members of the opposition to have the information that they ask for. That was our commitment, and that is what we have delivered on.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Premier. Premier, yesterday when you were asked about your working relationship with Peter Faist you said, "I had not learned of his existence until the last few days." I hope you can see why no one believes you. We're talking about the life partner of the former deputy chief of staff, who worked for both your caucus and your party.

Now I understand if the Premier is suffering from another one of her bouts of selective amnesia—we all know that this happens quite frequently when she's under pressure—but I'll give you another chance to set the record straight today. Premier, do you seriously contend that you just learned of the former deputy chief of staff's boyfriend, who was employed by your caucus and your party over the course of four years?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I may have made light in previous answers, but this is a very serious matter. I refer to that appendix, where there is one individual—the former chief of staff—who police are looking into. There are allegations that are not yet proven. There are all sorts of other individuals involved, and there are reputations on the line. This is a police investigation. For that honourable member to stand up here today and try to enter into a serious matter, a serious investigation, is quite frankly beneath him.

It's really the whole party. This is supposed to be the party of Bill Davis. Look at what some of the media are saying about what they're doing. The Globe and Mail, April 1: "The Conservative leader's aggressive attempts to score points without the facts to back them up are

reminding Ontario voters why they haven't warmed up to him."

I would say that—

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

Mr. Michael Harris: When the Premier can choose when and when not to remember critical facts, I think it's clear that she's no longer suffering from selective amnesia; she's suffering from the inability to tell the truth.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: Withdrawn.

So last week we learned that senior Liberal staffers in your government right now, including Lauren Ramey and Jason Lagerquist, told the OPP that they knew their computers had been tampered with. Yet you continue to claim that you had no idea what was happening in your own office as evidence needed for a criminal investigation was being destroyed all around you.

1100

I would like to know when this information came to light to key members of your transition team, including Tom Allison, Monique Smith and Greg Sorbara. When did these individuals become aware that Peter Faist gained access to 24 government computers in your office, and when did they learn that email information related to the gas plant scandal had been destroyed?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, this isn't a game; this is an OPP investigation. There is one person who has been named, the former chief of staff. There are other people who, according to the court document, have been interviewed or spoken with. I think the honourable member, if he truly is an honourable member, will allow the OPP to do their work, because the fact of the matter is that their tactics so far—let me share some other quotes here.

The Ottawa Citizen yesterday said that the PCs "asked repeatedly" whether Premier Wynne's computer was among those wiped, "which makes little sense: the police are crystal clear" that they are interested in computers in Premier McGuinty's office, where Premier Wynne did not work.

The Toronto Star: "Hudak went far beyond what the facts show." The Toronto Star again: "Yet every time he"—the Leader of the Opposition—"steps into a room of reporters who have actually read the police document—and can see how he is deliberately misreading it—the Tory leader risks diminishing his long-term credibility."

That is what the media are saying about their—

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

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, a question through you to the Premier: Is the Premier aware that one of the key people interviewed by the OPP over the deletion of government records has been put in charge of keeping government records while that investigation is ongoing?

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

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, the honourable member should look at appendix D of it. It highlights one individual who is the subject of these allegations, the former chief of staff to the former Premier. It mentions other individuals who are involved in this, including the member from Toronto–Danforth.

Let us allow the police to do their work. They put forward a document which was very clear that they have an interest in the former chief of staff. They are serious allegations—everyone admits that—but they are simply allegations, and I think it would be the prudent course for all of us to respect the OPP's work, to allow the OPP to reach their conclusions, and, from there, to see where it takes us in terms of the justice system. That is the tradition of this House, and that honourable member is undermining it with his questions and allegations here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My, my, my, Speaker. It may be that the Premier is aware that I never had a chance to chat with the OPP, but I would be happy to talk with them and fill them in on my perspective any time.

How does the Premier explain putting one of the key figures in the ongoing police investigation in charge of keeping government records?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, there is an OPP investigation going on. I have read that document. It's available. I tell the honourable member, it's available on the Star's website. Perhaps, if he doesn't have an account, someone will lend them their password—sorry about that.

But the fact of the matter is, what that document says is that there is one individual who they believe may have—they are allegations—committed a very serious breach, and that is the former chief of staff. There are dozens of other people that they perhaps have interviewed or who have come into the story. They are in the process by going to court and talking about one individual, and that's it. To stand up here with these drive-by smears about the other people named in this document, which, as I say, includes himself, is beneath the office that he holds.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. In my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, I am privileged to meet families and to listen to their concerns. One concern that I frequently hear from parents is that they want to know that the right services and supports are in place for their children.

This becomes even more important if their child is living with autism. We know the prevalence of autism is increasing. As a government, we must continue to take action to help families that face these additional challenges.

Can the minister please tell me what we are doing as a government to ensure that autism services are continually improving and expanding so that they are made available to more young people and their families?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I thank the member for her question, especially today, World Autism Awareness Day, as we know. Thank you to all the members for wearing the ribbons today as we move on with autism.

I've met some remarkable young people with autism and their families, so I'm certainly aware of the challenges that the families and individuals face. Each child with autism is unique, and we require unique services.

Unfortunately, we know as well that the prevalence of the disease continues to grow. The CDC reports now that one in 68 children will be diagnosed; not that long ago it was one in 150, so it is an increase in our numbers.

While we continue to increase our investments, we know that there is more work to be done. We are currently reviewing the advice of our clinical expert committee in conjunction with what we heard from our families. This advice will be critical as we move forward to ensure our families and children are properly supported.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Minister, thank you for that answer. I, too, have met these remarkable young people who have autism in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood. The people of Scarborough–Guildwood will be happy to know that we will be following the advice of experts and families to address some of the challenges faced by families caring for young people with autism.

As a government, it's important that we continue to listen to their concerns and find ways to deliver services more effectively, and reduce wait-lists. In Ontario, there has been real progress over the last decade in improving diagnoses and bolstering individual services. While the prevalence of autism is increasing, our government continues to increase our investments. I know that we have recently taken a number of steps to help children with autism.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What is our government currently doing to help children and youth with autism?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Again, thank you for the question. I will be meeting with many from Autism Ontario this evening.

Today, we are launching the autism parent resource toolkit. This online resource will help increase parents' and caregivers' understanding of autism and the range of programs and supports available for children and youth and their families. The kit is a one-stop resource to help families identify, plan for and access programs and supports for their child, to help them navigate the many great programs and services that we have.

We've also recently announced, as you know, our new Special Needs Strategy, which will also help families caring for young people with autism. As part of the strategy, we'll be introducing a new developmental screen to help identify risks to a child's development as

soon as possible, which is absolutely critical. This will help connect families sooner to the services they need. Through this strategy and all our connections, we will ensure that our families and children with autism are properly supported

POWER PLANTS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: My question is for the Premier. Premier, you named your transition team on January 29, 2013. David Livingston and your transition lead, Monique Smith, were said to have had close frequent contact. We are here to represent the people of Ontario and they want to know why you have not asked Ms. Smith or any of your senior transition staff if they knew about Peter Faist's deletion of emails.

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

Hon. John Milloy: Again, this has come about because of a document provided by the police to the courts that was made public last week. The document is very clear that it involves allegations—unproven allegations; we have to be very careful—against a former chief of staff to Premier McGuinty about events that took place under the former Premier's watch. Those are the facts of that court document. I believe it is 111 pages, and I invite the honourable member to read it. In fact, I invite all honourable members to read it because the reviews out there aren't that great.

Let me tell you what—

Interjections.

Hon. John Milloy: I'll keep going.

Let me tell you what the Toronto Star also said yesterday: The Leader of the Opposition is "inventing fanciful scenarios about the first days of Wynne's premiership."

The Globe and Mail had an editorial yesterday: "Ontario Progressive Conservative leader"—

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

Mrs. Jane McKenna: The minister is reading selective passages. Here is the truth, Premier: You keep insisting the problem was a lack of rules, but your own party introduced legislation to outlaw the deletion of official records. You just choose to ignore it. Premier, the problem here isn't the absence of rules, it's the absence of character.

You say you've answered tough questions but you refuse to search out answers for yourself. The gas plant scandal derailed the former government.

How can it be that you never even asked your senior team about the status and whereabouts of gas plants? Was your guiding policy "don't ask don't tell"?

1110

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member mentions a piece of legislation that, in fact, her party voted against. So I don't think we're going to be getting any—listen, let me continue with some more of the quotes of how your version of events is playing out there.

The Leader of the Opposition: "Ontario Progressive Conservative leader Tim Hudak is on thin legal ice"—the Globe and Mail editorial yesterday.

The Leader of the Opposition's "claim that Premier Wynne was personally behind any wiping of government computers, when there is no evidence to support such an allegation, goes too far"—the Globe and Mail yesterday.

The Leader of the Opposition's "reckless allegations against Wynne are reminders of previous mistakes"—the Globe and Mail yesterday.

We have the Ottawa Citizen, Mr. Speaker: "Trail of evidence in gas plant probe ends before Wynne's government starts"—March 28.

"Detectives have found no evidence that any computers in Premier Kathleen Wynne's office were accessed"—Ottawa Citizen, March 28.

Toronto Star, March 29: "A close reading of the 111 pages of OPP documents provides no hint yet of any impropriety when [Wynne] was Premier."

Mr. Speaker, I can go on.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: This question is to the Premier. David Livingston went to long lengths to destroy something on the computers in the Premier's office. According to the OPP, he was doing this in February and March 2013, after the Premier won the leadership. What was on the computers that David Livingston and Peter Faist were erasing?

