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of Debates
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Thursday 10 April 2014

Jeudi 10 avril 2014

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 10 April 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 10 avril 2014

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, good morning. How are you today? I know that the sun is shining in Peterborough, because Mike Judson of CHEX news on TV told me that.

I want to move that we move forward with government order G85 this morning.

COMPANIES STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
VISANT LES COMPAGNIES

Ms. MacCharles moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to amend various companies statutes and to amend other statutes consequential to the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010 / Projet de loi 85, Loi modifiant diverses lois visant les compagnies et apportant à d'autres lois des modifications corrélatives découlant de la Loi de 2010 sur les organisations sans but lucratif.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Ms. MacCharles.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker, and good morning. I'll be sharing my time this morning with my fantastic parliamentary assistant, the member from Brampton West.

It's my pleasure to rise in the House to begin the debate on Bill 85, the Companies Statute Law Amendment Act, 2014. This act amends various statutes consequential to the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010. If passed, it would have a significant impact on a law that affects a huge part of our province's economy and a significant part of our workforce. I will speak to that in just a moment. Today, I'd like to provide additional details about this act and how we are proposing to deliver on this government's commitment to modernize laws governing not-for-profit corporations in this province.

But first, let me take a moment to give some background and share that with the House. As many in the House will recall, in 2010 the Ontario Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010, commonly known as ONCA, passed with the support of all parties in this House. This passage fulfilled a commitment made in the 2005 and 2006 bud-

gets and put ONCA into place as foundational legislation providing modern corporate law to not-for-profit corporations in Ontario. Up to that point, the Corporations Act, the legislation governing not-for-profits in this province, had not been substantially updated in almost 60 years—a very long time. Now Bill 85 needs to be passed so ONCA can take effect.

Our government is committed to the not-for-profit sector. This sector is commonly referred to as the third sector, and plays a significant role in the economic life of our province. More than 50,000 not-for-profit corporations deliver a broad range of important social, cultural and other services. These include daycare centres; religious organizations; social and sports clubs; and arts, social services and health organizations, just to name a few.

It is estimated that this sector contributes \$50 billion annually to Ontario's economy, and according to the latest data we have, approximately 16% of Ontario's workforce is employed in the not-for-profit sector. There are also about 7.8 million volunteers working in not-for-profit organizations in Ontario as well.

I think we all know people in our network of family and friends who volunteer and make up part of that number. When you put it in context, more than half of the people in this province do some form of not-for-profit volunteering.

ONCA establishes modern governance rules for the not-for-profit sector. Our efforts to update this act will mean that it will provide not-for-profit corporations with many benefits. These include more modern corporate governance, improved accountability, an easier incorporation process and clarification that not-for-profits can engage in commercial activities where revenues are used by the corporation in support of their not-for-profit business.

ONCA has the broad support of stakeholders in the not-for-profit sector including the ONN—the Ontario Nonprofit Network—YMCA and United Way. We are also working closely with Community Legal Education Ontario to make sure support is provided to not-for-profit corporations as they transition to ONCA.

However, before ONCA can come into force, more work needs to be done. That's why, on June 5 of last year, we introduced the Companies Statute Law Amendment Act, 2013. This act proposes consequential, clarifying and transitional amendments that are needed to proclaim ONCA. Until this act is passed, ONCA cannot come into force. If the amendments are passed by this Legislature, ONCA is anticipated to come into force no earlier than

six months after passage, in order to ensure adequate time for not-for-profit corporations to prepare for transition. These proposed amendments would affect 86 statutes overseen by more than 15 ministries—that's quite a few. They are necessary, non-contentious and technical amendments, Speaker.

In just a moment, my parliamentary assistant will provide you with more details about how these amendments will play out in the not-for-profit sector in our province. People ask me that all the time; they say, "What does this really mean?" So I'm looking forward to his remarks.

I hope I've been able to provide this House with some additional information on the proposed amendments included in the Companies Statute Law Amendment Act, 2013, that are critical before ONCA can be proclaimed. Ontario's thriving not-for-profit sector is dependent on us to fulfil our commitment to providing this modern legislation as a foundation for this sector that gives so much to the economy and the workforce of this province.

The government remains fully committed to implementing this important legislation. We also recognize that the not-for-profit sector is concerned about the uncertainty of the timing of the implementation. We are eager, with the assent of this House, to take the remaining steps to complete this important journey that we began four years ago.

Now, Mr. Speaker, I invite my parliamentary assistant in the Ministry of Consumer Services, the member for Brampton West, to provide you with more details on how Bill 85 will benefit the not-for-profit sector in Ontario and, quite frankly, benefit all of us. He'll also speak to how the amendments will affect this very important sector.

Thank you very much for your time, and I'm very happy to turn over the balance of the time to my parliamentary assistant.

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

Mr. Vic Dhillon: It is an honour to rise in the House today to add to the comments made by the honourable Minister of Consumer Services.

The minister has outlined the benefits that the Ontario's Not-for-Profit Corporations Act will bring to this sector if we are able to pass Bill 85 to bring ONCA into force. With these benefits in mind, I would now like to discuss the details of the amendments that Bill 85 will put into effect.

0910

There are, in fact, more than 80 amendments to statutes that must be made in this bill. Many of these amendments are consequential amendments that would change cross-references in a statute from the current Corporations Act to ONCA.

The proposed clarifying amendments would address potential ambiguities of provisions in ONCA and the Corporations Act. For example, one of these proposed amendments clarifies that the Corporations Act will continue to apply to pension fund societies and employees' mutual benefit societies.

The proposed transitional amendments would also address items to facilitate a corporation's transition from one act to another. For example, one of our proposed amendments would provide transition rules for existing corporations, such as shared capital social clubs, to continue under the Ontario Business Corporations Act during a five-year transition period after ONCA comes into force.

One proposed amendment to ONCA, if passed, would also respond to a key concern of stakeholders in clarifying that new limited voting rights for non-voting members would not apply during the three-year transition period following proclamation of ONCA. This would provide more time to consult on this issue with the sector.

If these technical amendments are not made, it may lead to confusion, ambiguity and unintended and unforeseen consequences. As the minister mentioned earlier, the amendments proposed in the Companies Statute Law Amendment Act that we introduced on June 5, 2013, must be passed before ONCA can come into force.

I would also like to share some details about the proposed implementation of the act. With a few exceptions, the act will generally apply automatically to not-for-profit corporations that are incorporated under Ontario law. Existing not-for-profit corporations will have a three-year transition period once the act comes into effect. This would allow them to make any necessary changes to their incorporation and any other documents to comply with the act; for example, letters patent and any supplementary letters patent, bylaws and special resolutions.

The act sets out how Ontario's not-for-profit corporations are created, governed and dissolved. It provides a modern legal framework for not-for-profit corporations by ensuring there is greater transparency and accountability in how not-for-profit corporations are governed. Within this framework, there are a few highlights that I would like to bring to the attention of the House at this time.

If passed, the act would make a new distinction between public-benefit corporations and other not-for-profit corporations. It would make it mandatory for corporations to make proxies available to members, and would clarify that not-for-profit corporations can engage in commercial activities, if the activities advance or support the corporation's not-for-profit goals.

The act would also allow for a simpler process to review the corporation's records in some situations, and would require a corporation with two or more classes or groups of members to have the classes or groups set out in the corporation's articles. It would also provide clear rules for corporate governance and increased accountability to its members. It also lists specific requirements for directors and officers to report conflicts of interest in certain circumstances, and provide members with the remedies they can take if they believe directors are not acting in the best interests of the corporation.

In terms of scope, if passed, the new act would affect every corporation without shared capital that has been incorporated under an act of the Ontario Legislature, including the current Corporations Act.

Our government has prepared some tools to make it easier for existing not-for-profit corporations to make the transition to the new act. This electronic tool kit is available on our ministry website. As well, we have given a grant to Community Legal Education Ontario to provide support to not-for-profit corporations during the three-year transition period, should this bill be passed, and we will continue to work closely with the Ontario Nonprofit Network and sector partners on ways to smooth this transition.

So those are some of the highlights of this bill, Bill 85, that we're debating today. I join with the Minister of Consumer Services in supporting and encouraging swift passage of this very important legislation.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to start by saying that this is a significantly comprehensive bill. I'd refer to it more as an omnibus bill, really. It could be some housekeeping. I am surprised—it's 100 pages and eight sections, quite a technical bill. I haven't completely read it. I was here this morning, actually, to listen to a one-hour lead by the government. They used not even 15 minutes. I think that's an insult to this place. I want them to make a full disclosure on a piece of legislation that the members here are anxious to—we would love to support it if it's an improvement to our economy. It is relating to amendments, some company statutes and things like that.

We naively assumed that they were going to deal with the plight of the economy of Ontario—a finance minister that hasn't got the foggiest idea of what's going on. He's saying one thing and the media is saying another. This bill doesn't tell me a thing that needs to be done to make Ontario a better place, to create jobs and strengthen the economy.

The first section here is consistent between section 2 and section 3. It amends the act with application to not-for-profit corporations. Now, that's a portion that—I know our caucus would like to strengthen the not-for-profit sector. Why? Most sectors are not-for-profit in Ontario. Heinz has left.

If you want to look to the future with any confidence, you should look to the past. A great predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. There is nothing that they've done in the last while, including Bill 85 and the two bills I spoke on yesterday, 173 and 176, another two bills—this may not be an appropriate word. I think it's duplicitous, actually. Some of the stuff they're saying is contrary to what they're actually doing. In fact, we were talking on the highway traffic improvement act yesterday. The Minister of Transportation is here and perhaps he'll speak for—

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a pleasure to stand in the House today and talk about the not-for-profit sector and charities. I don't know if our province would be as good as it is today if we didn't have so many charities and not-for-profits out there raising money to support the things that we all need in our communities.

I was talking to a member of the Legion, one of our World War II veterans, just a couple of weeks ago, and he was saying that the government has changed the rules and regulations, meaning—if you think of the Legion, they collect money through break-open tickets, through meat draws. They distribute poppies. They run bingos still, some of them. They can't use the money the way they used to because of a change in government regulation. So when you have a Legion that needs a new roof—the roof is leaking—or they need a new air conditioner, they can't use the money for that anymore, which they used to be able to. The question they put to me was, "How are we going to raise money for academic scholarships, to support Little League baseball and track and field, and our veterans' comforts when we won't have a clubhouse to do it in?" Because they can't use the money as they used to, to repair the roof.

I think there's a dilemma there. I think what the government should do is investigate what changes were made and how they can correct them, how they can change that around to allow charities and not-for-profit groups such as the Royal Canadian Legion to be able to use the money the way they used to be able to do. I would ask the government to do that, whether it's specifically in this bill or another bill that came along a while ago, but I think it's something out there that—I know we all respect our charities and not-for-profits, but some of them are hurting because of some government action.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, there are so many bills, including Bill 141, that deal with the economy, apprenticeships, infrastructure, education, training and tax reform. The member for Durham doesn't understand the economic importance of this. This is a technical bill.

0920

I was the president of a not-for-profit called the Canadian Urban Institute. What the member opposite doesn't seem to realize is that Ontario has the fourth-largest not-for-profit sector, I think, in the world. It is one of the fastest-growing. The not-for-profit that I was president of doubled in size, did the climate change strategy for the Philippines, built about 50,000 affordable housing units, introduced private property and local democratic structures to Ukraine, designed an energy system for Calgary that saves the city \$32 billion and employs people without very much government money, and has to raise all of that money through contract work internationally and through working for companies and governments around the world. The ignorance shown by the member from Durham about this sector—

Mr. John O'Toole: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): A point of order.

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Speaker, I have not attacked personally; I've attacked the policy. I would expect he would apologize and then resign.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would leave that up to the speaker.

The Minister of Transportation, if you could stay to the legislation that's in front of us.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, ignorance is a lack of knowledge, and I think the member demonstrated it. If you do not understand—

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: —as the member for Quinte West clearly does not either, that this is one of our fastest-growing, independent, not-government-subsidized sectors—he just put forward every stereotype, which is why this technical bill is so important for the governance reforms, for the complex financial relationships they have. We need this. The sector needs it to continue growing and creating jobs. I'm sad the party opposite didn't understand that.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I want to just come back to the comments offered by the Minister of Transportation on the issue of this bill, because one of the things I note is the fact that it was introduced almost a year ago and it hasn't been debated. This was the lead-off speech this morning. I think the members would normally expect that in a leadoff, the minister responsible would provide a thorough, insightful analysis of the bill. I think the shock, quite frankly, of members expecting to hear that kind of analysis and expecting to have that kind of thorough discussion, when a one-hour leadoff is just that, a one-hour opportunity—it comes as a bit of a surprise to members on this side of the House that it can be done in such a summary fashion.

Perhaps rather than talking about anyone's particular ignorance, what we should be talking about are the details of this bill in a manner that will further thoughtful debate. When you have reduced this apparently important piece of legislation that's been sitting in the wings for nearly a year, and you can dismiss it as the lead speaker, in, I believe, about 15 minutes, then I think it sheds a different light on it than we certainly understood it to have. We were prepared to listen for one hour.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Consumer Services, you have two minutes.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to acknowledge the participation of the MPPs from Durham, Windsor-Tecumseh, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure and the MPP from York-Simcoe.

Just on the issue of it being a substantive bill and some suggestion by the opposition that we need more time—you may have noticed, Speaker, that I kept my comments quite limited, as did my parliamentary assistant, so there would be more time on the clock for this. This is not new; this has been introduced before. The members opposite know full well that what gets called up is discussed by House leaders and so on and there are many good things that the government would like to call up, but in the context of a minority government much of this is negotiated.

In terms of the bill, I just want to close by emphasizing how important this is to our economy. My colleague to my left, the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment, sees this as very critical to the province of Ontario, as do all the other ministers who have some linkage to what we're bringing forward today.

When you look at those killer facts—\$50 billion annually is contributed by this sector; 16% of our workforce is employed in the not-for-profit sector; 7.8 million volunteers are working in this sector—it does affect all of us.

Quite frankly, the sector is keen to get this going, and there has to be transition time. So I really encourage everyone in the House to support this so that the transition can start.

Interjection.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's what?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's Volunteer Week.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Oh, it's Volunteer Week. The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure reminded me that it's Volunteer Week. What a great way to end this discussion. Thank you.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: I certainly welcome the opportunity to spend some time—it looks like I have a fair bit of time—to address Bill 85.

Bill 85 seems to be the son of Bill 65—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Or daughter.

Mr. Toby Barrett: —or daughter. It was being kicked around in committee and in this Legislature. I think it was back in 2013.

The order before the House, Bill 85, the Companies Statute Law Amendment Act, 2013—we understand that it's a series of technical amendments. It seems to be page after page after page. As of this morning, we have a little bit to go on.

I did listen to the minister's presentation. With respect to this legislation, she raised the question: What does this really mean? She didn't answer the question, so I think it's important that we continue this debate and keep this going.

Now, the minister did give us a few hints. When you talk about 50,000 non-profits, it's a bit of thin gruel this morning, for those who may be monitoring this debate, to know at this point, from the two speeches from the government, what we have here. But the minister did indicate that Bill 85, the son or daughter of Bill 65, does address some long-standing problems. The minister mentioned 60 years, so I guess it is time this government got on with it.

In areas of governance, and the minister mentioned accountability—there are two big areas that we have been dealing with for well over two years, on public accounts, with respect to Ornge.

The minister made mention of trying to kind of grease the wheels and ease the process with respect to incorporation. I know that is a bone of contention for so many of the very small non-profits. Out of the 50,000 non-profits that were mentioned, many of them are very, very small.

Essentially, the meetings would be probably nothing more than the chair or the president, the treasurer and the secretary. You're not sitting around the table with a board of directors of 15 people.

The minister made mention that Bill 85 addresses the need for more revenue opportunities—I'm not sure what the minister said exactly—which is so important for the non-profit sector.

Things have changed in 60 years. Sixty years ago, there weren't the government grants to keep a lot of these organizations viable. Sixty years later—today—there are not the government grants to keep these organizations going and to keep them viable. We do have to look for other measures.

0930

The minister made mention that this bill—actually, I really can't find anybody out in the non-profit sector who knows about it or knows that the government has been working on it for the last seven years, something that goes back 60 years. But it is a piece of legislation, as we've just been told, that touches on 86 different statutes and involves, in one way or another, 15 different ministries. I take that very seriously; I think some may brush it off as, "These are merely technical amendments."

Oftentimes, the devil is in the details, and I just hope to give, perhaps, some examples from my own riding where some of these technical details—and I oftentimes throw them into that box that I label the myriad constellation of bureaucratic rules and regulations; the picayune forms to fill out and the boxes to check off.

In the Legislature, we're referring to these as technical details, but these technical details can really cause grief for our sports and recreation organizations; our agriculture or commodity groups; our farm organizations; certainly the outdoors organizations; the various environmental groups, so many of them that build on a platform of a very small, local, non-profit organization; and, of course, our so-valuable health and social services non-profit organizations.

As I mentioned, this current government started consultations seven years ago and produced the bill. Now at that time, and I guess this would be in 2010, they produced a bill called Bill 65. This would be the father, or the mother, of Bill 85—I guess we have to cover ourselves carefully when we speak in here.

You would think that after this kind of a lengthy consultation process that by now we would have had a finished product—or last year, as MPP Munro mentioned—we would have had something to work with. We supported it; all three parties supported it. As I recall, it went through first reading and second reading debate. Hearings were held, or maybe a hearing was held. I wasn't there; I'm not sure where the hearing was held—maybe Toronto, maybe Sudbury. I guess people didn't show up for hearings, from what I understand.

There was third reading debate, but there it sat. It never did receive royal assent, and there were some reasons for that. I guess it's something like 101 pages of reasons why it was not signed by the Queen.

Seven years going on 60 years' consultation—that's in the category of snail-like consultation in my view. I think it's unfortunate if the 50,000 non-profits that we're dealing with have not been involved in this consultation process. I think that's unfortunate. I don't know whether the government has a fax number and an email address for the 50,000 non-profits, and I don't know whether the cabinet minister keeps in touch with these non-profits. They have to register to be a non-profit so their coordinates would be there in a computer somewhere, I assume. I hope they didn't get wiped out a few weeks ago by either the present government or the former government. There seem to be two Liberal governments we're talking about here.

But anyway, these groups are on record; I hope they've been kept informed. Maybe it was contracted out to the Ontario Nonprofit Network or some other group. Or maybe there was the assumption that it would kind of just happen on its own. But communication is so important; I'm not sure whether that communication has been adequate over the past seven years.

I do agree, and I think the minister stated this too, that the role of our non-profits in our communities is significant. Economic studies have laid this out, the kind of value volunteers provide in our communities. The legislation has a worthy goal—I think that was articulated in the brief comments this morning—very simply: helping the non-profit corporations and the organizations to organize themselves. That's part of management. Organization is part of management. Leadership is part of management.

We look to government for some leadership with respect to this very important sector. We certainly look to this government to play a role in the control function, the accountability, as was mentioned this morning. It's all part of management, and it's all part of governance, whether it's at the provincial level or at that organization-by-organization level—something that we see as MPPs.

Oftentimes, if we're doing our jobs, we are invited or sit in on the annual general meeting of so many of these organizations. Certainly with the farm organizations, whether I'm invited or not, I try and show up, because I've been going to farm meetings for as long as I can remember. Part of that goal is to help them to operate in a better fashion. To help them help themselves, so to speak.

When we're talking about Bill 85, we realize the original Bill 65 replaces legislation that did govern non-profits, legislation that apparently sat there for—people used to say it sat there for 50 years; well, now it's 60 years. Time has gone on. It has been seven years under this government.

At the same time, the responsibility of the non-profits and the various charitable organizations has grown immensely over the number of years. Much more complex services are provided by the non-profits. There's also the fact that there's a very big difference between non-profit organizations like private clubs—for example, golf clubs—compared to organizations that have a mission of

charity or societal service; different from the non-profits that serve as an umbrella group for some of the other organizations.

We're looking at a housekeeping bill that is to amend the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010, which never did receive royal assent—never did do any work, so to speak. I hope all MPPs address this in a more fulsome manner. It gives all of us an opportunity to speak to the value of volunteers in the communities that we're charged with representing. We are elected representatives, and our job is made a lot easier by these organizations that help structure the issues out there, whether it's health and social problems, opportunities for kids who play soccer or sports—or help structure cattlemen to deal with the tough times over the last 10 years with, back then, the advent of a disease which has eliminated probably half the herd in Ontario and, unfortunately, has eliminated a lot of cattlemen in that business. A lot of them are now cash crops. They're growing corn and soybeans and winter wheat.

It's an opportunity for us to discuss some changes that we should consider that would hopefully come through Bill 85 and Bill 65. When you've got 101 pages, or whatever it is, of legislation that we're talking about today, I don't know how many pages of regulation we're going to see down the road emanating from that legislation.

It is appropriate to talk about this. We know this is National Volunteer Week, again, reflecting the importance of volunteering in our society. Volunteers are the people that we deal with. We have the fortunate situation as MPPs that we do deal with the leaders, the elites in our society, those people who keep the women's institutes running, keep the Rotary club going, deal with minor hockey or deal with members of the local naturalist club. These volunteers—and we have the awards ceremonies—I consider them the elites of our society. They quietly work behind the scenes. They gain from that, as well, feelings of self-worth, of satisfaction.

0940

For many young people, it is, perhaps, a bit of a track to gain experience in how to run a meeting, how to be a secretary, how to be a treasurer. I see people who come up through 4-H and Junior Farmers. Fifty years later, they're on the board of directors of the pork producers or the ginseng growers association. They know how to run a meeting; they know how to take minutes.

We have a problem in the province of Ontario with many of the condominium boards. The people who sit on these boards or chair a condominium unit-holders' corporation—maybe they haven't come up through 4-H. Maybe they haven't been inculcated in the Ministry of Agriculture direction on how to take minutes or explain what a quorum is. In much of rural Ontario, we have that background. Perhaps on the condominium corporations, that kind of background isn't there. Again, that's where government can help out with those kinds of corporations, because we've seen the payoff with our volunteer organizations.

Again, government does recognize volunteers, and they can help not so much put the money where the

mouth is but just provide that kind of information, education and awareness of how to be better organized through your non-profit to achieve your ultimate goal, whether it's having a very good golf club or perhaps fraternal organization or to run your local Community Living organization, for example.

Like many MPPs, we have the opportunity to take part in the Ontario Volunteer Service Awards ceremonies. Now, there's a window on the non-profits in our areas. This Ontario Volunteer Service Award recognizes individual volunteers for continuous years of commitment and dedicated service to an organization. They're all tied in with an organization.

Down in my riding, in Haldimand-Norfolk, it's a full-night affair. It's held in the Vittoria community centre. It's a beautiful community centre out in the middle of farm country, down there in apple country. It amazes me how there are always a few awards—there's always someone who comes up towards the end of the evening who has been contributing to a non-profit for 50 years or more. Now, that's dedication, and that says to me that, yes, we as elected representatives have to do a good job on fleshing this out. I think we all have a responsibility, in spite of what's happened in the last seven years, to make sure that our non-profits know what's going on and what government is doing for them.

There are other awards for volunteers, Ontario government ones: the Ontario Medal for Good Citizenship, the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers, the Lieutenant Governor's Community Volunteer Award for Students. I believe a case can be made with respect to the Order of Ontario; that's the province's highest award. I consider that a volunteer award. It's often presented to someone who has done a tremendous amount of work for non-profits.

In my riding, all the firefighters, except the two chiefs, are volunteers—they're all volunteers. They're working through, essentially, a system of non-profit organizations backed up by the county, and the province somewhat, for training. I always attend the volunteer firefighters' awards ceremony in Haldimand county. That is quite an evening. There is the Ontario Medal for Firefighter Bravery, which I have seen presented on occasions. That's a volunteer award.

I'm very proud of the fact that when I was in government—this goes back to 1995. MPP Munro would know about this and also MPP O'Toole. We brought in a program—it was a requirement for students to put in a number of volunteer hours before they could graduate. Over the years, I continue to see these new young people oftentimes coming in each year, helping us run the community halls, the ethnic halls, and helping with serving food.

We call it volunteer hours, although it was a requirement. I guess it was a mandatory requirement to volunteer—it sounds like the military—kind of a mandatory opportunity. I don't know whether it was Lyn McLeod who coined that expression; I'm not sure. Maybe MPP Bradley would know which provincial parliamentarian coined that phrase—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would just ask the members on the far right if you would just keep the noise down.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I didn't hear any noise from MPP Bradley—a mandatory opportunity. Anyway, in the Mike Harris days, we brought in a requirement that you volunteer. It sounds like the First World War.

Again, this is a housekeeping bill, by and large. It allows that transition from previous statutes—Bill 65 to Bill 85—that transition to the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act that was passed but not proclaimed about a year ago.

It's 101 pages. I hope that's not reason to worry. Quite honestly, as I understand it, it's to make incorporation a little easier. That's a bit of a bone of contention for a lot of the smaller groups.

Again, my question: How many pages of regulation will be generated from 101 pages of legislation? There's probably a formula there. I guess we probably could expect a fair bit, but I don't know.

As we have all mentioned this morning, volunteers are so important. Like everyone in this House, I am so busy on weekends, year in and year out, attending the parades and the fairs, the church suppers, the United Way functions—I could go on for the next half-hour about that, and maybe I will.

All of these organizations, all of these events that we have the privilege of attending—although I guess some of our fellows here won't be able to attend the Easter Bunny parade that is happening somewhere in Toronto. Is that down in the Beaches? I don't know what happened. Somebody laid an egg on that one.

Anyway, all of these parades, these great events that pull our community together—we have the luxury of being invited, or we show up anyway, whether we're invited or not—have to be organized, and the basis is oftentimes your local chamber of commerce, your board of trade, or your agricultural society. These events, certainly in my riding, are volunteer events. They are so important. They are the crux of our area tourism industry, our recreational or agri-food tourism, and what we have to offer locally.

I think of the Norfolk County Fair. It's one of the largest fairs in Ontario; it has been going for 170 years. I wasn't there 170 years ago, but it would have started as a completely volunteer-run event. It's a gigantic endeavour now; about 100,000 people a year come through there. I make darn sure I have an exhibit at that fair, when you've got just about everybody from—well, Norfolk county is only 60,000, and 100,000 show up. Again, it's run by the Norfolk agricultural society. It's something that has been going on—I may not see it, but it will be going on for over 200 years. These people bring money into the area, the visitors from outside the county. They eat in our restaurants, buy gasoline and spend money on local businesses. It's quite an event, one that is flexible and continually changing with the times—up-to-date entertainment, for example. Other fairs in our riding are much smaller but there's still that kind of trickle-down, trickle-up effect.