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

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, we're hearing Conservative CSI; we've got NDP CSI. I mean, this is a serious matter. Let us allow the Ontario Provincial Police to undertake their work. They went to court in order to get warrants, and a document was filed with the court which was subsequently made public. That document is very clear: There is one individual, the former chief of staff to the former Premier, against whom there are allegations yet unproven. I think the prudent course would be to allow the investigation to move forward.

But you know—and perhaps I have to wait for the supplementary—I'm happy to read some quotes into the record about their performance on this. Maybe, Mr. Speaker, I'll wait for the supplementary, as I see you signalling that—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Good idea. Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Again to the Premier: The OPP seem confident that they have software that will be able to recover what was deleted on some of these files. Now, my question to the Premier is, isn't she concerned about what we will be able to find once the OPP is able to retrieve these files? Does she have anything to say with respect to that?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, let me continue.

Toronto Star, March 30: The leader of the NDP "injected in conventional opposition mischief by implying

police were ‘now focusing on questions about the period after you were sworn in and became Premier’—a clear misreading of the OPP documents.”

As I said, we have 111 pages which point out clearly that there is an interest in pursuing allegations against one individual—the former Premier’s former chief of staff—over events that took place under his watch. These are unproven allegations, Mr. Speaker. We are talking about people’s reputations. We are talking about a complicated matter which is being looked into by the Ontario Provincial Police. I think the prudent course for all members of this Legislature, Mr. Speaker, is to allow the Ontario Provincial Police to undertake their work and to not interfere through questions like this in the Legislature.

ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH

Mr. Phil McNeely: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. In May 2012, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada announced that the federal government would stop funding to the Experimental Lakes Area in northern Ontario and close it down.

The ELA is the only freshwater research facility of its kind, and it is vital to researchers in Ontario, Canada and around the world. It has been operating for over 45 years, and some of the experiments there have continued for decades, providing invaluable research.

As someone who is a strong advocate for the environment, it is important to me that research like this continues, and I was apprehensive when the federal government announced that it was pulling out all of its financial support and was planning to close down the facility.

Yesterday, I was pleased to hear that Ontario signed a long-term agreement with the International Institute for Sustainable Development as the new operator.

Speaker, could the minister please tell the members of the House about the important research that is being conducted at the Experimental Lakes Area?

Hon. David Oraziotti: I’m pleased to rise in the House today, and I want to thank the member from Ottawa–Orléans for asking this important question. The member is quite right: The Experimental Lakes Area is a world-renowned research station that provides us with invaluable data for the scientific community. Unfortunately, it was something the federal government was prepared to walk away from and close, but our Premier, Kathleen Wynne, stepped up to make sure that this would not happen in our province.

This facility attracts scientists from around the world who conduct research that informs pollution reduction, climate change strategies and protection of freshwater ecosystems. In the 1960s, research at this facility determined that phosphates were a killing pollutant in our lakes. In the 1970s, they determined the impacts of acid rain with respect to the impacts on freshwater lakes.

Scott Vaughan, the president of the IISD, had this to say: “This agreement opens a fresh, new chapter in the

life of the Experimental Lakes Area and the promise of many important and exciting research possibilities ahead...” Our government recognizes the—

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you to the minister for informing the members of this House about this unparalleled research facility. Undoubtedly, it is a very important research facility, and I’m glad to hear our government has signed an agreement with the IISD to keep the ELA operating. I was pleased to hear yesterday that, through this long-term agreement, our government will provide funding of up to \$2 million per year to ensure that this research can continue. As well, I understand that, as part of this agreement, Ontario will review all prospective experiments as a member of the ELA advisory board and ensure that its research is carried out in an environmentally responsible way.

Can the minister please update the members of the House about the timeline of the agreement for the Experimental Lakes Area and let us know if the facility will be open for the 2014 field season?

Hon. David Oraziotti: Thank you again to the member from Ottawa–Orléans. Since the 1960s, the ELA has been important to identifying emerging threats to our environment and to understanding important challenges to our ecosystems. I’m certainly pleased and thrilled that the researchers will be able to begin their work in time for the 2014 field season. In particular, they will be conducting some research with respect to tiny particles referred to as nanoparticles and nanosilver with regard to garment manufacturing and how that impacts our environment.

Dr. Orihel said this in the *Globe and Mail*: “I’m just thrilled. I am so happy, I am speechless right now.” She said, “We’ve...been working to rebuild” the ELA. “Initially, we had hoped to convince the Harper government to reinstate the federal funding. Basically, that was never going to happen and we needed” a solution.

The solution is right here with our government, this Premier, and she made it happen.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is for the Premier. Your government is acting like a government with something to hide. The alleged activities of Mr. Faist is the latest and largest bombshell to drop. But as we’ve seen, you have plenty of secrets, like the secret budget deficits, like the secret BLTs, the secret leaking teams. We know you wanted to hide the details of the gas plant scandal that ended up costing taxpayers \$1.1 billion.

But who knows what else is on those hard drives, Premier? Can you tell this House if Mr. Faist, or anyone else for that matter, deleted other secrets, like Ornge secrets or eHealth secrets, that the people of Ontario deserve to know?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I think the prudent course is to allow the Ontario Provincial Police to undertake their work.

In terms of opening up the government, I am very, very proud of the record of our Premier when it comes to opening up the government. When it comes to the gas plant issue, as has been pointed out in this Legislature, it was this individual who wrote to the Auditor General, even before she became Premier, to ask for him to look into the matter. She re-struck the committee. As a government, we have provided over 326,000 pages to the committee, including 30,000 pages from the Premier's office. We've taken action, both of a legislative and non-legislative variety, in terms of addressing issues around document retention.

If any party should be explaining, then perhaps the Conservatives should be explaining why their candidates never appeared in front of the justice committee to—

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

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Back to the Premier: You talk a lot about transparency and openness and what you aspire to do. But, Premier, I can tell you, Ontario taxpayers are worried that their Premier is either incompetent or complicit. You can talk the talk, but you don't seem to want to walk the walk. But to be fair, you said earlier, just moments ago—and I paraphrase—you are happy to debate the truth any day.

1120

Premier, I'm asking you, not the House leader, in the name of openness and transparency, can you confirm today that files related to other scandals, like eHealth and Ornge were not also destroyed?

Hon. John Milloy: Let's talk about openness. Just for once, will the opposition party admit what we all know from YouTube, from press releases, from the Twitterverse, that in the last election it was the Progressive Conservative Party that promised if they were elected they would cancel the gas plant. For heaven's sake, the police acknowledged in the document, again, that on October 6, "the Liberal Party won the provincial election.... The Liberal Party won the seat of Mississauga. Even though they made the same promise during the election, the opposing parties accused the Liberal Party of cancelling the power plant only to secure a seat in Parliament."

It's time that the Progressive Conservative—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Halton will withdraw.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Finish, please.

Hon. John Milloy: It's time that the Progressive Conservatives acknowledge the fact that they made the exact same promise going into the last election.

groups at the Ontario Energy Board hearings looking into Enbridge's request for a 40% increase in natural gas prices. These groups have requested special sessions to examine in detail whether the company acted responsibly in its practices. But their requests for these special sessions were denied by the board.

Can this government explain why their agency, which is supposed to protect Ontario families, seniors and businesses, refused to take a serious look at this unprecedented 40% rate hike application?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the severe weather conditions, the cold of this past winter, did increase the demand for gas across North America. This was not just an Ontario situation. This was a North American situation, and it resulted in higher prices across the continent. We have to look at what has happened in the context of the weather and what was happening in other jurisdictions.

We understand the impact that that has on families. That's why it's very important that people know that there are a significant number of programs in place to reduce the costs of energy: the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, the Ontario Energy and Property Tax Credit, the Northern Ontario Energy Credit, and the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program—that one in particular provides financial support for families having trouble paying their bills in the immediate term.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Here is what the Consumers Council of Canada wrote in its submissions on March 18 regarding the application for a 40% increase: "The board needs to fully understand why these amounts are so large and what specific factors contributed to the accumulation of these amounts." But the Ontario Energy Board flatly refused the council's request.

Why is the government content to stand on the sidelines and allow this outrageous increase without any serious examination of whether it is warranted or not?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to say that I share the concern—because of the shortage and because of the weather—that there was an increase across the province and across the continent. I'm very well aware of that, and I share that concern.

But in terms of what the OEB decided and what the groups who came to speak to the OEB asked for—consumer groups who intervened in the process, the Vulnerable Energy Consumers Coalition and Consumers Council of Canada. They submitted that the board should consider approving the rates on an interim basis and then allow more consideration for smoothing. And that is in fact what the OEB decided. My understanding is that the submissions that were made to the OEB in this difficult situation, because of the cold winter, were heard and that that is what the OEB decided.

NATURAL GAS RATES

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Premier. Serious unanswered questions were raised by consumer

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Research and Innovation. Ontario's ability to compete on

a global scale in this knowledge-driven economy depends greatly on our ability to harness our research strength and enhance the aptitude of our post-secondary students to deliver on our entrepreneurial ideas. I know that I have many talented young people in Scarborough–Agincourt who require the necessary resources to move their ideas into the market and generate significant job creation.

At 64%, Ontario has one of the highest rates of post-secondary education in the world, with almost a third of Canada's youth-owned enterprises located here in Ontario. This means that we need to provide the best emerging young entrepreneurs with the guidance and assistance they need. Therefore, it's also important that we provide a variety of programs to help these young entrepreneurs.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What is our government doing to support the transfer of knowledge and information from post-secondary to the economy?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I thank the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for that very important question.

Our government recognizes the importance of connecting youth with the tools, experiences and entrepreneurial support they need to succeed in employment and also to establish their own businesses.

Our youth innovation fund does this by helping post-secondary students commercialize their innovative ideas. Through this fund, we have invested \$20 million into our campus-linked accelerators to provide workspace, investments and mentorship to our youth, and a \$10-million investment in our internships program that provides graduate and PhD students in our universities to work on joint industry-academia projects.

Helping young people find jobs is part of the Ontario government's economic plan to invest in people to create jobs and help them in their everyday lives.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to hear that our government will be continuing to invest in programs that support our youth. With the increase in competition, it is now more important than ever to provide the youth with the training, tools and skills they need. That's why I'm doing my part, Mr. Speaker. I'm hosting a youth entrepreneurship workshop this Saturday to support Agincourt youth.

Our province's success is directly linked to the success of our young people. It is imperative that we build a strong foundation for young entrepreneurs throughout the entire commercialization process, from the development of prototypes to sourcing the first customers and solving real business needs.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What other initiatives does our government plan to have in place to support young entrepreneurs with their innovative ideas?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Again, I want to thank the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for that important question. I also want to congratulate her on her initiative. Last year, I actually attended that event, and it was a very successful event.

Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to helping our students and young people succeed by providing programs that develop their entrepreneurial spirit. These programs provide our youth with the opportunity to explore various facets of entrepreneurship.

Examples include our Summer Company program, which provides hands-on business and training mentoring for our students, and our Experiential Learning Program, which helps science, technology and engineering students receive the training and experience they need to succeed and turn their ideas into commercial products and services.

This government understands the important role youth play in our economic growth, and we help them to find jobs and participate in the economic growth of our province.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is to the Premier. As you will know, Ontario's Auditor General has estimated that your political decision to cancel the power plants will cost taxpayers over \$1.1 billion, further burdening our children and our grandchildren with your political debt.

We also know that computer hacker and data mastermind Peter Faist worked for your caucus and your party, with you as leader, for over one year. In fact, even the police who are investigating the matter have said that Faist was the guy who was hired to illegally wipe these computers clean.

Premier, people at home are demanding accountability. Why are you more interested in burying this scandal and protecting your own political interests than you are about getting to the bottom of it and holding people to account?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, sometimes you just don't know where to begin, but let's go back to the facts—something that they don't care about over there—and that is: There was a document that was produced in court, that was made public last week, which talked about an individual—the former chief of staff—against whom there are serious accusations for some activities that happened under his watch and under the watch of the former Premier. Those are the facts, Mr. Speaker, and standing up with question after question after question doesn't change those facts.

1130

Again, you're not doing well out there. Let me share some of the quotes again. The Globe and Mail yesterday: "The Conservative Leader's aggressive attempts to score points without the facts to back them up are reminding Ontario voters why they haven't warmed up to him."

The Ottawa Citizen yesterday: "[The PCs] asked repeatedly whether Wynne's computer was among those wiped, which makes little sense: The police are crystal clear that they're interested in the computers in McQuinty's office, where Wynne did not work."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: I don't know how you and your senior transition team were involved in the illegal document destruction that the OPP is now investigating, but my hunch and certainly that of the literally thousands of Ontario residents who have contacted my office alone regarding this matter is that where there is smoke, there is fire.

Ontario residents want someone to be—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Carry on, please.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Premier, Ontario residents want someone to be held accountable, and they are asking for people to be thrown into jail over this. You became Premier on February 11, 2013, and at the same time, computer hacker and data guru Peter Faist was working away for the Liberal Party, hired to illegally wipe clean a series of computers and email accounts, destroying important public documents and records.

Premier, how much time do you spend each day trying to cover up—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Stop the clock. The member will withdraw.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I just want to make it clear, Mr. Speaker: These aren't my words. This is how you guys are doing out there with the media. Let's go to the Toronto Star yesterday: The Leader of the Opposition "went far beyond what the facts show." Toronto Star yesterday: The Leader of the Opposition is "inventing fanciful scenarios about the first days of Wynne's Premiership." The Globe and Mail editorial yesterday—I commend it to everyone to read it in full, but let's give you a few highlights: "Ontario Progressive Conservative leader Tim Hudak is on thin legal ice." It goes on to say that the Leader of the Opposition's "claim that Premier Wynne was personally behind any wiping of government computers, when there is no evidence to support such an allegation, goes too far." It goes on to say that the Leader of the Opposition's "reckless allegations against [Premier] Wynne are reminders of previous mistakes."

Let the facts speak for themselves, Mr. Speaker, I invite the members to review the document and the—

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

New question?

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Speaker, it seems that each week, New Democrats are standing up holding this government to account for deep cuts to health care in London. Last week, we highlighted the crisis in mental health services. Before that, we raised concerns about cuts to St. Joseph's Health Care. Now Londoners are bracing for more cutbacks, this time at London Health

Sciences Centre, including the loss of 27 nurses and 41 cleaners.

Does the minister truly believe that the elimination of these nursing and cleaning positions will not have an impact on hands-on quality care in our community?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I would like to know from the member opposite and from her party is whether or not they support our transformation in health care. Our system is under transformation. We are moving services out of hospital where it's appropriate and safe to do so. This transformation involves really building up community supports so that people can go home from hospital as soon as they're safely able to do that.

This transformation is working. We are seeing the results of those investments in the community. Our hospitals are also working. I've never said this is easy for hospitals, but the hospitals themselves support this transformation. In fact, I was very pleased, when London Health Sciences Centre went out with this announcement, that they made very clear that these changes would have no impact on patient care.

Transformation is under way. We need to support transformation if we care about universal, single-tier health care.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Nurses have been sounding alarm bells about the quality of care in London for almost two years. They have lodged hundreds of complaints about inadequate care levels, and now things are going to get much worse with these 27 nurses being laid off. The hospital is facing deep deficits and they have no choice but to make cuts to patient care and hospital cleanliness.

At what point will this minister realize that it's misleading to tell Londoners—

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I withdraw.

At what point will this minister realize that continually sending this message to Londoners that patient care won't be affected in the face of more layoffs—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: More layoffs won't affect patient care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, I think once again we have to go to the facts. The facts are that no layoffs are anticipated as a result of this plan.

When it comes to nurses in Ontario, we now have 20,500 more nurses working than we had just 10 years ago. We are continuing to invest in nursing. We are continuing to bring our hospitals so that they are safe and they are effective, and when patients can receive services outside the hospital, that's where they prefer to receive those services.

Speaker, I perhaps will send this over to the member opposite. I think it's important that she know what is going on in London. What is happening in London is that

we are investing more in the community and that hospitals are becoming more efficient.

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, every year your ministry provides funding to school boards through the Grants for Student Needs that supports our quality education workers in addition to important programs and infrastructure projects. This funding is critical to ensuring we continue to make progress in student achievement and build our reputation for international success. However, I understand there have been some changes as of late.

Minister, can you please inform this House what the changes are in this year's Grants for Student Needs and how those changes will impact schools, students and families in my community?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Thank you to the member from Oak Ridges–Markham for that question. Education is one of our most valued services, and Ontarians expect our government to invest wisely in our schools and students. Over the past 10 years, Ontario has become a global leader in education and a highly successful model for other jurisdictions. We're very proud of our education record.

For the 2014-15 school year, we are providing stable funding through the Grants for Student Needs of \$22.5 billion to help boards keep up with costs, while also providing increased funding to complete the rollout in September of full-day kindergarten. We have also committed to a three-year investment in ongoing school renewal of approximately \$1.25 billion to make sure that things like roofs and boilers get replaced.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you for that response, Minister. My community has been pleased to welcome full-day kindergarten over the last four years and is looking forward to this upcoming September, which will be the final year of the rollout for this program. In my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham, 17 more schools will offer the program beginning in the next school year. As of this coming fall, my riding will already have full-day kindergarten in 51 schools that will serve almost 4,800 students in 192 classes.

We know full-day learning is the best start we can give our kids and it is one of the most important investments we can make in Ontario's future prosperity. Can the minister please update this House on the status of the rollout of full-day kindergarten across Ontario?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm delighted that we're going to be able to complete the rollout of full-day kindergarten this September. When we finish the rollout this September, we expect we'll have about 265,000 children in full-day kindergarten taking advantage of the program.

One of the changes this year is that the funding is no longer outside the regular Grants for Student Needs. We've rolled the funding for full-day kindergarten inside the Grants for Student Needs, which signals to the school

board sector, many of whom are here today, that this makes the program permanent and that the full-day kindergarten students will be funded like every other single student in Ontario schools.

TABLING OF REPORT

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, I rise to inform the members and for that matter the public that I have tabled Ontario's Long-Term Report on the Economy with the House just moments ago. This report is an essential part of our government's commitment to greater openness and is one more part of the Fiscal Transparency and Accountability Act that our government introduced in 2004. Thank you.

VISITORS

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

Mr. Joe Dickson: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order to welcome to the Legislature today Pickering page Simon Hopkins's mother, Fiona Hopkins; his father, Duncan Hopkins; his brother, Colin Hopkins; and grandparents Dianne and Graham Kinghorn. They're sitting in the members' gallery today. I'm sure Simon is honoured to have his family here this morning showing their support at the Legislature as he fulfils his role as page on this special day as page captain. I welcome you all to Queen's Park.