0950

Now, we're getting into the time of year for the home shows. I just attended the Caledonia home show, which has morphed into a—what did they call it?—"sip and savour," where local grape growers, wine producers and meat processing and cheese production facilities would be there showing off their wares.

Down in the two counties I represent, it's a greater than one-in-three chance when you dial 911 that there will be a volunteer connected somehow going out and responding to that call. Obviously, if it's a fire, it will be a volunteer firefighter who is there, that person who is willing to put their life on the line and provide that first response when some of us get into an emergency. Police calls: We have a very good system of volunteer police officers, the auxiliary officers who are there as backup. For them, and I see it with the volunteer firefighters, there are good things in it as well: a means of socializing, of meeting new people. You really can't put a monetary value on something like that.

But with so many people—and I do encourage people who are maybe somewhat socially isolated. We see the opportunities for younger people. Maybe they have intellectual disabilities and they tie in with the local Lions Club, for example, or they get adopted by the firefighters or the sports team, and that helps with respect to socialization. For many, that community contact, I'm sure, has a beneficial effect with respect to perhaps any underlying mental health problems, for example. I guess you could try to put some money on it. It alleviates any additional burden on our health care system.

Church groups: We remember the uproar a number of years ago when the new health regulations came in and had a big impact on the church supper. Many of these meals, these bake sales, were the last lifeline of financial survival for some churches. I'm really not aware of anyone getting sick from sitting down in a church basement to a roast beef dinner or eating an apple pie—you certainly hear about them in some of the very large food plants—but the ramifications of that particular crack-down are still being felt.

Again, that rolls into that red tape box. I think it's really unfortunate. Red tape is my fear with this legislation here today. Are we in any way creating additional bureaucratic rules or regulations that are going to discourage people from coming out and supporting our non-profits?

There's an article in the Globe and Mail about changes to the Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act and fears that it will negatively impact small not-for-profits. And again, my concern with this legislation that we're debating is, what are the downsides? Is there collateral damage? Maybe it will take another seven years to see what that is.

A number of my staff who were talking about this bill are involved in non-profit organizations. They've had some bad experience on the red tape side of it. One staffer walked into a situation where the previous board was not knowledgeable in successfully navigating the

swamp of red tape which was supposed to be overseen by government bureaucrats. As a result, it was very damaging to the organization itself. He saw finger-pointing, there was blame-shifting, and it put quite a load on the shoulders of the volunteer board members.

Another staff member had negative problems with respect to the lottery commission, and was really questioning: Does an established organization need to provide its constitution to the local issuing agency? Is there a real purpose in this, or is it just filed and put on a shelf somewhere? We know the changes to lottery regulations came about due to some abuse by a few organizations. I'm all for reporting what money is being spent and what it's being spent on, but very clearly, after Ornge, for example, we all agree we need more transparency and accountability—we need the rules, but cracking down on non-profits and creating new rules because of a few bad apples and violators is not the way to fix the situation. It seems to be the trend: Create more rules, create more paperwork and, unfortunately, drive the organization out of existence. Essentially, you kill the goose that's laying the golden egg.

Now, it's not entirely in this government's control, but the process for volunteer checks is frustrating. Often, long-standing volunteers have to take time off work to go for fingerprints. Then they wait for weeks for the results. There's no question we need to ensure our children are safe, say, in our sports organizations and the scouting movements and many other organizations like that, but it's got to be made a little bit more volunteer-friendly.

There has recently been a casualty as a result of over-regulation and red tape. Just last January, the National Wild Turkey Federation pulled all of its fundraising out of Canada. This organization is very important down in Norfolk county, Haldimand and much of rural southern Ontario, with the advent of the wild turkey, first introduced in Norfolk back in the 1980s, maybe 1986, through one of those excellent MNR programs. So the NWTFF worked with OFAH, the Ontario Federation of Anglers and Hunters. They worked with MNR. They brought the wild turkey back to Ontario. Now we've lost that organization. Federal rules for the not-for-profits were the reason that was given. There was never any suggestion of breaking the rules; it was just the difficulty in complying. That was responsible for this North American organization pulling out of Canada. That's unfortunate. I would go to that wild turkey dinner every year. I would throw in my money. One night I came home with a chocolate lab. I mean, you could buy just about anything there. You could bid on just about anything and I actually bought a handful—if anybody here has ever owned a Labrador retriever, let alone a chocolate one.

Ducks Unlimited: Now there's another very, very successful and valuable organization—the work that they have done in preserving wetlands. Ducks Unlimited has been around since 1938. I guess they precede—the grandfather or grandmother of some of these pieces of legislation. It's a science-based organization, a habitat preservation organization. In 1938, they worked with US

dollars—volunteer-raised dollars. Now, that all changed as a result of a series of events that occurred, actually, in my riding and also the member for Oxford's riding. A fellow named Hazard Campbell—he lived in Buffalo but he hunted down at Turkey Point, at Turkey Point Co. and TP Farms. He convinced some of his friends, Canadian members of the duck hunting company, to come over to a volunteer fundraising dinner in the United States. They came home so impressed and they held the first Canadian Ducks Unlimited dinner in 1974, in Tillsonburg.

Dr. Duncan Sinclair—he lives in MPP Jeff Yurek's riding—was part of that first dinner committee. In fact, he became the national president of DU. He was also a member of the MNR's fish and wildlife advisory board.

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Then, later, they moved the chapter down to Port Rowan, in my riding. It's known as chapter number 1 of Ducks Unlimited. Since then, DU, Wild Turkey and the Ruffed Grouse Society—and I'm a member of a number of these organizations—have used that fundraising model, volunteers to raise millions and millions of dollars for wildlife habitat. As you get bigger, you do hire staff as well.

So certainly down my way are marshes, uplands, rivers; they're hotbeds of conservation supported by a myriad of non-profit outdoors organizations. There's a number of DU chapters in my riding. Dunnville: I know their fundraiser is coming up very soon. I donated one of my father's books on Long Point for that night, which I'm not able to attend.

Norfolk county's Delta Waterfowl chapter is one of the top Canadian fundraisers for that organization. Another group, Long Point Waterfowl, has got a fundraiser coming up. I know former MPP Tim Peterson has shown up there, and he has ended up getting the winning bid on a hunt in Africa, plus a photo hunt in Africa. It was a very generous night, as I recall, for Tim Peterson. Long Point Waterfowl is a top-rated research organization.

Our local fish and game clubs—I'm a member of Long Point Fish and Game—have such an important role in habitat restoration. In addition to Long Point, we have the Long Point Bay Anglers' Association. I was a guest speaker there just last Saturday, talking about the threat of Asian carp and how that is going to eliminate their fishing opportunities for pike and perch and smallmouth bass. We have the Delhi District Anglers, the Dunnville Hunters and Anglers Conservation Club, the Caledonia Hunters and Anglers—the Caledonia group has done a tremendous amount of work with young people and getting them involved in the outdoors.

Up until not too long ago, we had the Simcoe and District Fish and Game Club. They have recently become dormant or perhaps disbanded, again because of the struggle in finding volunteers. I only hope that this kind of legislation, Bill 85, Bill 65, and the impact that it's having not only on other ministries and other pieces of legislation but also the impact it may have on some of our groups—I'd hate to see an organization like Canada's

Wild Turkey or the Simcoe Fish and Game disappear just because they've had it with filling out all the forms.

We had the formation many, many years ago, in 1962, of our Norfolk Field Naturalists Club. I can remember attending those meetings 50 years ago. Now it's 50 years of research and valuable bird counts and education.

Long Point has been designated a world biosphere reserve by UNESCO. That was in 1986, and it takes a non-profit to keep that one going. Bird Studies Canada started back in 1959 as the Long Point Bird Observatory. It's presently headquartered in Port Rowan, a national authority on bird migration and conservation—again, an organization that had its genesis back in the late 1950s with volunteers; birdwatchers who had the vision.

Up until recently, we did a lot of work through our land stewardship councils. They're still doing a very good job tied in with the Norfolk Federation of Agriculture in forming the ALUS program, Alternate Land Use Services, to provide financial assistance to those farmers who want to set aside maybe 18, eight or 16 rows of corn or that corner of the field where there are going to be cattails anyway. Again, this is all for the good as far as habitat, clean air and water.

We have the Haldimand and Norfolk Land Stewardship Councils, two rapidly growing new non-profits. The Norfolk and Haldimand Woodlot Owners again have taken on a lot of that stewardship of our forest cover down in our area. We see the rise of non-profits, and we see the decline of others, and I don't want government to, in any way, be instrumental in encouraging the latter to occur. We don't want that.

I mentioned the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides who have planted millions and millions of trees. I recall the training we received. I went through Sea Scouts in Port Dover. Our leaders were commercial fishermen, war veterans. They knew the ways of the world. I benefited immensely from that.

I know my staff talked about how they have benefited from organizations they were involved in—sports organizations. Now I see them as they sit on the boards. They serve as coaches and assistant coaches. They chaperone school trips, get people out to the games and things like that. Why are they involved? Why are we all involved? Well, they believe in their community, but they remember and they respect those who ran the sports clubs before, the ones who sat on the boards previously and kept everything vibrant back when they were kids. Now as adults, they realize they were beneficiaries of these non-profits. Now they know it's their turn to give back—opportunities for their kids, their neighbours' kids and it's an opportunity for they themselves to reap the benefits, the fellowship, the friendship of sitting on these boards, but they don't want to have the rancour and some of the disruptive incidents that can occur on these boards.

In many ways, computers and technology have made some of this aspect of volunteering a little easier, but the reports come in. There's too much paperwork, and there's too much red tape. We've got to do everything we can to make it easier. I think that's the goal of this legislation, to help the people who are helping us run these

non-profits. These people are hard to find. Recruitment is a major, major ongoing goal of these organizations. I see so many organizations—church organizations, farm organizations—reach out to younger people. It's easier for many people just to send in some money or write a cheque, donate some money rather than donating their time. The world is changing. This legislation has to reflect that. I truly hope it will.

Some people aren't necessarily flush with money but, in many cases, they're even less flush with the time necessary either to show up at the meetings, let alone spend time filling out forms and dealing with red tape.

There's one incident that one of my staff indicated quite recently—I think it was this winter. She spent 22 hours online. We've got a computerized system, but it still took her 22 hours online—she's computer literate—so that she could assist a novice hockey team. The training had nothing to do with teaching kids the game or helping them develop skills.

Her perception was, it was just the way for the global association to essentially cover its hide in case an incident should occur somewhere, and all in all she says that the training could have been done in about two hours. At the end of the day, she feels that it's still not going to keep the bad people from coaching. She said, "Just because the computer tells you you've passed the test doesn't make you a better person or a coach. It's to ensure associations protect themselves from legal responsibility." She obviously feels parents need to reflect on their own behaviour, either in the arena or out of the arena. They have to understand what they're doing makes it harder and harder for minor hockey associations to fill these coaching spots.

1010

When you're a volunteer, you're giving up your very early mornings, your evenings, planning the drills and the practices. It's really disheartening when a parent, as she was explaining, is continually riding you for not doing this or not doing that, for not giving little Johnny the ice time or giving little Susie the ice time.

There's an article that was on the front of last Friday's Maclean's magazine. There's a picture of a lawyer and a father sitting on a bench beside a young hockey player. The headline: "How Parents (and Their Lawyers) Are Killing Hockey: Inside the Madness that Is Driving Kids, Volunteers and Referees out of Canada's Game."

This is a quote from the article: "Local volunteers must now follow lawyer-designed protocols to deal with problem parents, lest the matter wind up in civil or criminal courts." Can this legislation help out on that kind of stuff? Again, I guess time will be the test of that, and with respect to this piece of legislation, there does seem to be all kinds of time.

So there's an article that deals with this obsession that parents have with Canada's game and attempting to turn Johnny or Susie into the next Great One or Rob Blake or Hayley Wickenheiser.

The article goes on: "... a link between parental obsessiveness and children's interest in the game. In short: Gung-ho adults may be costing hockey young players."

Here are some stats. Again, I'm hoping the government monitors—I hope they're keeping an eye out for the red flags with respect to hockey. "Since 2009, enrolment in tyke through atom (ages five through 10) has slid by about 6,300 players...." That's 3%. You look at peewee, bantam and midget enrolment; it has dropped by 7.4%. Again, time commitment, the expense, safety concerns: These are some of the reasons that are given by Hockey Canada.

We see the Ontario Minor Hockey Association making it mandatory for all parents to take this online course called Respect in Sport. It costs \$12.

Some associations are sending letters, saying to parents that unless a player has one certified adult attached to the name, the youngster won't be able to play hockey. That's a barrier. That reminds me of the mandatory certification so many people are complaining about with respect to the College of Trades.

We know there is a handful of overzealous parents, but forcing everyone to take the program and charging them \$12—some people see that as a bit of a money grab. What is the answer, to have better-behaved parents and others in sport? We're not sure. I don't know whether adding more red tape or hitting people with a \$12 fee for everybody—because not everybody is the problem. My staffer, Bobbi-Ann, took that course, the Respect in Sport course. She's a volunteer. She's an assistant coach—Delhi minor hockey. She said there is great information there. She feels it should be free, and then maybe there wouldn't be so much resistance to this course.

Again, as we deliberate on how best to continue on with Bill 85—the daughter, the son of Bill 65—we can look at other jurisdictions. There is a lot of other advice out there. I actually wish I had more time.