I have to tell you I share with my colleague in Pickering–Scarborough East, in that Simon goes to William Dunbar school in her riding and the family lives in my riding—

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

The Minister of the Environment on a point of order.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I know that you would want me to introduce Kathy Burtnik, the chair of the Niagara Catholic District School Board, who is in the members' gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, for the record, the standing orders are fairly clear that you cannot say anything that is not true in this House. The government House leader repeated today that New Democrats actually said during the last election that we would cancel those gas plants. I just want to read the quote in order to clarify that New Democrats have said what they would not do. Both Hudak—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not a point of order.

The member from Leeds–Grenville on a point of order.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you, Speaker. 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 so that we can freeze everyone's pay across the entire broader public sector and not just MPPs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville 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 so that we freeze everyone's pay across the public sector.

Do we agree? I heard a no.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's my pleasure today to introduce a number of visitors with us in the west and east galleries and a number who will be introduced later as well on the occasion of Ontario One Call. There's Ben Hamilton from Ontario One Call, Lyne McMurchie from Enbridge Gas Distribution, Damian Edwin from Enbridge Gas Distribution, and David Donovan from Enbridge Gas Distribution. We welcome them all here to Queen's Park today for this legislation.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm here to introduce some members of the Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance who are here today to celebrate April, the first Dig Safe Month celebrated at Queen's Park, a celebration of the success enjoyed by the member from Sarnia–Lambton and myself for Bill 8.

In the visitors' gallery we have Bob McKee, Avertex Utility Solutions; and from Enbridge Gas Distribution we have Vicki Mitchell, Tim Dykas and Maria Pilavakis.

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

Ms. Dipika Damerla: It is my pleasure now to introduce Cardinal James, who's here, as well as once more to welcome Marino Gazzola, president, Catholic trustees. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome, Your Eminence.

He's got a uniform like mine.

Further introductions.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'd like to introduce Heather Higgins, who is a member of the Trillium Gift Of Life Network, who will be joining us shortly.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: A point of order, Speaker: I'd like to correct my record. I was wrong in the way I introduced. My apologies. I'd like to reintroduce my guests: Cardinal Thomas Collins, Marino Gazzola and James Ryan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's always a point of order to correct your own record.

Now I will return to introductions.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'd like to introduce several guests who are with us in the gallery. They are Pascale

Daigneault, president of the Ontario Bar Association; Ronnie Gavsie, president and chief executive officer of the Trillium Gift of Life Network; and Heather Higgins, daughter of a former police officer who died in a car accident and donated his organs to help others; thank you, Heather.

They're here to support a partnership between the Ontario Bar Association and the Trillium Gift of Life Network, which is Make a Power of Attorney Month, in support of Be a Donor Month. Thank you so much for joining us today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, and welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SHAVE FOR THE BRAVE

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to rise and recognize three schools in my riding that have organized an event called Shave for the Brave to benefit Young Adult Cancer Canada, YACC. Fred C. Cook Public School, W.H. Day Elementary School and Cookstown Central Public School are taking part in it this year.

The Shave for the Brave event invites participants to collect pledges and either cut up to 10 inches of hair or shave their heads bald to support Young Adult Cancer Canada.

While many organizations collect donations for cancer, less than 1% are dedicated specifically to battling cancer in young adults ages 19 to 39, which is why I felt so strongly to speak today about this issue.

Three years ago, Fred C. Cook Public School introduced Shave for the Brave to the town of Bradford West Gwillimbury and has helped raise awareness of the Young Adult Cancer Canada organization and fundraise for them.

Having had the opportunity to attend the event at Fred C. Cook on March 21, I was impressed by the dedication these children have shown. With over 32 participants, both students and teachers, registered to shave their heads and the over \$6,000 in donations, this event has grown significantly.

This year, Shave for the Brave is going to be carried on in two other schools: W.H. Day and Cookstown. They will be hosting their own Shave for the Brave events in April. I wish them all the success they deserve, and I know they will raise thousands of dollars.

It's these exemplary children who remind me why I became an MPP: to help build the future that the people of this province deserve.

INDIGENOUS UNIVERSITY GRADUATES

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'm proud to rise as MPP for London West to recognize a group of 20 new Western university graduates, including six from my riding of London West, who were honoured yesterday at a special

indigenous graduation ceremony on the Western university campus. This was the second annual indigenous graduation ceremony hosted by the university, held to highlight the successes of indigenous students on campus and in the wider London community.

We know that indigenous students are much less likely than non-indigenous students to complete a university education. According to the 2006 census, only 10% of London's indigenous peoples had obtained a university degree, compared to 23% of the non-indigenous population. Recognition of indigenous students who have overcome systemic barriers to post-secondary education, along with culturally responsive programs and services that honour indigenous cultures and languages, is critical to supporting these students to achieve their highest potential.

I would like to acknowledge the important work that is being done at Western to foster indigenous presence and inclusion on campus and to increase engagement between the university and local indigenous communities. Most of all, I would like to extend my warmest congratulations to these 20 new Western grads.

If Ontario's economy is to be successful, we need to leverage the talents and skills of all our citizens. I look forward to the contributions these graduates will make to our shared prosperity and quality of life in London and across the province.

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Speaker, as I believe everyone in the chamber knows, today is World Autism Awareness Day. Every year around this date, organizations from across the globe hold events to fundraise and raise awareness for those in our communities dealing with autism.

Last Friday I was pleased—delighted, in fact—to attend one of these events, the 15th annual gala fundraiser in support of the Shining Through Centre. The Shining Through Centre is a not-for-profit organization in my community of Vaughan that provides high-quality therapy, education and research services for affected children and their families. This annual gala fundraiser is their largest fundraising initiative. This year, about 1,400 people from Vaughan and across the GTA were in attendance. I was pleased to be at this fun and touching event.

Our government has wholeheartedly supported this cause since 2003. In fact, we have invested nearly \$186 million per year for autism services.

I'd like to take a moment to specifically thank president Fred Santini and vice-president John Di Massimo of the Shining Through Centre, as well as everyone across the province doing their part to help affected families dealing with this situation across the province of Ontario.

POPE JOHN PAUL II DAY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Today marks the very first time that Ontario observes Pope John Paul II Day. It was

recently enacted into provincial law, having been initially tabled seven years ago by my colleague the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

Today, the Ontario Legislature not only honours the man who served as spiritual leader to millions of Catholics in this province and around the world, but we also pay tribute to Pope John Paul II's legacy that reflects his lifelong commitment to international understanding, peace, the defence of equality and human rights. His legacy as the great son of Poland has an all-embracing meaning that is particularly relevant to Canada's multi-faith and multicultural traditions and experience.

As one of the great spiritual leaders of contemporary times, the Pope visited Ontario twice during his pontificate of more than 25 years. Each time he visited here, he made an incredible impact on all of us as he reached beyond the Catholic church to defend the rights of all people, regardless of their faith and culture. He embraced everyone, especially the marginalized in society. He is therefore rightly called "Ontario's Pope," who will be formally canonized a saint by Pope Francis in Rome later this month.

Today we welcome to Queen's Park His Eminence Thomas Cardinal Collins of Toronto, who earlier celebrated the Eucharist here and who has given his constant support for Pope John Paul II Day from its inception. We also welcome other representatives of the Catholic Church, Catholic teachers and the proud members of our Polish-Canadian community. On behalf of our leader, I welcome all of you who have gathered here today to honour Pope John Paul II in this first commemoration.

1510

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Mr. Michael Prue: Today is World Autism Awareness Day. It was my privilege and honour to leave this place at noon and go down to Toronto city hall, where there was a ceremony and a flag-raising, and His Honour the Lieutenant Governor, along with other dignitaries, had an opportunity to speak about autism and autism services in this province and in this country.

I was there, and I listened intently to a young man—at least a younger man than me—who stood up. He had worked some 20 years at the Bank of Montreal, and he talked about being given a chance—a young man with autism—and for 20 years successfully held down a job; the bank had given him that opportunity.

Others spoke about autism, and the fact that one in 64 children born today in the province will find themselves with an autistic condition. They spoke about the need for all of us to do so much more. I know that we hear in the Legislature how much the government does or can do or should do, but I think all of us need to commit ourselves to doing more for people who have autism. We need to find jobs for them. We need to find education for them. We need to make sure they finish school. We need to find housing for them when they become adults. And we need to make sure, most of all, that children have the

services they need when they need them, and that they not be stuck on waiting lists for years.

POPE JOHN PAUL II DAY

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Today, it is an honour for me to stand here in this Legislature and officially declare April 2 as the very first Pope John Paul II Day in Ontario. It is particularly special that Cardinal Collins is here on this historic occasion. Thank you so much.

It was here in this very Legislature on Monday, March 17, that my bill to proclaim April 2 as Pope John Paul II Day passed third reading with all-party support, and for that, I am deeply grateful to all of you, my colleagues. I would also like to acknowledge the MPP for Newmarket–Aurora for his role in originally bringing this bill forward back in 2009.

One of the most charismatic and popular popes, as the leader of the Roman Catholic Church, Pope John Paul II served as the spiritual guide to over a billion Catholics. As a political leader, he was the catalyst to end communist rule in his native Poland and eventually all of Europe. He won the hearts of millions around the world, people of all ages and all faiths; a pope who did not wait for people to come to him, but one who went out to meet the people.

The most travelled pope ever, he also became the first pope ever to come to Canada, making three trips in all. A remarkable man with many legacies: a pope who brought a generation of young people to the Catholic faith, a pope who sought personal redemption and reached out to the Jewish and Muslim faiths, and a pope who brought down communism. It is fitting that we now have a day in Ontario to commemorate the many legacies of this great man and soon-to-be saint.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. It's a joy to watch everyone get along.