Back in, well, it would be May 2012, the UK government, under the Minister for Civil Society—I think that was Mr. Hurd—put together a policy. It was titled Promoting Social Action: Encouraging and Enabling People to Play a More Active Part in Society. I think this is what we're trying to do here, or at least trying to forestall some of the problems or the decline of people partaking in civil society.

I have a list of recommendations—

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

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

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

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am going to do things just a slightly different way today. I would like to introduce in the Speaker's gallery the recipients of the

Attorney General's Victim Services Awards of Distinction.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You jumped the gun, because I'm going to call upon the Attorney General to introduce our special guests for the honour that's being bestowed.

I regretfully tell our other visitors that you can be here to observe, but you cannot participate in any way, shape or form. You have to refrain from making any kind of noise or any demonstration. I appreciate that.

So I will turn to the Attorney General to introduce our honoured guests.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Alors, ça me fait plaisir de vous présenter les récipiendaires aujourd'hui, the recipients of the 2014 Victim Services Awards of Distinction: Josée Bibeau, Melissa Graham-MacDonald, Lynn Zimmer and Mary Waters from Peterborough; Tammy Bullock from New Lowell; Cristina and André Duchesneau and Julie VandenAkker from Kingston; Roseanna Hudson from Thunder Bay; Michele Liotta from Aurora; Sandy Milne and Johanne Morency from Ottawa; Steve Oliver from Lindsay; Margaret Schreurs from Orillia; David Swerdfeger from Amherstview; Gregg Thomson from Oakville; Stephen Tooshkenig from Wallaceburg—welcome; Carol Barkwell from Oshawa; Jeanne Charlebois from Hawkesbury; and Lisa Oegema from Renfrew county.

Congratulations to all of you for your achievements, and welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): By way of assisting, I will make sure that everyone has an opportunity to introduce their guests because of the size of this particular group. But we will be reminded that we just introduce our guests.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm pleased to introduce Stephen Tooshkenig, a constituent visiting from my riding of Lambton—Kent—Middlesex. He was being awarded an Attorney General's Victim Services Award of Distinction. Stephen is the youth coordinator of the newly developed Bkejwanong Youth Facility of Walpole Island First Nation.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome my guest today, Alice Funke from Pundits' Guide. She's been here many times. Welcome from everyone.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I was very proud this morning. We have four individuals from Peterborough who were recipients of the Attorney General's 2014 Victim Services Awards: Josée Bibeau, Melissa Graham-MacDonald, Mary Waters and, of course, Lynn Zimmer, the very distinguished executive director of the YWCA in Peterborough.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to introduce Enci Dhanoo-singh, as well as Ryan Edgar, who are receiving the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Voluntarism. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Page Isabella O'Brien has visiting with us today her mother and father: her mother, Angela Ceccato, and her father, Robert O'Brien. They're

here to see young Isabella at work, and we're pleased to welcome them to the assembly.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I know that Lisa Oegema was formally introduced by the minister, but also joining us from victim services in Renfrew county is Faye Cassista, who is also a councillor in the region of Whitewater.

M. Grant Crack: Il me fait un grand plaisir de souhaiter la bienvenue à deux personnes importantes de ma circonscription de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell : Jeanne Charlebois, présidente de la Maison Interlude House, et aussi, Céline Pelletier, la directrice exécutive. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): In the Speaker's gallery today, I also have some guests visiting from the riding of Brant: Karen and Bruce Williamson, some good friends of mine. We appreciate you being here today, visiting.

On behalf of the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, visiting Jonah Opler: His uncle Lorne Opler is in the gallery today. Welcome to you as well.

ORAL QUESTIONS

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is to the Premier. Premier, this is regarding the chief corporate services officer for the WSIB. According to the Ministry of Finance public sector salary disclosure for 2013, your chief of staff is being paid \$344,230. Premier, this salary is substantially more than your own and more than anyone's in your oversized cabinet. In fact, it is more than double the salary of President Barack Obama's chief of staff, who earns about \$170,000.

More than the outrageous salary itself, Premier, my question has to do with the sneaky way in which your office has tried to hide this salary from Ontario taxpayers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's not acceptable. Withdraw, please.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I withdraw.

Premier, why is the WSIB paying the salary for your political staff, and why can't I find the name of Tom Teahen on the sunshine list for your office?

Interjections.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: Scandal number seven.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Warning number one. I couldn't resist.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the member opposite knows that the number of employees in my office who are on the sunshine list is down. It's 10; that's down from 15 in the former Premier's office. My chief of staff, Tom Teahen, earns an annual salary in the Premier's office of \$304,000.

His compensation for working in the Premier's office from mid-February to the end of last year was \$271,282. The remaining amount consists of compensation earned while he worked at the WSIB before moving to the Premier's office. His salary is in line with other chiefs of staff from former Premiers, and I know that the member opposite actually knows that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Premier, I can't find the name "Tom Teahen" on the sunshine list, but it is there plain as day on the list of the top donors to the Ontario Liberal Party.

The Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act makes Ontario's public sector more open to taxpayers and requires organizations that receive public funding, such as the Premier's office, to disclose annually the names, positions and salaries of employees paid \$100,000 or more. Premier, your office has gone to great lengths to ensure that the bloated salary that you are paying your friend, your chief of staff and your Liberal Party donor, Mr. Teahen, did not become public. Not only is his name excluded from the sunshine list, but his name is excluded from the list titled "Individuals seconded to ministries from public sector organizations." Premier, why are you trying to hide the fact that your chief of staff is paid more than any other provincial chief of staff in Canada?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

1040

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The Premier's office reimbursed the WSIB for the salary that the member opposite is talking about. That's the normal process for secondments. Mr. Teahen, my chief of staff, is on a secondment from the WSIB, so he is on the sunshine list. So that's just not accurate.

It we look at the salary that he is being paid, it pretty much is in line with former chiefs of staff. Guy Giorno's salary: In 2002, he was paid, if we adjust it to today's dollars, \$291,180. Ernie Eves's former chief of staff Steven Pengelly earned \$277,801 in 2003. So in fact, what we are paying the chief of staff is in my office is line with other chiefs of staff.

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier. In 2007 Mr. Teahen was earning less than \$100,000 a year as a ministry staffer. In 2009, he made \$144,000 as the chief of staff at education. In 2010, he switched to the WSIB and pulled in \$191,000. In 2011, that went up to \$253,000. And in 2013, another raise, all the way up to \$344,000 per year.

Premier, we know you are in the midst of a month-long spending spree that will increase government spending by nearly \$6 billion, and we know you've given Mr. Teahen over \$200,000 in salary increases over four years. Premier, is there a salary guideline for ministry chiefs of staff, and can you confirm if Mr. Teahen's salary levels

fit within the guideline? Is that why you are skirting the rules and keeping him on the books at the WSIB?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I find this a little odd—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, in case you didn't hear me—I find it a little odd that I'm actually asking the members of the person putting the question to tone it down, because I was having a hard time hearing the question.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't need editorials.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said, my chief of staff is on secondment from the WSIB. His salary is in line with former chiefs of staff, including former Conservatives. He is on the sunshine list. He has taken on increased responsibilities since he came into this job.

As I said before, there are five fewer people in my office who are on the sunshine list than under the previous Premier's office.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm not exactly sure where the music is coming from, but it's going to stop.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Throw them out.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to tell the minister responsible for seniors, as I do often, I will be the judge.

So let's bring it down.

Finish please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I would just say that I understand that this question is in line with the opposition's desire to drag the names of people who are working very, very hard through the mud. I take full responsibility for answering questions on my actions and on the government's actions, but I think that this is beneath the member opposite.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, our review of your budget-leaking team documents shows no evidence that you are addressing the growing problems in our health care system. Last year, you cut \$60 million out of physiotherapy services, as well as cuts to cataract surgeries. Many hospitals have had to close beds and operating rooms. You have also cut more than 1,000 registered nurse positions in our hospitals.

Between 2009 and 2012, 13 of Ontario's 14 CCACs gave their CEOs salary increases of more than 30%. This was in direct violation of the broader public sector salary freeze.

Minister, will you tell us today if the budget will include any solutions to fix the growing problems in our health care system?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will leave the finance minister to speak about what is in the budget. What I can tell you is that we are undergoing a transformation in our health care system that is showing remarkable results for the people of this province. We have far more people—thousands more people—getting access to the home care they need.

Our last budget was not an easy budget for hospitals, it was not an easy budget for parts of our health care sector, but we did that so we could invest more in home care and more in community care.

The Ontario Hospital Association supports our transformation initiative even though it means difficult decisions for hospitals, and when it comes to nurses, I will happily contrast our success with yours: 20,500 more nurses working in Ontario today than were 10 years ago.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Mr. Speaker, I would say to the minister, through you, that this so-called transformation is certainly not going in the right direction. The top 15 executives at CCACs in Ontario were paid nearly \$4 million last year.

What would \$4 million get us? For starters, \$4 million would fund over 320,000 hours of front-line care. It would fund over 42,000 one-on-one physiotherapy sessions for seniors. It would also pay for 70 full-time new nurses. It would also fund much-needed cataract surgeries for our seniors.

Minister, will you commit to funding front-line care instead of funding CEOs?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's maybe time to look at what the PC plan for health care is in this province. I can tell you that they can—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Burlington, the member from Cambridge, the member from Prince Edward–Hastings—

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Let's do this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Northumberland; I just don't think shouting people down is the right thing to do.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, the PC plan for health care is risky, it is reckless and it is the wrong plan. It is clearly the wrong plan.

Let's take a little walk down memory lane: When you were in office, you fired health care workers, you closed hospitals, we had the worst wait times in the country, and now you're playing the same old game of slash and burn. You want to fire 4,000 front-line health care workers by eliminating our CCACs. Those are the people who make sure our seniors get the care they need in their own homes.

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

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I would certainly be happy to put our health care plan up against what you have. You're cutting and slashing yourselves.

Minister, there are so many urgent problems that you're not even looking at in our health care—

Mr. Grant Crack: What about Montfort hospital?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell is close enough for me to see him as well as hear him.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North is not helpful either.

Please ask.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Let's look at what's actually happening under your system. We've got 19,000 seniors in hospitals waiting because they have nowhere to go; they have no long-term care to go to and they have no home care services. We have thousands of people who can't get access to needed cancer drugs because you will fund IV cancer drugs but won't fund oral cancer drugs. We have seniors in home care who aren't getting more than a bath a week. We have people in long—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm going to get you to listen. The Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation, come to order. The member from Sudbury, come to order. The member—oh, jeez. Next time.

Please.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: You're actually making cuts across the board without even coming to grips with the bigger problems in our health care system. Will you deal with this in the budget or not?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We will continue to invest in the community when it comes to our health care system because that's how we're getting people out of hospital and into the homes. It's a lot better now than it was, but we are not finished this journey. We acknowledge that there are still too many people in long-term care who don't need to be; there are still too many people in hospital and they don't need to be. That's why we're investing in home care. That's what we are all about.

1050

We went from the longest wait times in the country to the shortest wait times in the country. We went to a health care system where it was impossible to find a primary care doctor to one where, in many communities, doctors are now advertising for patients.

We have come a long, long way. I will happily, happily put our record against their record any day of the week.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Yesterday, the Minister of Government Services insisted that he knew nothing about an internal investigation conducted by the Ministry of Government Services. Was the Premier briefed on the investigation?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, we have made it clear when we learned about investigations. We made it clear when we learned about the allegations. We have done everything in our power to work with and co-operate with the people who have been asking questions about the relocation of the gas plants. We have changed the rules around the retention of documents. We have opened up the process.

As the member knows, we've been very clear about when we learned about the allegations. We learned about them when they came into the public realm.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Can the Premier, perhaps, tell us who was briefed on that internal investigation?

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

Hon. John Milloy: Again, the leader of the third party can ask whatever question she wants, but considering the fact that we went over this yesterday, I would have thought we might have heard some policy questions.

But to tell her again, the fact that the Ministry of Government Services co-operated with the Ontario Provincial Police is something that is outlined in the document that was there in the court. As I indicated yesterday, I had a discussion with my deputy minister of the day, a very brief discussion, where he spoke about the fact—it was a matter of public record—that there was an OPP investigation and they were in contact with the OPP. Did I want to be briefed in any way? I said absolutely not. I did not want to have any discussions, with myself or my staff, and the ministry respected that.

The work that went on by MGS is outlined to an extent in the document before the court, which is now a public document.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Back to the Premier: Was anyone in the Premier's office briefed on the internal investigation in any way?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I reference the court document, which talks about some of the assistance that the OPP received from the Ministry of Government Services. It was made clear to my deputy that this was to be done independent of myself or my political staff.

Again, I think we have to stress that this investigation is entirely independent. I think it is now a matter of public record that OPP investigators have been working with a federal crown attorney from the Public Prosecution Service of Canada to ensure its independence.

We have heard from the OPP in front of the committee, and they have reminded us that the best way to deal with an OPP investigation if you're a politician is to get out of the way, allow the OPP to do their work and respect their independence and also their privacy as they undertake this work.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is for the Premier. Last November, the Premier's office scheduled

a visit from the OPP anti-rackets branch. When most people hear the police want to search their offices, they ask why. Did the Premier or her staff ask any questions about what was being investigated?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I will just say again what the Minister of Government Services and House leader has said: This is an independent investigation. It seems that the leader of the third party is trying to suggest that I should have inserted myself at some point into the investigation. That would have been inappropriate. That is not what a Premier should do. It is not what I should have done. It is not what I did. I have not inserted myself. It is an independent investigation. We need to let the OPP do their work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The OPP allege that three staff in the Premier's office had their computer hard drives wiped. They also allege that the House leader's chief of staff had her computer wiped. Is the Premier asserting that for well over a year, not one of these people who she works with daily ever raised this issue with her?

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

Hon. John Milloy: Again, let's go back to first principles. The OPP made an application to the court, which was made public. We determined that there is an OPP investigation, well under way, that is focused on one individual—unproven allegations—the former chief of staff to the Premier. I think the advice that we've gotten from the OPP is that we allow them to undertake their work. What the leader of the NDP seems to be confusing is that the fact that the OPP was looking into this matter in general has been on the public record.

I quoted yesterday from an article from last June. Commissioner Lewis appeared in front of the justice committee. It has been common knowledge that the OPP was looking, in general, into this. It was approximately two weeks ago that we were giving more information through this court document.

But again, Mr. Speaker, the advice we've had is to stay out of it.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The government conducted an internal investigation, but we're told that the Premier doesn't know what it found. The OPP searched the Premier's office, but supposedly the Premier didn't even ask what they were looking for.

People stuck paying the bills for this mess haven't forgotten the Liberal record when it comes to this scandal. Liberals initially claimed it was going to cost \$40 million. Now we know it's \$1.1 billion.

The Premier claims she wasn't involved in the decision, but then it turns out that she's the one who signed the cabinet document approving the deal.

Does the Premier think that people will believe she knew absolutely nothing about any of this investigation?

Hon. John Milloy: I listened very, very carefully to what the leader of the New Democratic Party said, and quite frankly I find it shocking. She seems to be suggesting that the government should be directing the Ontario Provincial Police and that the government should somehow be involving itself in an OPP investigation. I'm not sure how she plans to run her party, but over on this side of the House, we respect the independence of the Ontario Provincial Police.

When there's an OPP investigation going on, we, first of all, co-operate fully, but second of all we get out of the way and allow them to undertake their work. As the investigator reminded us in committee the other day, interference by politicians, the type of interference that we're seeing today through question period, could, in fact, jeopardize that investigation. The prudent course is to allow the Ontario Provincial Police to undertake their work.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm hearing some heckling that I'm not impressed with, and it will stop.

New question.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: My question is to the Minister of Health. I received an email yesterday afternoon, and I want to put it on the record on behalf of the pilots flying for our air ambulance service out of the Moosonee base. It reads as follows:

"This email is being forwarded to you on behalf of the pilots in Moosonee. The bottom line is that the helicopter that Ornge is planning to send to Moosonee for the operational helicopter is basically the oldest Sikorsky 76 in the world, with the least amount of automation.

"This, after the only helicopter fatality in 35 years occurred in Moosonee and Ornge promised to do everything to make our lives safer, yet the bottom line is, they are sending this machine because it is the cheapest to operate. Help us make the ministry wake up that Ornge can't operate aviation."

Speaker, this appeal is coming from the front-line pilots of our air ambulance service, whose lives are once again being put at risk by the decision-making at Ornge. On behalf of those pilots, I want to ask the minister: Will she stand with these pilots and stop this wrong-headed decision by Ornge that will put our pilots in harm's way?

Interjections.

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

The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I welcome the question from the member. I think if he turned to his left and spoke to a pilot, he will learn that no planes can be flown unless they are airworthy and unless they are properly accredited and approved by Transport Canada.

I think it might be helpful if we just took a look at some of the remarkable claims the member opposite has

made. He once claimed that tail rotors of helicopters, like the ones Ornge operates, sometimes fall off. He was wrong. He read a directive that did not apply to Ornge helicopters.

1100

He said, “An Ornge-contracted ... Pilatus ... aircraft crash-landed at the Timmins airport....” That was wrong, and Ornge’s front-line staff wrote a letter affirming that the statement was completely misrepresenting our operation and especially the level of safety we work so hard to maintain.

The member said there was no reference in the performance agreement to either critical-care or advanced-care paramedics. The response—

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister without portfolio will come to order, and the member from Halton will come to order. I think it’s the second time for both of you.

Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The pilots that the minister is putting at risk are not impressed with her response today. I am reading her an email from pilots at the Moosonee base who are concerned about the antiquated equipment that Ornge is asking them to fly, and I’m asking this minister—the next time one of those aircraft crashes, she has heard the warning from the pilots. What they don’t want to hear is more sympathy from this minister, because she has had an opportunity to step in, stop a wrong-headed decision and make sure that our pilots and our paramedics have safe equipment to fly in to deliver the kind of air ambulance service that they should be delivering to the people of this province. Will she stand with those pilots, will she stand with those paramedics, do what’s right and stop that wrong-headed decision?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite knows that we have strong safety standards in Canada and at Ornge.

But let’s go on, Speaker. The member claims that Ornge hid the salaries of 79 employees. In fact, they were posted publicly, online.

He questioned the competence of hard-working public servants and claimed nobody in the ministry with oversight of Ornge has experience in land or air ambulance. He’s wrong; in fact, there are 10 people in management or senior management roles with that kind of experience.

He claimed that the front lines are saying that things are going from bad to worse. In fact, we had Brandon Doneff at SCOPA. He said that things at Ornge under the new leadership are definitely better.

He claimed that two Transport Canada inspection reports suggested that Ornge should not be in the aviation business—wrong again. The truth is, Transport Canada would have withdrawn Ornge’s operating certificate if they thought that was the case. They didn’t; on the contrary, they approved Ornge’s corrective action plan in May 2013.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of Government Services. The gas plant committee hearings had to be cancelled this morning because witnesses aren’t coming forward. David Livingston, Peter Faist and Laura Miller’s assistant were not responsive or not available. Does the Liberal government think that senior Liberals should be avoiding the committee?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, as I’ve stated here in the House before—

Hon. James J. Bradley: No policy questions.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment is warned.

Hon. Mario Sergio: No.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister responsible for seniors is warned. Anyone else?

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, as I have stated in the House before, the government has co-operated fully with the justice committee. The Premier has been there several times, the Minister of Energy, myself—even I appeared in front of it. I would encourage everyone to co-operate with the committee.

Committees have the power and the responsibility to call witnesses. There is a process they go through, and as you and members of this House are aware, there are steps they can take if they are trying to access a witness who, for one reason or another, is not wanting to appear. That is up to the work of the committee. There is a process and there are steps that are taken by committees, and I think we should respect that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Well, it is my hope indeed that the government does support the work of the committee.

New Democrats are taking steps to get a Speaker’s warrant, if needed, to ensure that key Liberal witnesses show up at committee. We hope it doesn’t come to that. Are the Liberals going to stand in the way of that, or will they support using all tools available to ensure that senior Liberals come before committee?

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, again, the committee right now is putting together—is dealing with witness lists. There are steps that it takes, and every member of this House is aware of that. But we have been very, very co-operative on this side of the House. The Premier has gone several times, the Minister of Energy—Mr. Speaker, I have to tell you about my appearance in front of the committee. It was one of the most surreal experiences of my life. I was questioned, I believe for an hour, about a document that I had never seen before and a meeting that I never went to. I’m not making it up. It was a little bit like the twilight zone, but I was very happy to go in front of it and answer questions about things that I was not involved with.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Ma question est pour le ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains

de 2015, the honourable Michael Chan. Minister, this week, the Premier, you, I and Minister Coteau helped launch TO2015's call for 20,000 volunteers. Yesterday, we had a great launch function in my own riding of Etobicoke North, and hundreds of kids were delighted and diverted to have you in my riding.

As Minister Coteau has stated before, it's National Volunteer Week here in Canada, and we couldn't be more proud of Ontarians who dedicate so much of their time to volunteerism. I know that my own residents in Etobicoke North are excited to have these opportunities to volunteer in the largest multi-sport event in Canadian history.

Speaker, my question is this: Will the minister please elaborate on the many opportunities for Canadians to volunteer, to give back and to pay it forward?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the member from Etobicoke North for asking the question. Yes, we had a great time yesterday at a school in his riding. That was a great launch of National Volunteer Week.

The 2015 games will foster volunteerism in Ontario, especially among young people age 16 and up. It will leave a legacy of skilled leaders from a variety of backgrounds and age groups who are socially involved and committed to their communities.

Opportunities will be available throughout southern Ontario, stretching from Welland to Minden Hills, from Hamilton to Oshawa, where competitions will take place. All volunteers will receive valuable skills training, work experience and tokens of appreciation to recognize their role in the Toronto 2015 games. In fact, as of 9 a.m. this morning, over 6,100 people have already signed up.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Thank you, Minister, for the detailed update. It strikes me that this is like the volunteer measures act, the largest call for volunteers in Canadian peacetime history. I can see in my own community of Etobicoke North the interest to volunteer for the games despite potentially detracting remarks from the party opposite.

Another benefit the parties opposite may be overlooking is the announcements that you have made this year, Minister Chan, along with Minister Duguid, that help OSAP recipients and trade apprentices take advantage of opportunities that the games bring.

Speaker, would the minister please elaborate on the many benefits of hosting an event of this magnitude?

Hon. Michael Chan: All Ontarians stand to benefit from the opportunities the games will bring next year. Amongst them are people like Tyrone Solomon from North York, who is helping to build the Pan Am aquatics centre. He says, "When I tell my family where I am working, they are so proud of me."

Janet Laurence from Hamilton, who will be volunteering in her third world-class athletic event, says, "It's an experience you can't put a dollar amount on."

Even Olympic hockey gold medallist Natalie Spooner has—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is warned.

Finish, please.

Hon. Michael Chan: Natalie said, "By volunteering myself for TO2015, I'm saying I believe what these games can do for all of us."

I encourage all members in this House to sign up.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning, Speaker. My question is for the Premier. Premier, the gas plant scandal documents prove that you signed the go-ahead for Project Vapour. This started a process that wrote a blank cheque in order to reach a deal. This moved it from the public court system into private arbitration, where the proceedings and the results would be kept secret.

In order to reach an agreement, the Liberals waived all of their defences and gave up any limits on damages. Then, you put most of the cost on the hydro bill, while only talking publicly about the much smaller taxpayer portion.

Premier, how can you continue to pretend that you knew nothing of the gas plant cancellations when it was you and you alone who started the entire process?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

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Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think that's the biggest stretch we've heard in this discussion so far. The member opposite knows full well that I was part of a cabinet that made decisions—

Mr. Monte McNaughton: She'll be calling her lawyer now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex will come to order, and he's now warned.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, three times.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite knows that I was part of a cabinet that made a decision based on a commitment that we had made to relocate the gas plants, a commitment that had been made by all parties. We acted on that commitment. We went ahead and we relocated those gas plants.

I have said repeatedly that there were processes that should have been better. We have worked to change those processes. We've put in place new rules in terms of siting this kind of infrastructure. We've got new rules in terms of document retention. That is the work we've been engaged in for the last year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Premier, I'm quite surprised that you're questioning the results of the Auditor General, which I just read in my last question, but what I outlined

is exactly why David Livingston is alleged to have had the hard drives in the Premier's office wiped.

The Liberals stayed in power because of the manipulation of the gas plants. You're the Premier today because the last one quit in disgrace over the manipulation of the gas plants. Many of your cabinet ministers stood in this House and said one thing about the gas plants, knowing the complete opposite to be true, and seven of them have since bailed. But you think of your own self-interest so much that you can no longer see right from wrong.

Premier, how about this: Why don't you name the members of your transition team who had interaction with David Livingston between January 26 and February—

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

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to be clear, because we've been going through this for a number of days now. The member opposite is perpetuating false allegations and false accusations against me because he thinks it's good politics. That is what is going on.

I believe that he knows we opened up the process. He knows that I have said what I know. He knows that I appeared before the committee. He knows that we have co-operated with an independent investigation. I believe that this kind of questioning actually insults the office that he holds, and I would ask him to stop it.

Interjections.

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

Hon. David Zimmer: You're lying, Vic. You're lying. He's lying, Speaker.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And no other comment need be made.

New question.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Premier. Families in London have had enough bad news. Over the past year, London has lost 7,200 jobs, our unemployment rate has climbed above 8% and the usage of the food bank continues to rise.

The London Food Bank announced today that a new approach is needed. They serve almost 3,600 families every month and simply stated that they are just stretched to the limit.

It's clear to everyone that the status quo approach the Liberals have taken just doesn't work. When will the Premier admit that she is failing families in London because her government has no clue how to create jobs in southwestern Ontario?

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I'm sorry, but I have to disagree fundamentally with the member from London. I think, in fact, what the food bank has actually said is considerably different than how you've characterized it.

But what I want to say about the unemployment rate and jobs in London is, in fact, the reality is considerably different than what you've represented it as. About a year ago, the unemployment rate was unacceptably high. It was over 9%. It has actually come down by more than 1% since that period of time. We've had very important announcements: Incredible companies like Natra, which is a European chocolate maker, has decided to make London its North American headquarters. The single largest export deal in the history of this country has come out of London recently, with thousands of jobs that are going to be protected and new jobs created as a result.

So in fact, the news is quite good for London. I don't know why the member opposite continues to denigrate the hard work that is going on to help that important part of the province recover.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Everyone in London—except this government—seems to know how bad it has gotten. Our unemployment rate has climbed four months in a row, and 12,000 people have simply lost hope and dropped out of the workforce altogether since the Premier took office. That is the Liberal government's record.