WORLD AUTISM AWARENESS DAY

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to stand today to also recognize World Autism Awareness Day, a day when autism organizations around the world raise funds and shed light on autism spectrum disorders. This day is a reminder of how important it is for the province of Ontario to develop a comprehensive strategy for people with developmental disabilities such as autism spectrum disorders. It has been an honour to serve as part of the Select Committee on Developmental Disabilities, which, I am happy to say, has put partisanship aside to focus on this important challenge. The select committee has heard from people all over the province about what we can do to improve the services and care for people with developmental disabilities, as well as what we can do to better support their families and caregivers. The committee is now working very hard on our recommendations, which will be released in our final report this May. It is our hope that we can ensure Ontario is a place where

each individual with an autism spectrum disorder has the means to achieve a high quality of life as a fully respected and fully integrated member of our society.

CLUB COFFEE

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Monsieur le Président, j'ai des développements extraordinaires dans ma circonscription d'Etobicoke-Nord.

Speaker, I had the privilege, honour and heavy burden yesterday of welcoming the Premier of the province of Ontario to make an extraordinary \$5-million announcement at Club Coffee, an advanced manufacturing facility also supported by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food.

These folks have been a massive success story for the past 80 years. They are en route now to perhaps dominating the single-serve coffee pod K-cup market, and are going to be producing something in the order of almost a billion of these things per year, exporting globally. The investments, tied to their own investments, will together lead to 130 high-skilled jobs, single-serve packaging lines and high-quantity custom coffee roasting for across North America export. It's a remarkable facility.

Strangely, and oddly, when you think of coffee, I had this feeling that it would be an agricultural-level facility. But if you walk into it, it's actually part of Ontario's new generation of advanced manufacturing. To me, as a physician, frankly speaking, it looked like some kind of advanced genetic laboratory, with the assembly lines and robotics and electronic controls that were involved. It was extraordinarily refreshing for both the Premier and myself to see it right in Etobicoke North.

CARING NURSE AWARDS

Mr. Bill Walker: It is my pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize the hard-working and dedicated nurses in my riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and all across Ontario and Canada.

I would especially like to thank and extend my sincerest congratulations to a group of RNs and RPNs from Bruce and Grey who were recently awarded the 2014 Caring Nurse Award by Bayshore's Healthy Tomorrow's Association for their outstanding front-line service to the local community and their patients.

They are Alma Geonanga, RN; Susan Miller, RN; Judy Greig, RN; Nancy Little, RN; Christina Sebesta—all from the Owen Sound Regional Hospital; Shelly Ashby, RN, from Lee Manor; Elizabeth McCutcheon, RN, from the Owen Sound Family Health Team; Carol Knox, RN, from family doctor A.L. McArthur; Debbie Zehr-Holst, RPN, Owen Sound Regional Hospital; Jennifer Wonch, RPN, Lee Manor; Holly Bowen, RPN, Meaford Long Term Care; Anne Stewart, RN, from Care Partners Visiting Nurses, Wiarton; Patty Furgal, RN, Lion's Head and Wiarton hospitals; Netta Mallard, RN, Wiarton Hospital; Lisa Slot, RPN, Wiarton Hospital; Valerie Breadner, RN, Centre Grey Hospital, Markdale;

Carolyn Leith, RN, Centre Grey Hospital, Markdale; Edith Huehn, RN, retired, Rockwood Terrace, Durham; Sarah Barr, RN, Walkerton birthing centre, South Grey Health Centre, Walkerton; Krysta Craig, RN, Southampton Hospital; and Helen Rice, RPN, Participation Lodge.

These caring people are the front-line caregivers, comforters, patient advocates and educators who made outstanding contributions to preserve, protect and improve the health, safety and well-being of patients and families in Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. Again, I'm honoured to recognize and celebrate their hard work and also to thank all dedicated nurses across Ontario and Canada for their excellent work and their caring spirit.

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

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): Mr. Dunlop from the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly presents the committee's report as follows and moves its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 122, An Act respecting collective bargaining in Ontario's school system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the order of the House dated April 1, 2014, the bill is ordered for third reading.

1520

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

DIG SAFE MONTH

Hon. Brad Duguid: Yes, I am the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, but I'm making this statement on behalf of the Minister of Consumer Services.

But before I begin, Mr. Speaker, I beg your indulgence to be able to introduce some folks who are here with us today and are involved with what we're about to talk about. I'm pleased to introduce members of the Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance: Peter Jurgeneit—I think I'm saying that right—a board member for the ORCGA; Lloyd Chiotti, Ontario One Call—you can stand up if you like, folks; Leslie Elliott, Bell Canada; Trevor Tuck, Enbridge Gas Distribution; James Scho-

field, Enbridge Gas Distribution; and Mike McGivery, Enbridge Gas Distribution.

Mr. Speaker, I'd beg your indulgence before I start the statement, just to reach across the aisle in a spirit of continuity and unity. This was an issue supported by all sides of the House, and I want to acknowledge my colleagues, who will likely respond: the member for Sarnia–Lambton was a leader on this; and I think the member for Hamilton East was as well, if I recall. This was an issue important to him; I don't know if he's responding. But I want to thank them for their work here as well.

Now for the statement. It's a great privilege for me to rise in the House today to recognize April's designation as Dig Safe Month in Ontario. Dig Safe Month is dedicated to increasing awareness of collective efforts by government, corporations and municipalities to improve safety and reduce damages to underground infrastructure through safe digging practices.

I hope that many members are wearing pins today to commemorate Dig Safe Month. I want to use this occasion to remind the House that on Monday, March 31, new regulations were brought into force that will enable Ontario One Call to effectively administer the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act. You'll recall that this initiative was originally brought forward by the member for Sarnia–Lambton and the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, whom I've just acknowledged.

Ontario One Call—or ON1Call, as it's commonly referred to; I guess “ON1Call” is what they say—is a statutory, not-for-profit corporation that is responsible for administering the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act.

ON1Call is the single point of contact for people requesting the location of underground infrastructure before they start to dig. The new regulation sets out terms and conditions of membership and provides the corporation with much-needed tools to promote and encourage compliance. As a result, Ontario will have the first comprehensive and mandatory one-call-to-dig system in Canada. Fittingly, it coincides with the start of spring digging season.

Dig Safe Month serves as a reminder to excavators that they need to call Ontario One Call before digging begins to prevent injuries, property damage and service outages. All owners and operators of underground infrastructure, including municipalities, are required to be members of Ontario One Call and to respond to requests to locate underground infrastructure.

Ontario One Call's mandate is to:

- operate a call system to receive excavator requests for the location of underground infrastructure within Ontario;

- identify for excavators whether underground infrastructure is located in the vicinity of a proposed excavation or dig site;

- notify members of proposed excavations or digs that may affect their underground infrastructure; and

- raise public awareness of Ontario One Call and the need for safe digging.

By working together, we can improve safety and reduce damage to vital underground infrastructure through safe digging practices across the province.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to respond today on behalf of the PC caucus and as a co-sponsor of this bill. I'd like to first of all thank the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities for the kind words that he gave across the aisle. It was a pleasure to work with Minister Tracy MacCharles, the Minister of Consumer Services, and her ministry in bringing this bill to fruition.

I'd like to thank all members of the House, from all three parties, who did work together. It's symbolic, I think, that this House can work together a number of times on a number of different issues that are important to Ontario, and this was one that was certainly that.

It's an honour to rise in the House today to recognize April as Dig Safe Month and to recognize that in just few weeks, the Ontario One Call system will be fully operational in the province of Ontario. In June 2012, Bill 8, the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, the private member's bill that I introduced with my colleague the MPP from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Mr. Paul Miller, was passed into law by the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

The purpose of this bill was to create one central location that anyone in Ontario could contact for free to obtain complete and accurate information about the correct location of infrastructure. Whether it's a homeowner planting a tree or a road-building crew restoring a street, homeowners and workers alike can take comfort that infrastructure assets in the ground will be clearly marked before they begin a project. This means fewer accidental strikes to infrastructure, fewer costly delays, fewer interruptions of service and, most importantly, increased safety and security for those people of Ontario who are in the vicinity of those locations.

Ontario is the first province in Canada to pass this sort of legislation. The Ontario One Call system has set the standard, set the bar, for service and safety and has become a model for all other jurisdictions in Canada to follow. In February, it was my pleasure to appear before the Senate of Canada's Standing Committee on Energy, the Environment and Natural Resources to discuss the One Call organization, the implementation of the Ontario One Call initiative and how it could be replicated across the country to make infrastructure construction safer. I believe that the work that we have done here in this House, in Ontario, with Ontario One Call has set that standard for underground and public safety in Canada. That is something we should take tremendous pride in in this House.

Of course, MPP Miller and I wouldn't have had the success we had with Bill 8 if it wasn't for the support that we received from the Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance and their member organizations, many of which are represented here today. I'd like to recognize some of the groups we have here today—only a number of them,

but they were very important and key to this legislation: Union Gas, Ontario One Call, Bell Canada and Avertex Utility Solutions, just to name a few. This core group has shown tremendous leadership and an unwavering focus on advancing safety standards in Ontario.

I'd like to also acknowledge my former legislative assistant Mr. David Donovan, who's here today. David has now joined another organization, Enbridge, but he had a lot to do with drafting this bill and did the lion's share of the work. I just got to stand in the House and read it. Anyway—there was lot more to it than that.

Over the last three years, I've had the honour of working very closely with the Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance and its members to promote the importance of being fully aware of the location of utilities or other infrastructure that may be located in areas of dig sites. Yesterday at Nathan Phillips Square, we officially kicked off Dig Safe Month in Toronto and across the province. I look forward to many more events with the ORCGA and continuing to promote public safety across the province.

Like I said to the Senate colleagues when I was there in February and March, I'm not saying Bill 8 is perfect, but take it as a template. Make it better. Take this across the country. Do what you can to make this a trans-Canada bill that would take into account all the infrastructure and all the excavations and construction. It's about the environment. It's about safety and health for individuals. We want every man and woman to go home safe at the end of the day.

As I wind up, remember: Always call before you dig.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm pleased to come before the House today to offer a response to the minister regarding Dig Safe Month. Yesterday, I was honoured to attend the kickoff to Dig Safe Month at Nathan Phillips Square, at Toronto city hall, where I was joined by my colleague from Sarnia–Lambton; Toronto city councillor Denzil Minnan-Wong; Glenn Beaumont, president of Enbridge Gas Distribution; and Ontario Regional Common Ground Alliance acting president and CEO Jim Douglas.

Before I continue, I would also like to thank Minister MacCharles for her co-operation throughout this process.

Dig Safe is dedicated to improving safety and reducing damage to underground facilities by raising awareness of the safe digging practices through local events across the province. In 2011, with my colleague from Sarnia–Lambton, I was proud to introduce Bill 8, An Act respecting an underground infrastructure notification system for Ontario. The purpose of Bill 8 was to establish Ontario One Call Limited as a not-for-profit single point of contact for all utility location services in Ontario. It was the result of far-reaching consultation with industry and a lot of hard work by the Ontario alliance members, the staff of my colleague from Sarnia–Lambton, and also my staff.

1530

In June 2012 in this Legislature we passed Bill 8, the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012, allowing Ontarians to simply call one number

for all their underground utility locates. After complete implementation of related regulations in June 2014, Ontario will become the leading Canadian province for safe digging practices.

Prior to the introduction of Bill 8, failing to locate all underground and overhead utilities resulted in unnecessary repair and replacement costs passed on to utility customers and municipal taxpayers, totalling nearly \$39 million each year.

In 2010 alone, there were over 3,200 natural gas line breaks in Ontario. In 2008-09, two accidental strikes resulted in fatalities. These deaths could have easily been prevented if Ontarians had accurate, up-to-date information on the infrastructure that exists on their property. Loss of life is the worst case, but in addition there is loss of revenue, productivity and efficiency for businesses of all sizes.

While I am happy to stand here today and proclaim that Ontarians have access to the information which will keep them safe, it has been a long way to get here. We are quickly approaching the two-year anniversary of the passing of Bill 8 and yet it's only today that we are seeing the final regs, well past any original deadlines that were established. In those two years, as a co-sponsor of Bill 8, I was only informed officially once on the progress. The minister did pass me notes on occasion. This process took far, far too long; however, given those delays, I am happy that we are finally here today to celebrate Dig Safe Month.

As a former steelworker, I can appreciate the importance of a safe work environment. I was involved in heavy industry for over 30 years and I've seen a lot of accidents which could have been prevented. In those days, it was always a knee-jerk reaction, but with Bill 8 we have enacted a piece of legislation which will prevent accidents and save lives.

Speaker, ensuring the safety of those who work or live in the vicinity of underground facilities and protecting vital services is everyone's responsibility. I believe that all of us in the Legislature expect that when our loved one goes to work each day, they will come home safely at the end of it.

We are at the beginning of summer job time for students, and many of them will go to workplaces that do have maximum safety measures taken to protect them. Unfortunately, some will suffer injury and may not be able to earn the money they use to go back to school in September. We try to implement measures to provide the best protection possible for all workers but particularly our youth.

We still have a long way to go in many industries, but at least we'll know that once the regulations are finally implemented, all workers, residents and businesses affected by underground infrastructure will have a much better chance of making it home without harm.

The bill speaks to the beliefs of every member in this House. Bill 8 and its regulations will not only make it easier for all Ontarians to ensure that they can safely go forward with a landscaping project or dig a foundation for a new structure, but they'll be able to do it safely.

Dig Safe Month affords the opportunity for all of us to share this information with our constituents and be sure that they are aware of these new safety opportunities available to them. I commend all the underground infrastructure companies who have worked so hard for so long on this project. It was the right cause, supported by all parties in this Legislature.

I look forward to continuing work that will have Ontario One Call a common term for all Ontarians. I would like to give you a reminder, Speaker. I would like to remind the public and all members that, except in emergency situations, requests for locates should be made at least one week in advance. Locate requests can be completed online at www.on1call.com or by calling 1-800-400-2255.

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

PETITIONS

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a very interesting afternoon here, but it's time to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in 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 and/or sell their houses to raise" the money to pay for therapy and treatment;

"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 it and support it and present it to Urooj.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITY OFFICE

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

“Whereas the Family Responsibility Office (FRO) is outdated, ineffective and the provincial government needs to conduct a review of the entire system;

“Whereas many families are either paying too much in child support or receiving too little, due to the ineffectiveness of the system;

“Whereas families are forced to become their own caseworkers to investigate information that is required by the Family Responsibility Office before they can enforce action;

“Whereas many of the federal and provincial databases do not link up, causing misinformation which affects the money paid or owed in child support for many families;

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

“We call on the provincial government to strike an all-party-support select committee to conduct a review of the practices of the Family Responsibility Office to improve and streamline the collection of child support in the province of Ontario.”

I sign this and give it to Divya to be delivered to the table.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: J’ai une pétition ici adressée à l’Assemblée législative de l’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 as 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.”

I agree with this, Speaker, sign it and affix my signature, and send it to you via page Calvin.

CYSTIC FIBROSIS

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

“Whereas this drug helps improve the function of the defective protein, leading to better lung function, weight gain, and lower sweat chloride levels. For a CF patient with the specific G551D mutation, access to Kalydeco could lead to a healthier, longer life; and

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

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

“That the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care take immediate action to expedite listing Kalydeco on the province’s drug formulary so this treatment is available to Ontario families as it is to those in several countries, including the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom.”

I am pleased to affix my signature in support and send it to the table with page Jane.

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

M. Michael Prue: I have a petition. It has been read into the Legislature before, so I want to read the “be it resolved.” It’s in French.

« Que le ministre de l’Éducation intervienne pour localiser une école secondaire sous-utilisée du quartier Riverdale-Danforth, Beaches-East York et Leslieville qui pourra être vendue aux deux conseils scolaires francophones (catholique et public) ou partagée avec ces derniers afin que chacun ouvre leur école secondaire francophone respective (de la 7^e à la 12^e année d’études) en septembre 2014 pour accueillir des élèves francophones qui n’auront plus à choisir entre un déplacement sur une grande distance pour fréquenter une école secondaire francophone et le délaissement à leur éducation en langue française au profit d’une éducation de quartier en langue anglaise, pour jouir du même droit que leurs contreparties de langue anglaise, soit de fréquenter une école secondaire située dans leur quartier. »

Je suis d’accord, et je vais la signer et la donner à Mustfah.

1540

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: J'ai une pétition ici adressée à l'assemblée législative, 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 as 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."

I agree with this, Speaker, and send it to you via page Nusaybah.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

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

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the University of Guelph's Kemptville and Alfred campuses are two of Ontario's outstanding post-secondary agricultural schools; and

"Whereas these campuses have delivered specialized and high-quality programs to generations of students from agricultural communities across eastern Ontario and the future success of the region's agri-food industry depends on continuing this strong partnership; and

"Whereas regional campuses like those in Kemptville and Alfred ensure the agri-food industry has access to the knowledge, research and innovation that are critical for Ontario to remain competitive in this rapidly changing sector;

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

"That Premier Wynne in her dual capacity as Minister of Agriculture and Food act immediately to reverse the University of Guelph's short-sighted and unacceptable decision to close its Kemptville and Alfred campuses."

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

LONG-TERM CARE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister from Kitchener-Waterloo.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I like the "minister" part.

"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 totally agree with this petition and will give it to page Kathryn.

USE OF DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister—member from Etobicoke North. I've got "minister" on the brain today.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Speaker. I can aspire only.

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;

“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.”

I agree, Speaker, affix my signature and send it to you via page Jane.

CHARITABLE GAMING

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m sitting beside the member—or, the minister from Kitchener–Waterloo.

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

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

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

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

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

I’m asking the Minister of Finance to introduce this in the budget coming up on May 1.

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

M. Taras Natyshak: Je suis content d’introduire une pétition pour l’école secondaire francophone de quartier,

de 7^e et 12^e année, des citoyens de Riverdale-Danforth, Beaches–East York et Leslieville. Je vais aussi lire seulement la dernière partie, comme mon collègue de Beaches–East York, qui dit :

« Que le ministre de l’Éducation intervienne pour localiser une école secondaire sous-utilisée du quartier Riverdale-Danforth, Beaches-East York et Leslieville qui pourra être vendue aux deux conseils scolaires francophones (catholique et public) ou partagée avec ces derniers afin que chacun ouvre leur école secondaire francophone respective (de la 7^e à la 12^e année d’études) en septembre 2014 pour accueillir des élèves francophones qui n’auront plus à choisir entre un déplacement sur une grande distance pour fréquenter une école secondaire francophone et le délaissement à leur éducation en langue française au profit d’une éducation de quartier en langue anglaise, pour jouir du même droit que leurs contreparties de langue anglaise, soit de fréquenter une école secondaire située dans leur quartier. »

Je suis d’accord avec cette pétition. Je vais affixer ma signature et vous la présenter par page Divya.