The Premier refuses to admit that her policies aren't working, and it's forcing families to fall further and further behind. Speaker, how many more jobs need to be lost before the Premier gets the message and provides real help for small businesses to create jobs in London?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The list is long in terms of businesses—including, importantly, food processing facilities—that are opening in London and the London area. It's partly due to the hard work that is being done by those local communities and their local economic development corporations.

In fact, I had the opportunity, the honour, just in the last couple of weeks to speak and outline the province's job plan to the economic development corporation and about 150 other business leaders, community leaders and municipal leaders in London—just to talk to them and engage them in the progress that they are making. They've got an important and growing high-tech and digital sector which exists in London as well. Brose, an important facility, just announced in the last few weeks.

I'll just say, in March 2013, the unemployment rate in London was 9.6%, while today, in fact, it's 8.2%. It's still higher than it needs to be, but it shows the progress that has been made just over the past 12 months. They're moving in the right direction, and I wish that member would stop talking down London and the hard work that her economic development community is doing to create—

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

Interjections.

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

SCHOOL NUTRITION PROGRAMS

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, I often hear from concerned parents. They want to ensure that their children are getting the best possible education and have the greatest opportunity to succeed.

Research has shown that an important part of a child's ability to learn is having access to a nutritious diet. Children who eat regular, healthy meals are better participants in the classroom, and I know that, in Ontario, we are committed to providing our students with the best possible learning environment.

Speaker, through you to the minister: What is our government doing to provide students with access to nutritious meals?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you to the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for the question and for the many discussions that we have had with respect to the importance of health and education for our children.

Mr. Speaker, it's evident that our government is committed to ensuring that every child across this province has the opportunity to succeed. We know that nutrition plays a role for success in school and keeping children healthy. That is why, earlier this week, I was proud to announce that we are expanding our Student Nutrition Program. We are investing an additional \$32 million over the next three years to provide students across the province with nutritious snacks or breakfast. This is expected to create 340 new breakfast and morning meal programs, and benefit an additional 56,000 students. I have spoken with teachers, principals and students about the progress. They all report positive outcomes, including better concentration in school.

This investment is just one more way our government is—

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

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. Parents in my community will be pleased to hear that our government is expanding the Student Nutrition Program. I know that in my riding, the Toronto Foundation for Student Success operates a number of nutrition programs. I also know that they do a terrific job of providing student nutrition across the city of Toronto. I'm happy to hear that we are providing additional funding to organizations like theirs to expand the services they currently provide. The Student Nutrition Program is a great way to ensure that students from across the province can maintain a nutritious diet.

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Speaker, through you to the minister: Can she please inform the House how this new investment will allow the

program to become more responsive to the needs of our communities?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Absolutely, and again, thanks for the continuation.

There are currently 4,200 student nutrition programs across the province. These programs provide nutritious breakfasts, snacks and lunches to over 695,000 students across the province. We recognize that the cost of food continues to grow, so this enhancement in funding will help our communities with those food costs as well. We will also be expanding the program for First Nations schools on reserve, which we've heard we need to do.

Expanding this program is part of our plan to support our children and our future, because we know that students who eat a nutritious breakfast are more likely to attend school and achieve better academic results. We'll continue to invest in our children and youth to ensure success, opportunities and healthy living.

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, as you are no doubt aware, cider sales are experiencing huge growth in Ontario, having grown by an astonishing 60% in the last two years, very similar to the growth that we've seen in the Ontario craft brewers.

Ontario Craft Cider Association members use 100% Ontario-grown apples and pears, which ensures both a quality product and more economic opportunities for our Ontario growers. Minister, will you level the playing field to ensure that Ontario cider can be sold to restaurants and bars with no LCBO surcharge on direct deliveries, as is the case for Ontario craft beer?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I am very proud of the tremendous work done by our local growers and local craft brewers, including our cider. I know that one of our colleagues, the then Minister of Agriculture—where are you now? The Minister of—well, Ted McMeekin—I know we're not supposed to name names—was a big advocate for cider sales.

I truly appreciate the tremendous work being done by the community: locally grown, as is our VQA, as is our barley, as is so much of the industry throughout Ontario, to support growing in Ontario, processing in Ontario and selling in Ontario. And certainly through the LCBO, much of that is being promoted and protected, especially for our craft brewers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Minister, I'm proud of our Ontario ciders too, but you need to actually show some leadership and do something that they need to level the playing field. It is an issue of fairness and one where you could show some real leadership.

Ontario cider is an industry that is thriving in many parts of Ontario: Dufferin–Caledon, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Haldimand–Norfolk, Hamilton East–Stoney

Creek, Lambton–Kent–Middlesex, Huron–Bruce, Niagara Falls, Oak Ridges–Markham—

Mr. Todd Smith: Prince Edward county.

Ms. Sylvia Jones:—Prince Edward county, Toronto Centre, Simcoe–Grey, not to mention the many regions across Ontario where apples and pears are grown.

People are looking to you for action. When cider producers sell and deliver their products directly to restaurants, the LCBO takes a 40% cut. Will you take action and remove it?

Hon. Charles Sousa: On this side of the House, we certainly value and promote locally grown opportunities. It is why we have increased access through our express stores, most recently. It is why we are doing more to promote our VQAs, our craft breweries and our cider sales.

I appreciate the question. I really do, because I think it's essential that we do everything we can to promote our industry. We want to make certain that our local growers are getting the maximum benefit afforded to them, which they wouldn't have had, Mr. Speaker, had it not been for the proactive nature that the LCBO has been doing to promote the industry. We'll continue to work with them. I appreciate the question and I will look into it, certainly.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

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

The racetracks at Leamington, Sarnia and Dresden will receive fewer race dates than they requested for the 2014 season. As you know, the Lakeshore group has been working to keep racing alive in Essex county since the demise of Windsor Raceway and the loss of 2,000 jobs. The cut in dates from 60 to 45 is yet another indication that this government has no intention of supporting the horse racing industry in rural Ontario.

Will the Liberal government actually come up with a long-term plan for our horse racing industry instead of issuing self-congratulatory press releases as more race dates are being cut?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate the question but, again, I think the member opposite knows that we have been working to make sure that we have a sustainable horse racing industry in the province. We've been working with all of the tracks. We're putting in \$500 million over the next five years. And quite apart from not having an interest in the industry, we are also making sure that there is extra money for the breeders, because we know that breeders were very concerned about the sustainability of their industry as well.

We will continue to work with the tracks—the tracks all over the province, not just the tracks in particular urban areas, but all of the tracks. We want them to have a season, but most of all, we want the horse racing industry to be sustainable. We want it not to be under a plan that was not transparent. I think the member opposite knows that the SART Program was not transparent. It was not

accountable. We have changed that. We've got a sustainable horse racing industry, and that has been our plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Speaker, I'm sure other governments could have made it transparent instead of cancelling it.

This government keeps chipping away at the horse racing industry. Businesses need stability, and they need to start planning now for the upcoming race season. The misguided cancellation of the Slots at Racetracks Program has had a huge negative impact on the horse racing industry for the past two years. Instead of reversing its decision, this government is choosing to go ahead by cutting more race dates.

Will this government ensure that all racetracks across Ontario get the support they need in time for the upcoming racing season?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: If the member opposite is asking whether we will bring back a program that really was not transparent and was not accountable in any way, then, no, we will not do that, Mr. Speaker.

I know that the three tracks—the Hiawatha, Leamington and Dresden tracks—are working together to come up with a plan. This is good news. That's what we want to have happen. We want those collaborations to happen so that there can be a sustainable path forward.

That's what we're encouraging, that negotiation is ongoing, and I think the member opposite knows that. I don't really think that he thinks we should go back to a system that was not accountable for the tax dollars. I don't think he believes that is the case.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is for the Attorney General. As the minister knows, assisting victims of crime when they need it the most has always been a priority for our government, and I know it is an important issue for the people of Scarborough–Guildwood.

Each year, our government invests over \$100 million in victim services and programs through the Victims' Justice Fund and the Consolidated Revenue Fund. I also understand that the people of Ontario have access to a broad range of services to address their needs as victims of crime. Mr. Speaker, could the Attorney General please elaborate on these important services our government offers to the people of Ontario?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, let me say thank you to the member from Scarborough–Guildwood. I know that she's a great supporter. I was with her; we opened a French-speaking shelter for French-speaking people in her riding, and she is great.

Our government has been a leader in upholding victims' rights and providing improved access to a number of services across the province. Victims of crime in Ontario have access to important programs such as the Victim Crisis Assistance and Referral Services, the Victim/Witness Assistance Program and the Victim Support Line, all of which provide immediate on-site support

services to victims of crime to information and assistance during the criminal court process.

Mr. Speaker, these are just a few examples of exceptional services our government has made available to victims of crime to assist them in their time of need.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Attorney General, for your answer and for your support of the francophone community in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood.

The people of Scarborough–Guildwood would be relieved to hear of the important services our government is providing to victims of crime. I also understand that this morning, we recognized a group of outstanding individuals involved in the front-line care of victims. The Victim Services Awards of Distinction is an annual ceremony in which the Attorney General presents awards to individuals or organizations that have made significant contributions to the provision of victim services in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, could the Attorney General please tell us more about these leaders in victim services?

1130

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I was very impressed this morning with these people who work day in and day out to use their own experience to help those who are in similar situations. I am pleased to hear of the important services our government is providing for victims of crime.

This morning, we had these wonderful 19 recipients. They had been nominated for this award because they raised the profile of victims' issues in Ontario, volunteered countless hours of their time and delivered exceptional services in innovative ways to better serve victims of crime.

I want to thank all of them and their families who helped them to be able to work as volunteers in their own communities. They gave great commitment—tireless work and commitment, and it is because of their work that Ontario is a leader in victims' service delivery.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, I've raised the issue with you before about the ongoing funding challenges facing the Collingwood General and Marine Hospital. I explained that, as per a key outcome of their 2012 sustainability review, they were promised gap funding for three consecutive years while the new health-based allocation model is rolled out.

Minister, it is now April. The fiscal year has come to an end. The new funding model hasn't been fully implemented. The hospital hasn't received this funding, and without it, they face a \$1.8-million deficit and will be forced to drop a core service. Last year, there were 476 expectant mothers who gave birth at this hospital, 1,071 ski accidents that got treated in the emergency room and 1,193 hip and knee orthopaedic surgeries.

My question is quite simple: Without this funding, which of these core services should the hospital no longer provide?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said earlier today, we are in the middle of a transformation of health care spending. As I acknowledged earlier today, it is a difficult time for hospitals as they accommodate, as they rethink their services, as we make sense out of how hospitals are funded.

You as a former health minister would well know that before we introduced our new funding reform for hospitals, it was impossible to explain why the budget for one hospital was what it was relative to another. We're bringing some sanity, actually, to how we fund hospitals. For some hospitals, that means an increase in budget. For others, it means a lower budget. We are implementing this over time. Hospitals are well aware of what their allocations will be under the new funding model, and we are working with all the hospitals to do this in a way that protects patient care.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Certainly through you, Mr. Speaker: Minister, I think we have indicated many times on this side that, for the most part, we agree with the new HBAM funding model. But the point here is that Collingwood General and Marine Hospital was given a letter from your ministry indicating that it could get three years of gap funding, and so it budgeted accordingly. It didn't get its funding.

I got a letter from you suddenly in December of last year, after I perpetually raised this, saying that the LHIN has asked for you to make a decision on this second year of gap funding and that you're reviewing it. We heard from the LHIN recently that you're going to renege on that promise. They've already gone to the four mayors in the Collingwood area—Wasaga Beach and Clearview and throughout the area—and they want to come down and see you because of a broken promise.

It's a relatively small amount of money. The hospital budget is based on your government's commitment, and they are going to cut patching people up on the ski hill, births or hip and knee surgeries; that's what they're telling the community. It'll be on your head.

What is it? What are they supposed to cut in order to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, I would be happy to meet with them if that's what they'd like to do, and we will go over what's happening at that particular hospital.

I do think, though, that as I look at what hospitals are doing, I find it a little bit hard to believe that they would no longer care for people with broken legs. I think our hospitals are far more responsible than that. In fact, they have an obligation to provide service.

I would be happy to look into it, happy to meet with the community. I can assure you that we will do what we can, everything we can do, to make sure that services are maintained in the appropriate way.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Minister of Labour. The new Minister of Labour has said that he supports fair wages for all workers. Are we to assume that this includes servers in restaurants?

After a long winter, it's already patio season, and it's the busiest time of the year for servers. I am sure they look forward to earning a little bit more money, but due to the Liberal foot-dragging on the bill, their bosses are still entitled to steal their tips. Bill 49 will stop this practice. Will the new Minister of Labour, who says he is a friend to workers, insist this bill be called for third reading?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I want to thank my honorable colleague for the important question. When Ontarians tip, I think—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, if you'd take your seat, I'll tell you to stop.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: — any one of us in this chamber, when they tip, they want 100% of that tip to go to staff.

In the summer of 2012, the ministry held an employment standards blitz, and it protected vulnerable workers and inspected workplaces in a variety of sectors. That included the restaurant sector. Anybody who does have a question about their rights is encouraged to contact the employment standards information centre.

But as you know, Bill 49 has been to committee. It has been referred back to the Legislature for third reading with all-party support. My understanding is that my predecessor has worked with the gentleman, and we'll continue to work with him.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: Mr. Speaker, it is up to the Liberal government to call the bills, including this one that they say they support. The ministry supports this bill. The former minister supports this bill. The Premier has said she supports the bill. The whole caucus over there says they support the bill. Bill 49 will protect thousands of Ontario workers who rely on tips to lift them out of poverty.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Paul Miller: They're doing the same on Bill 69—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That will be enough. I didn't get quiet for you to start to heckle—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And anyone else to respond.