Le Président suppléant (M. Paul Miller): Merci.

1550

ORDERS OF THE DAY

COMPLYING WITH INTERNATIONAL TRADE OBLIGATIONS ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 DE CONFORMITÉ AUX OBLIGATIONS COMMERCIALES INTERNATIONALES

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 19, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The last time we dealt with this, Mr. Tabuns had the floor. We’ll now move on. Further debate, please.

Mr. Michael Prue: I should state at the outset that I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Essex. I think that may be the limit of NDP speakers on this particular bill. We both wanted to be on record, so we’re going to take this opportunity, but I also understand that the bill may collapse sometime today, due to a lack of speakers.

Mr. Speaker, it was important for me to be on the record because I feel very passionately and strongly about the position in which Ontario has now found itself. Ontario has found itself subject to a WTO—World Trade Organization—ruling against Ontario’s domestic content rules.

This could have and should have been foreseen. I know it’s often very difficult to anticipate legal chal-

lenges, particularly legal challenges that take place in other parts of the world. But Ontario should have been well aware, in the path that Ontario has chosen to go with electricity, that we might find ourselves up against the World Trade Organization, because we decided as a province, I think mistakenly, a number of years ago—and it continues—to privatize our electricity system.

The World Trade Organization deemed that Ontario's position was inconsistent with the general agreement and therefore ruled against us. So Ontario now has to face the task of redoing the legislation, which we're doing here, but also has to look—in my view, and I hope the government would agree—at whether the structure we have set up with a whole series of private companies that produce and distribute our electricity in Ontario is in the best interests of the province and the people who live here. Quite clearly, if it is going to mean that jobs are lost in Ontario, it's not. If it's going to mean that jobs might be gained in Ontario if we get into a big export market, if that's where we go, then maybe, as in all bad things, some good can come of it.

Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight and show the difference between what is happening here in Ontario with the World Trade Organization and what is happening in the province of Quebec. Quebec has an electrical system not dissimilar in the past to what Ontario had, but they have kept theirs largely in-house. In the province of Quebec, they produce the electricity, they distribute the electricity, they own the electricity, and they don't get into the same problems that we do. Quebec is not the subject of a World Trade Organization challenge. They were not challenged by anyone: not by Japan, not by Europe. No one brought a case against them, largely because Quebec was deemed to be close to the direct government procurement model.

I would suggest that it is in Ontario's best interest to look at that direct procurement model, if not for electricity, then for a great many other things, if we are going to safeguard the livelihood and the jobs of the people of Ontario. Quebec has done that. Ontario instead went down a system which we in this place often refer to as FIT. Now, FIT has a great many problems to it altogether, but this is the one that has manifested itself most significantly, at least in terms of this bill.

I would think it is time for us to rethink the privatization, not only of our electrical system but of a great many systems, as this government goes down—and I have heard the Minister of Transportation wax eloquently a few times on P3s, on that kind of model, saying that although they didn't work in the past, he is now confident that they can work in the future, after a little bit of tinkering. I would caution against that kind of thought, because in the end, if we find ourselves subject to some kind of ruling and if we are forced to comply, the P3s that the government often thinks may save money—actually, they don't ever save money, but the government pretends they sometimes will save money—might end up being far more costly than the actual P3 itself in terms of jobs and long-term prospects for the people of Ontario. So I'm asking that.

I think what we need to do now, as well as rethink the privatization, is rethink how, in the past, we were producing jobs on local projects, to see whether any of those can be saved. It's important that the people who have those jobs, some of them very good-paying jobs, keep them in order for the Ontario economy to prosper but, more so, to make sure that the individuals and their families prosper.

We need to look at and rethink and inform local communities about the jobs that may be gained in the future, or perhaps those that would be lost, so that planning can take place.

If we go down the other route, if we learn from this lesson and become much more export-oriented, and if we are able—I'm sure we are able to compete on export markets, to go into them in a big way. We have the expertise here. We have people who know how to build. We have people who know how to design. Certainly, we have the wherewithal in our industrial and commercial enterprises to make an excellent product.

Having said that, I think we need to expand those markets. We need to expand public electricity, because only public electricity seems to work in this province or in this country. I look at the two borders on either side of us: Manitoba and Quebec. They are not going through the paroxysms that we are here with our electricity production and with all of the costs and cost overruns and, need I say, the inflated CEO salaries from those public and private-public partnerships that have been set up.

We need to expand community co-operatives, because this is the reality of where I think we should be going. If you can expand the co-ops, if you can involve the First Nations, if you can get the local distribution companies down pat, many of the complaints that people have, particularly about solar and wind power, will dissolve. If you can show that there is a community benefit by building it, then the communities will accept the windmills and the solar farms on the adjacent lands. If you can't, they won't.

I think we have to rethink our energy policy. That starts at home. That starts as a result of this bill, and I would suggest that we recognize that the bill must proceed. I think all members of the House recognize that the bill must proceed because of the situation in which we have found ourselves.

Having said that, we need to learn the lessons of the WTO ruling, and we need to make sure that we do not get caught in this way again.

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I leave the remaining time for my colleague from Essex.

Interjections.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Essex. They were distracting me. Sorry.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Thank you so much, Speaker, for recognizing me. I appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): At least I didn't call you "Minister."

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Well, whatever. I wouldn't mind that either.

Speaker, it is a pleasure to join the debate and a pleasure to follow my colleague—our finance critic for the Ontario NDP—the member for Beaches–East York on this particular provision and bill that has come before the House that really brings into question now the overall benefit of the Green Energy Act in its entirety.

In Windsor and Essex county, we have seen quite an expansion of industrial wind turbines and industrial solar farms, not so much on the microFIT side but more on the feed-in tariff side, on the large industrial side. Knowing that these issues were contentious and complex in their initiatives, at least we knew that there were some provisions built into the Green Energy Act that would require provisions for domestic content.

As New Democrats, it is a little bit fundamental, I guess, to our overall principles in terms of supporting domestic manufacturing—

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, it's a little bit fundamental, or a lot fundamental. It's fundamental. It's a principle. It's a core principle.

Interjections.

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Mr. Taras Natyshak: I know. It's interesting. Yes, it is fundamental. Thank you to my colleagues who have corrected me. It is fundamental in terms of protecting domestic production and it's fundamental in the sense that we have a historical record of advocating for fair trade policies and advocating for domestic procurement and advocating for enhanced manufacturing on our own home turf, in our own jurisdiction. That means that we don't simply ship raw resources out; we actually add value to them and look for value-added manufacturing in resource-based industries.

One, of course, that we know very well in this province is the automotive industry. Prior to the initial Free Trade Agreement, the FTA, with Canada and the United States, and the subsequent NAFTA agreement, the North American Free Trade Agreement, there existed a provision called the Auto Pact, which required, very simply, that if you were to sell your product here, then you had to make your product here. I wonder if any members in the House can reflect back on the enormity of that industry in this province prior to the North American Free Trade Agreement. I can tell you, having grown up in Windsor and Essex county, that we had Ford, Chrysler and GM running nearly—I believe, in total, at full production, we had about 10 different plants employing tens of thousands of workers in Windsor and Essex county, not to mention the tier 2 suppliers in the tool and die and mould sector. We were bustling. Of course, we had a preferential dollar at that time, but what we knew was that if units, specifically in the automotive sector, were to be sold in Canada, they had to have some content built in Canada. That's what, I guess, essentially protected us from the effects of globalization and free trade agreements.

Now fast-forward to 2014, where the World Trade Organization, the dispute settlement body of the WTO, under provisions under the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade—an unelected, unaccountable body that exists somewhere in the ether—has determined that, as a sub-national jurisdiction, we cannot put these clauses in or ensure that we have domestic content built into our energy sector. I would say and I would submit and argue that that is dangerous, specifically in energy, because if we are to say that we have no control in terms of the content or the quality—of course we would have quality, but ultimately, it's a free market. We can't be assured that those important power-generating products will have the our best interests at heart. By that, I mean that I want a company in Ontario, in Canada, to produce those important assets that make up our energy production. I want them to have some skin in the game. I also want them to have to rely on the continuity and quality of their product for their own manufacturing. You see the case that I'm making here. I would like them to have some skin in the game. Of course, when they are producing and manufacturing and adding value, that adds to the economy of our province.

It was, again, one of the very few provisions of the Green Energy Act that I saw any tangible benefit to. Now this bill will apparently wipe out that benefit, and I have a question to the government. I understand that the debate will collapse today because no one is ready to speak on it or they aren't ready to answer questions, which is unfortunate; maybe I missed something. But I want to know now: What are the remaining benefits of the Green Energy Act if we are no longer able to assure that we have some control in terms of the manufacturing process, in terms of the quality, in terms of what gets built in our province?

My colleague the member from Beaches–East York pinpointed what the government's focus will be on from here on in. It will be simply on outsourced, privatized components to make up the bulk of our energy system. It's a little bit frightening, to say the least, to know that now we are at the whim of the WTO. We see other jurisdictions, like Quebec, who have taken control and understood that it was something worth fighting for, to ensure that you have those provisions, mainly because, on the procurement side and distribution side, they are heavily publicly owned and operated. I would love to see the government take on that type of responsibility.

I don't know if we have gone too far away from the principles that made up our historic Ontario power system here, which were to ensure that it was publicly owned, publicly managed, distributed at a fair price and used as a strategic asset. I think we have gone so far away from that that I shudder to think that this government has the ability to regain any control over it. It is directly one of the reasons that we see skyrocketing hydro rates. I would also say that we'll probably see more, given the fact that now we won't be able to control or to identify beneficial manufacturers that are in this province that could add to the value of the overall Green Energy Act and FIT contracts that are given out.

The entire argument speaks to the nature of, “Buy local, buy Ontario, support local business,” and anyone who speaks in favour of this I guess no longer has the legitimacy to say that they support “Buy local” in any other respect, whether it be in manufacturing or whether it be in agriculture, because if you’re saying that we relinquish our ability and control to support domestic manufacturing, then you also say, you know, why should we support domestic agriculture? The industries are similar in that respect, Speaker. Of course, we understand foreign markets, and we understand that it’s important to access foreign markets, but on a fair basis, one that identifies that we certainly can’t bring our standards down to a level that undermines the ability for our domestic manufacturers to compete and undermines a healthy economy.

This is an argument that I certainly have made in many other debates, whether it be around green energy or agriculture or any other aspect of provincial procurement. It’s one that, unfortunately, given the WTO and the fact of their ruling against Ontario, makes us less able to ever be able to infuse any domestic procurement contracts ever again. I wonder if this is a slippery slope that the government should have identified prior to the initiation of the Green Energy Act, as my colleague from Beaches–East York said. They could have foreseen this. They should have foreseen that it was to be challenged, again, through the mechanisms of privatization of our green energy.

Speaker, I’m pleased to have had the ability to add my comments to this debate. I’m pleased that New Democrats have expressed deep concern with the way that this government has managed our energy file in general. I hope that Ontarians are listening and paying attention to exactly what has happened with the Green Energy Act and how these are systemic failures that have been identified here that ultimately will lead to a failure in the overall system.

I appreciate your time, Speaker, and thanks for recognizing me from the other side.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You’re more than welcome.

Questions and comments.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I appreciate the comments from the member from Essex. At the outset, this does deal with a single clause of a relatively abstract or abstruse kind of bill here with reference to the WTO agreement. We’re removing some restrictions on domestic content to fulfill our World Trade Organization rules.

But perhaps in reply to one of your other, earlier questions that you brought up in your remarks concerning benefits of the Green Energy Act, I have to say that as a physician who was very proud to witness our government’s closure of coal-fired generation, therefore removing untold particles and particulate matter from the air that we breathe, that is an extraordinary, progressive and full-of-foresight initiative.

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I can give you a very quick example. My own daughter, who’s 14 years old, travelled recently to China

with her school. In one of the prep meetings for that, all the kids, the 20 or so girls who were going to this, were instructed to buy N75 masks—which is, by the way, SARS-level protection—in order to basically walk around the streets of Beijing, China. By the way, that’s a bit of a shock to a doctor, because we were instructed as doctors only to wear those types of masks if, for example, we suspect somebody has some pretty high-powered virus or drug-resistant tuberculosis or something in front of us. This is part and parcel of the daily life of very large segments of the population.

I would simply say that when we’re looking at this particular abstruse clause with regard to the WT Organization, or whether we’re looking at the larger framework of, for example, as you said, the Green Energy Act and its cascading and legacy-level benefits in the future, we’re on very solid ground.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m pleased, in the last dying moments of this small bill, to have a couple of minutes to comment on the member from Beaches–East York as well as Essex.

I would say this: I have to put a plug in here for my son. My son is the parliamentary secretary federally to the Minister of International Trade, Minister Ed Fast. I did have occasion to talk to him about this, because this is an infringement of trade law internationally. As such, the province, you would think—now, I don’t blame the Minister of Energy specifically. Minister Chiarelli is a very respectable member and all that thing, but he wouldn’t know much about this. But when they screwed up in the Green Energy Act, Bill 150, they forgot to do what Quebec did and put in some assurance that there would be job creation in Ontario as a result of this Green Energy Act. As it turned out, most of the solar panels and all this stuff were coming from somewhere else—China and other places. They then, retrospectively, tried to fix the problem by putting in a glowing error into the bill itself of permitting a certain amount of domestic content. Well, then they started to fund those people through some of these picking-winners-and-losers types of grants they have under McGuinty-Wynne.

I’m not surprised that the international court has ruled against them, because like most of the things this government is doing, they’re under suspicion. It comes down, fundamentally, to not being able to manage projects. I see it all the time. It’s getting worse by the day. Even in the papers today, there’s questioning about spending another \$5.7 billion that they don’t have.

With all due respect, Speaker, this bill here—I believe enough time has been spent. Admit you’ve broken the law, come out with your hands up, and let’s get on with it, because this government certainly needs to be corrected.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments.

Mr. John Vanthof: It’s an honour once again to have a couple of minutes to put something on the record

regarding An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 with respect to a World Trade Organization decision.

It's a very small bill, but it's not abstract and it's a big issue, because when the Green Energy Act was promoted and created, it was to kick-start the production of green energy technology in the province. A noble goal: 60,000 jobs. But what they forgot, and what is truly galling is—and this government should have the expertise. I come from a dairy background, and we spend a lot of time looking at World Trade Organization rules. There's a lot of expertise in this country regarding the World Trade Organization. Yet this government failed to check to see if this would comply. That's the problem, and that's a big problem.

That's the difference between what Quebec did and what Ontario did. Ontario went gung-ho: "Just forget about all the rules. We've got this great idea: We're going to put turbines all over. And when we put turbines all over, we can build the factories." Somebody forgot to check the WTO. That's what this bill is about. That is truly scary, that this government can just kind of—because the expertise is there. We're under trade threat all the time.

This is the member from Etobicoke North: "This is an abstract little bill." No, it's not. This is what the Green Energy Act hinged on: all those jobs. Well, this bill destroys all the jobs, because they forgot to design it so it would pass the WTO. And it's possible, because Quebec did it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It has been a fascinating discussion. The member for Durham talks about the federal government, which removed all taxes on foreign-made parts that come into Canada. I hope he votes Liberal federally, because the argument you just made was against the federal Conservative Party's position on removing tax. The other thing that's interesting is, they didn't support the reform which took \$8.5 billion of reduced costs out of Canadian manufacturers. So the official opposition is saying, "Don't tax foreign-made parts," and here in this House, they wanted to keep taxes higher for Canadian-made manufacturing.

On the issue of legality, I've been involved in a number of trade fights and issues, including one, very famously, where we walked the fine edge. Quite frankly, you have to, sometimes, as we did on clean energy. People may remember the battle with the World Trade Organization that many municipalities in this province, Manitoba and Quebec had over the apparel industry on duty remissions, where there was a debate about what the legal standing was. We took the chance to protect our apparel industry, and we won at the WTO.

We make a lot of buses in Manitoba, Ontario and Quebec, but they're 40% made here and they're hauled off to branch plants in the northern US because the Buy America policy—actually, I still have questions about its legality. The Americans played hardball, and they won—60% of buses that are Canadian-made.

The member for Nepean–Carleton always sort of suggests something that I find very ridiculous. I'm really confused by the Conservatives' policy these days, because she said that this would be declaring a trade war. We weren't declaring a trade war with duty remissions or lumber or steel or buses.

Is the Conservative Party's position "trade surrender"? You're never going to take a stand and never go before the WTO and never take a chance? Well, we're prepared to take those chances to do exactly what the member for Essex said: protect Ontario jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Essex, or Beaches–East York, has two minutes. The member from Beaches–East York.

Interjection: Seniority rules, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Michael Prue: As my colleague said, seniority rules. I think we flipped a coin and I lost.

I thank the members from Etobicoke North, Durham and Timiskaming, and the Minister of Transportation for their comments.

No one would deny that going into green energy is probably more healthy for the people of Ontario in terms of what they're breathing. No one would deny that getting out of dirty coal is a good thing. We would only suggest that when the Liberal Party first talked about getting out of coal, they said they were going to do it in a couple of years, and this has literally taken 10 years, not the initial two or three that were promised.

The member from Durham: It's always a pleasure to listen, especially to the little tidbits that he gets from his son, and some gleaning of thought of what's going on in the process in Ottawa.

The member from Timiskaming: Thank you very much for your very fiery rendition on all of this. I have to agree with him that we should know what to expect, in many cases, because of the—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Prue: Well, yes. I mean, we know, in so many cases, that we are going to be taken to task as a province, as a country, whenever there are trade deals at risk, and we know that many of those have gone badly for us.

That brings me back to the Minister of Transportation. Do the Americans play hardball and win? Yes. So do the Japanese, and so do the Europeans, and so does everyone else. Everybody plays hardball to win. When you know that you're up against that at the outset, you should shield yourself from some of that when you have an idea that it may be coming down the pipe, or conceivably might.

All I'm suggesting, and all my colleague from Essex was suggesting, is, if Quebec knew how to shield themselves, we should have known how to do it too.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Further debate? Last call for further debate.

Seeing none, Mr. Chiarelli has moved second reading of Bill 153, An Act to amend the Electricity Act, 1998 with respect to a World Trade Organization decision.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: No; I'm sorry. The government would like to refer the bill to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister has referred it to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly. It is so ordered.

Orders of the day.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I move adjournment of the House, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Murray has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1621.

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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	

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Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

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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
Laura Albanese, Steven Del Duca
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

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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

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
John O'Toole, Jagmeet Singh
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Catherine Fife
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
Catherine Fife, John Fraser
Monte Kwinter, Jane McKenna
Rick Nicholls, Peter Tabuns
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial 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
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
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