Please finish your question.

Mr. Michael Prue: Don't let another patio season go by without extending protection to the people who need it. Will this new minister commit today to join Quebec, Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick to make it illegal for business owners to steal their employees' tips?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I do want to thank the member from Beaches–East York for reintroducing this private member's bill. I think it has been an example of co-operation in the House.

I've had the opportunity already to speak with numerous stakeholders in the service sector. It has allowed me to learn a lot better what this industry is like and where the unfair practices are actually taking place. It was determined during the process that certain improvements needed to be made to this bill, and they were. We also needed to take into account unionized workplaces, obviously, where collective agreements exist.

I want to thank both opposition parties for their support. It's my hope, sincerely, that this bill moves forward. It should.

FLOODING

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. With the arrival of spring and a noticeable rise in temperature, we can all spend more time outdoors enjoying the good weather. However, at this time of the year, we must be aware of the possibility of spring flooding.

In Durham region, I've had the good fortune to be elected to both the board and the executive of CLOCA, the Central Lake Ontario Conservation Authority. This organization works to monitor on an ongoing basis weather forecasts and watershed conditions at locations across the watershed. These measurements, weather forecasts and radar information on temperature and rainfall predictions, along with historical data, are all compiled to develop a flood forecast.

The work at Durham region's CLOCA is meant to reduce risk to life and damage to property by providing the public with advanced notice, information and advice so that they can respond to potential flooding emergencies.

Can the minister please share with this House the initiatives that the Ministry of Natural Resources is moving on to ensure that all communities in Ontario are prepared for potential flooding?

Hon. David Oraziotti: I want to thank the member from Ajax–Pickering for raising this important issue. As the member mentioned, our province experienced a severe flood last spring. In fact, it was the worst flood on record since April 1928, so a very significant event.

With respect to monitoring, our government is responsible, and our ministry is responsible for flood warning and forecasting. We have a Surface Water Monitoring Centre that is engaged in this activity 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Daily assessments for flood hazard potential are performed at this site. It includes a river watch program that collects and analyzes stream flow and water level data, a weather watch system that collects and analyzes weather data, as well as watershed conditions that include measuring snowpack depth, and running models with respect to this risk. Our ministry will continue to ensure that we're advising Ontarians appropriately and in a timely fashion.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I rise to correct my record.

Earlier, I posed a question to the Minister of Government Services. I said David Livingston, Peter Faist and Laura Miller's assistant were not responsive or not available to the committee. I should have added Laura Miller to that list.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's actually not correcting the record; that just simply means you've added somebody, and that's not appropriate.

VISITORS

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

Mr. Rob Leone: I noticed in the public gallery just behind me, Professor Robert O'Brien, who was the chair of the department of political science when I received my PhD. His daughter is a page here in the this Legislature. Welcome to the Legislature.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I suspect that's going to invite an awful lot of comments, but we will not be making them.

The Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities on a point of order.

Hon. Brad Duguid: In the visitor's gallery today is Emily Hedges. She's my director of communications, and after many years of loyal service, she's moving on today. It's her last day on the job here at Queen's Park. We're going to miss her.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I wanted to acknowledge that today we were joined by a member from my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, Mr. Bhagat S. Taggar, and his guest from England, Ravi Bhakri, who is a city councillor who joined us today.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Walker assumes ballot item number 55 and Mr. Smith assumes ballot item number 12.

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

The House recessed from 1143 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I am pleased to recognize the town of Minto for an outstanding new initiative that has been undertaken by council and staff.

On March 18, Minto began the development of a program to offset the town's carbon footprint. The town currently uses about 130 litres of fuel each year. Using the carbon-offset formula, it is estimated that 950 trees would be needed to offset that carbon footprint.

Council and staff are taking a proactive approach by developing a plan to implement a one-cent-per-litre transfer from the town fuel budget. This money will go towards Minto's Trees for Farms initiative and will be reserved for tree-planting programs.

Staff and councillors who submit mileage will also be encouraged to voluntarily donate one cent per kilometre to the Trees for Farms fund. This plan has the potential to raise between \$1,300 and \$1,600 a year.

This is an exciting project, and I am proud to offer my support.

I would like to recognize two other environmental leaders who serve as an inspiration for this initiative. Thank you to the township of Mapleton for its Trees for Mapleton program and to the county of Wellington for its Green Legacy Programme.

SAFE DIGGING

Mr. Paul Miller: I'm pleased to come before the House today to remind members that April is Dig Safe Month.

Dig Safe is dedicated to improving safety and reducing damage to underground facilities by raising awareness of safe digging practices through local events across this province.

In 2011, along 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 Ltd. as a not-for-profit, single point of contract for all utility location services in Ontario.

In June 2012, the province passed Bill 8, the Ontario Underground Infrastructure Notification System Act, 2012, allowing Ontarians to simply call one number for all underground utility locates.

After complete implementation of related regulations in June this year, Ontario will become the leading Canadian province for safe digging practices.

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.

MARKHAM SKATING CLUB

Ms. Helena Jaczek: This year, we in Markham are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Markham Skating Club. Since 1964, the Markham Skating Club, or the MSC as it is known locally, has been dedicated to developing skaters of all ages and skill levels.

For their 50th anniversary, the club hosted a 50 and Fabulous Ice Show from April 4 to 6. The show featured

icons from each decade over the last 50 years, with themes such as Hollywood starlets and the Mickey Mouse Club.

Today, the club has more than 250 members and 12 professional coaches, eight of whom have trained with the MSC at some point in their careers. In fact, Sandra Churchill, the current board president, was one of the club's original skaters in 1965, and her daughter Meaghan is now skating with MSC at the advanced level.

However, the MSC offers more than just figure skating. Adults of all levels can take skating lessons, and their power skating program has alumni such as NHL star and Markham resident Jeff Skinner, who is the youngest player in the four major North American sports to play in an All-Star Game and was the NHL Rookie of the Year in 2011.

Congratulations to the Markham Skating Club on their 50th anniversary, and may there be many more years to come.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Rob Leone: I want to pick up where I left off yesterday in response to the Minister of Education's statement on anti-bullying, to which I had the opportunity to respond on what I believe was a very successful International Day of Pink. But anyone who devotes their time and effort to eradicating bullying knows that the day after a day of action is just as important. It's for that reason that I'm glad to take some time to recognize anyone who keeps up the fight against abusive language and behaviour 365 days a year.

Autumn Fernandes is the founder and choreographer of the ONE Movement performance company based in Cambridge, Ontario. The ONE Movement program travels to schools around Waterloo region and the province to inspire children and teens through movement. Fernandes, who was bullied growing up, tells students that confronting bullying head-on is the best course of action. She says that "students will leave the performance with energy, enthusiasm and a sense of belonging." She adds that kids play a vital role in stopping the cycle at the source and conveying a positive message for generations to come.

I applaud Autumn's efforts in using her passion and work ethic to bring about a safer school experience for kids right across the province of Ontario. The Cambridge Chamber of Commerce has recognized Autumn as the Young Entrepreneur of the Year. On behalf of the people of Cambridge and members of the Ontario Legislature, I want to congratulate Autumn on her tremendous achievement.

DIABETES

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Canada is in the midst of a diabetes epidemic. I take this opportunity, as a physician and parliamentarian, to personally thank the Globe and Mail, the Canadian Diabetes Association and medical colleagues Drs. Subodh Verma, Bernie Zinman and Richard Gilbert.

First, I'd like to salute, thank and recognize the Globe and Mail, and in particular my effervescent editor, Tralee Pearce, Globe Life editor Kathryn Hayward, and health editor Sarah MacWhirter. I thank them for allowing me to pen pieces that I hope will contribute to the Canadian conversation, alert us to important health trends, and signal shifts and recalibrations of the medical mindset. It has been said that medicine is the most scientific art and the most artistic science. I am pleased to report to this House that the Globe's approach to health coverage mobilizes this wisdom.

I also thank the Canadian Diabetes Association for the diabetes charter, a diabetes bill of rights.

I quote now from my own article in today's Globe:

"Managing the coming diabetes epidemic won't be easy. Right now, there are three million Canadians with diabetes. Six million more are pre-diabetic.... There's a whole generation of adolescents who study, play and socialize by computer—a digital world in which physical activity is unnecessary...."

The diabetes charter is a bill of rights outlining "the duties and responsibilities of patients, health care providers, governments, schools and the public."

These are all important pieces of the evolving diabetes puzzle.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Ted Arnott: In 1994, 20 years ago, the Ontario Legislature passed the amendment to the Highway Traffic Act which allowed our volunteer firefighters to use a flashing green light on their cars or trucks when responding to an emergency. This was the very first private member's bill of mine that was passed into law.

Working together two decades ago to build support, I remember the strong support of Wellington county fire chiefs like Clifford's Dennis Kaufman and Doug Smith of Puslinch township.

Today, we are joined in the House by Wayne Nie, who is chair of the board of directors of the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario. Welcome, Wayne, and thank you very much for coming here today.

All of our province's firefighters deserve our special appreciation, but our volunteer firefighters are the day-to-day heroes of small-town Ontario. We can never say thanks often enough, and that's why I've raised many of their concerns in the House over the years. Even after 20 years, more needs to be done to raise public awareness of volunteer firefighters' flashing green lights, especially for our urban residents who may be visiting rural Ontario. Many rural municipalities have erected road signs to inform motorists, but the province could do much more to help remind drivers that a flashing green light on a car or truck means that a firefighter is on the way to an emergency and minutes can mean life or death for a family like yours, so make way.

I urge the Ministers of Community Safety and Transportation to work together to develop a strategy to continue to raise public awareness to ensure that our fire-

fighters can respond to emergencies swiftly and safely, fulfilling their important calling and mission and saving lives.

JACK O'NEIL

Ms. Cindy Forster: I rise today to celebrate National Volunteer Week. Many volunteer recognition events have been held in the Welland riding this week to recognize the important work of volunteers. From seniors' residences like Rapelje Lodge, Woodlands of Sunset and Northland Pointe, to hospitals, Family and Children's Services, March of Dimes and Red Cross, volunteers are crucial in providing support and keeping these vital community institutions running.

1310

I'd like to make special mention of a well-known Port Colborne resident: Jack O'Neil, president of Friends Over 55 and a community activist for many years. He volunteered at Port Colborne hospital for decades, arranged community Christmas dinners, and is advocating for seniors at every turn. He spearheaded a campaign to raise awareness and push for government funding for low-income seniors. He canvassed with a petition that I brought to this House—it's an issue he continues to raise. He's now fighting to protect seniors from the Enbridge 40% gas rate hike. He knows seniors are already living on tight budgets and are unable to afford such drastic increases.

My office has drafted a petition and Jack will, I'm sure, come back with 20,000 signatures. He has consistently reached out to my office on behalf of seniors in need, and on this fight and so many others, and I'm proud to help him in any way. He's a shining example of the impact of people getting involved and volunteering in communities.

Thank you, Jack, for all your generous work.

JEWISH HERITAGE MONTH

Mr. Mike Colle: Mr. Speaker, the month of May, which is soon approaching, is Jewish Heritage Month in the province of Ontario, as unanimously passed in this Legislature two years ago. We're now entering the third year for Jewish Heritage Month, and I just want to invite all MPPs from Brantford to Hamilton, Niagara Falls to Windsor and Etobicoke to celebrate the Jewish roots in your ridings.

The Jewish community has been a part of Ontario's fabric for over 200 years—200 years of history. They fought in the War of 1812, they fought in the First World War and Second World War, and they helped build many of our cities. The Jewish community is rich in history and tradition. They are rich in the medical field, philanthropy, and in constructing this great province from every brick up to the sky.

Jewish Heritage Month is now under the auspices of the UJA Federation of Greater Toronto and the Centre for

Israel and Jewish Affairs. They're also going to have the annual Walk with Israel down by the lakefront.

I invite all members to celebrate 200 years of Jewish history in this province and to please do something in your ridings to recognize a great number of your community who come from this 200-year history of Jewish contributions to this great province.

SCHOOL BUS SAFETY PATROLLERS

Mr. Bill Walker: As a former safety patrol at Amabel Hepworth Central Public School, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today to recognize some 900 school bus safety patrollers who volunteer on over 335 bus routes in Grey and Bruce counties.

These grade 6 and grade 8 girls and boys tend to some 14,000 students from 52 elementary schools in the Bruce-Grey Catholic District School Board and Bluewater District School Board, ensuring that each one of them gets to and from school safely. They help their peers or younger students employ safe crossing practices, and they assist by watching for traffic and signalling to cross when it is safe to do so. They assist bus drivers by acting as an extra pair of eyes on the bus, modelling good behaviour, and remain on guard in case of emergencies, such as taking charge and getting help on the way if the driver becomes incapacitated.

Every day, they do their job with the utmost care and respect, and as a result, their duties are a valuable contribution to the major reduction in pedestrian fatalities and injuries in Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, it was a little disheartening to hear that the efforts of these valuable partners in education are often overlooked by Queen's Park, so today I am pleased we're changing that by making a first statement in recognition of these young leaders and the challenging job they perform.

On behalf of all parents in Bruce and Grey who place their trust and care into your hands every day, my colleague Huron-Bruce MPP Lisa Thompson and I extend our heartfelt thanks to you for being true leaders amongst your peers.

We also extend our appreciation to Mr. Steve Lustig, general manager of the transportation and purchasing consortium of Grey Bruce, for helping to plan local events to ensure these kids are recognized for their work and efforts.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TAX FAIRNESS FOR REALTORS ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ FISCALE POUR LES COURTIERS EN VALEURS IMMOBILIÈRES

Mr. Smith moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 188, An Act to amend the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 / Projet de loi 188, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2002 sur le courtage commercial et immobilier.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd just like to welcome a number of visitors from the Ontario Real Estate Association, strong supporters of this bill—Tom Lebour, Ron Abraham, Johnmark Roberts, Don Kottick, Craig Homewood, Nita Kang, Andrew Wells, Robert Stanley, Matthew Thornton and Sylvia Pena—for joining us in the west members' gallery this morning.

The Tax Fairness for Realtors Act amends the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002, to permit a brokerage to pay commission or other remuneration to a personal corporation of a broker or a salesperson that it employs.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent to put forward a motion without consent. Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. John Milloy: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item number 7 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL VOLUNTEER WEEK

Hon. Michael Coteau: I rise today to recognize National Volunteer Week. Every year, we use this week to say thank you to the more than six million volunteers here in the beautiful province of Ontario who make their communities stronger. These dedicated men and women commit their generosity, effort, compassion and time to help build their local neighbourhoods. Volunteers change the world every day. They deserve our heartfelt thanks, recognition and support.

Speaker, our government is working to strengthen volunteerism here in Ontario. This month, we launched some important initiatives to advance that goal.

Yesterday, we kicked off Ontario's seventh annual ChangeTheWorld: Ontario Youth Volunteer Challenge,

which runs from now until May 19. ChangeTheWorld connects young people with not-for-profit organizations in their communities, where they can volunteer to make a difference.

Since 2008, more than 100,000 students have volunteered hundreds of thousands of hours in their communities, gaining confidence in themselves, developing their talents and skills and expanding their personal networks. These young people are really changing the world.

This year, ChangeTheWorld is working with 23 volunteer centres across the province and engaging more than 33,000 young people. That's a record number.

Speaker, our government recognizes that the 2015 Pan Am and Parapan Am Games present a unique opportunity to strengthen volunteerism. The 2015 games will rely on the commitment of some 20,000 volunteers.

To that end, we brought forward three initiatives that I'm sure will interest prospective volunteers. We're creating a certificate program to recognize the training and experience that people get volunteering, including those supporting the Pan Am and Parapan Am Games. This certificate will help volunteers compete in today's job market.

We will also be launching Ontario's new online volunteer gateway to support volunteer recruitment province-wide. This accessible gateway will provide a one-stop shop for up-to-date volunteer resources, tools and opportunities, including future large-scale events.

Finally, our government is encouraging students to volunteer for the games by waiving the Ontario Student Assistance Program—OSAP—pre-study contribution for new and returning college and university students, as well as extending the interest-free grace period for recent graduates who volunteer.

Speaker, volunteers change our world as mentors, board members, fundraisers, caregivers and in many other ways, so we're working to improve the volunteer experience. Last month, we began a provincial round table to have discussions with our stakeholders across the province for our first-ever volunteer strategy. This strategy is intended to be our plan to strengthen volunteerism here in Ontario.

1320

Lastly, during National Volunteer Week, we recognize outstanding community services through various important award programs. The Ontario Volunteer Service Awards, since the inception, have been presented to more than 180,000 Ontarians.

I just got back from the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Voluntarism, recognizing individuals, businesses and other organizations. I'll say, they were such an exceptional group of people that were the recipients of this year's award—and also, the Ontario Medal for Young Volunteers.

I want to thank members who have already taken part in these Volunteer Service Awards ceremonies that began on March 19, and I urge all members to recognize their community volunteers this week and during the Volunteer Services Awards ceremonies that continue until June 26.

I just want to say thank you to all of the six million volunteers here in the province of Ontario.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's an honour to rise on behalf of my leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus to respond and mark National Volunteer Week, which takes place this year from April 6 to 12. We are all lucky to live in a country where civic pride and volunteerism are commonplace throughout many communities across Ontario. National Volunteer Week is a time to give thanks and show our appreciation to the 13.3 million volunteers across our country who put the needs of others above themselves and give back to their friends, their neighbours and their community.

Often the most cherished annual events in our communities are organized and carried out by dozens of dedicated volunteers.

Speaker, I'm sure you're no different than most of us. Almost without exception, every event that we attend on the weekend in our communities is hosted, organized, and facilitated by volunteers. Think about your local Santa Claus parade, or, considering the time of year, the Easter egg hunts that people look forward to in our communities. Then there are events like the Rotary Ribfest that comes through town, or an annual blues and jazz festival. Events like these form healthy communities and are always enjoyed by local families and residents. Behind all of these fantastic events, there are always countless volunteers putting in many, many hours, and often for no reason other than to help give back and make their community better.

Volunteers are behind these initiatives that make our communities unique. The great thing about the local Lions clubs, the Legions, the Optimists, the Kinsmen and the Rotary is that they are, at their heart, comprised of volunteers from our community. You know that a large part of what makes events like the ones I mentioned above so special is that they are always unique, no matter where you attend.

The value of the many volunteers who pitch in across Canada cannot be understated. Indeed, that is one of the reasons why I introduced my private member's bill, the Helping Volunteers Give Back Act, which would make it easier to volunteer for multiple organizations in Ontario. For all the important things that volunteers do on a daily basis, it is important that we give back to them as well and help ensure that volunteering is easier to do in Ontario.

This week, I was also proud to attend the town of Caledon's volunteer citizenship awards, where many local residents were given awards for their extensive commitment to their community.

As we pay tribute to our volunteers and acknowledge the importance of volunteerism in our communities, I must say that I am proud that it was a Progressive Conservative government that introduced the program that requires high school students to obtain 40 hours of volunteer service before graduation. I believe that this has proven to be an excellent initiative that has introduced

thousands of young Ontarians to the value of volunteering.

When it comes to volunteers and the tireless work that they do, I often like to use this quote: "Whether you volunteer your money or your time, it is valuable, it is important and it is appreciated." National Volunteer Week is the perfect time to thank volunteers for all they do for us in our communities.

I'd encourage those listening at home to go online at www.volunteer.ca and consider participating in the Volunt-Hear hotline initiative to participate in a national conversation about volunteer recognition. This hotline is a toll-free number where people can leave a brief impact statement and say thank you to a volunteer.

For my part, I'd like to conclude by taking this opportunity on behalf of my leader, Tim Hudak, the PC caucus and the residents of Dufferin-Caledon to sincerely thank all of the wonderful volunteers across Ontario for everything they do. Thank you.

Mr. Michael Prue: It is my privilege and my honour to stand here today to talk about volunteer week. The community, no matter where you live, recognizes the value of volunteers—the people who live there and the things they do. It doesn't matter whether you're from East York or Dufferin-Caledon or Scarborough or Timmins; it doesn't matter at all where you're from. The people who live there recognize those who do, those who contribute and those who make our community a better place to live.

In my own community of Beaches-East York, we have two awards ceremonies, one in the Beach and one in East York, every year. We try to pick a volunteer, somebody who has made a significant contribution. In East York we have what is called the Agnes Macphail Award, which is given out yearly to a person who epitomizes Agnes Macphail's contribution to Canadian life, whether that be helping women or the cause of poverty or those who find themselves incarcerated. We have an award in the Beach called the citizen of the year award. We give that award out every year to the person in the Beach who is elected by their peers as the person who has made the best contribution as a volunteer in their lifetime up to that point.

Without volunteers, I wonder what many of our institutions that we hold so dear would do. How would the hospitals operate without those volunteers who answer the telephone, who direct patients and family to the right rooms, the candy-stripers, if they are still called that—I don't know—inside the hospital and the thousands and thousands of things they do?

We look at our sporting teams. I don't know how they would operate at all. I had the honour to go to the Little Stanley Cup in East York this past weekend. There were all the volunteers, who had given up hundreds if not thousands of hours in that same year for every single one of those kids and every one of those teams, to make sure it came off without a hitch. Those same volunteers in another couple of weeks will go out and start the baseball teams as well, and the soccer teams and everything else that they do—amazing, amazing, selfless people.

I think about the community festivals that take place in my riding and everywhere else around this entire, wonderful province and the volunteers who come out to those to make sure they happen. Whether it's Canada Day or the jazz festival, the Easter parade, it doesn't really matter; it doesn't matter at all what it is, there are volunteers there doing what they can to help bring a sense of cohesion to the people who live there.

I would be remiss if I did not talk about Willis Blair. I attended his funeral yesterday. I hope to make a member's statement on it later with much more information, but there was a man who was a former mayor of East York—actually, the second mayor of East York. What he is remembered best for even today isn't his mayoral duties, although he was an excellent mayor; he's remembered best for his volunteer activities after he left that post. He worked in the Kiwanis, he worked in the hospital, he worked at the Westview Presbyterian Church. He was a fixture in all of those and he gave all 90 years of his life.

I think about the young people, by the thousands in our community, who help the poor, who help the disadvantaged, who help the children, who are there in the morning serving breakfast for the children's breakfast programs at the schools to make sure that every kid has an opportunity to learn, because you can't learn if you have an empty stomach.

I think about Community Centre 55 in my riding, which ran the Beaches Spring Sprint this past week, which I also attended, in order to talk about people getting sufficient exercise, but also to raise funds for worthy causes in our community.

Without our volunteers, it would be a much poorer place. Without our volunteers, the communities that we all know and cherish would not be the same kind of communities. It is those people who are the heart and soul of everything that we are and everything that we hope to be. We need to salute them. We need to do much more to recognize them.

I know that we have this day—I am thankful that the minister and my opposition colleague have stood up and spoken about this and I'm happy for the opportunity myself—but each of us in our own way, must salute our volunteers, not once, not twice, but a hundred times every year for the work that they do and the fact that they, and they alone, make our community the place that it is and that we're all proud of.

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PETITIONS

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for improved post-stroke physiotherapy and eligibility.

“Whereas current OHIP legislation and policies prevent Ontario post-stroke patients between the ages of

20 and 64 from receiving additional one-on-one OHIP-funded physiotherapy; and

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

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

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

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

“Now therefore we, the undersigned, hereby respectfully petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario 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 these treatment practices.”

TEACHERS

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: “Petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

“Hire the best teachers and repeal regulation 274.

“Whereas Ontario schoolchildren need the best education; and

“Whereas good teachers are key to the excellence of education; and

“Whereas regulation 274 unfairly requires principals to hire teachers differently now by prioritizing seniority over quality and suitability; and

“Whereas Ontario's four million parents and grandparents want the best teachers for their children;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario repeal regulation 274, Hiring Practices.”

I affix my name and I give this petition to Divya.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mrs. Julia Munro: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

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

As I am in favour of this, I have affixed my signature and given it to page Bani.

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

M. Taras Natyshak: J’ai le plaisir d’introduire une pétition à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario pour une école secondaire francophone de quartier, de la 7^e à la 12^e année d’études. Je vais lire seulement la dernière partie, qui dit :

« Nous, soussignés, demandons à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« 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 vais y affixer ma signature et la donner à Urooj.

GREENBELT

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Whereas the Tim Hudak Progressive Conservative Party voted against the formation of Ontario’s greenbelt;

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

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

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

Mr. Michael Prue: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Given the nature of this petition, was this stamped by the Clerks as being acceptable? I find it hard to believe that it was, given the nature.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I will consult with the table. We’ll carry on and get back to you.

WORKPLACE INSURANCE

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

“We, the undersigned, do hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to repeal the statutory obligations created by Bill 119.”

I agree with this, Speaker, and hand it to page Justin.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a rather lengthy petition. I have read this into the record several times. I’m just going to read the “be it resolved.”

“That the Minister of Education intervene to locate an underutilized secondary school building in the neighbourhood of Riverdale-Danforth, Beaches-East York and Leslieville that may be sold to or shared with both French school boards (public and Catholic) so that each may open their respective French secondary school (grades 7-12) by September 2014 and so that French students no longer must choose between travelling great distances to attend a French secondary school or giving up their French education in favour of a local English school and so that they may have the same benefit as their English counterparts, the right to attend a local secondary school in their neighbourhood.”

I’m in agreement and will send it with page Urooj.

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

I'll rule on the member's previous point of order. The petition that was read has been ruled to be in order previously, but the particular petition read today was not stamped. I would encourage members to realize that they must have their petitions stamped by the table before they are read.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGES

Mrs. Julia Munro: "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 ... 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;

"Therefore 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."

As I am in agreement, I have affixed my signature, and give it to page Bani.

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ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to introduce a petition, on behalf of Geri Sutts and her daughter Trish Sullivan-Crew, from my riding of Essex. It has amassed a number of signatures.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

"Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers...."

Mr. Speaker, I will affix my signature to the petition and deliver it, through Caroline, to the Clerks' desk.

NATURAL GAS RATES

Mr. John O'Toole: This is from my riding of Durham and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario Energy Board has approved a 40% increase in Enbridge Gas rates effective April 1, 2014;

"Whereas the government of Premier Kathleen Wynne has not taken action to ensure affordability of natural gas in Ontario;

"Whereas the provincial government has contributed to higher costs of natural gas by its own policy on purchasing natural gas for electricity generating stations required to supplement wind and solar power;

"Whereas an increase averaging \$400 in annual gas bills is a hardship for all Ontarians, but especially seniors on fixed pensions and families and individuals of modest means;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the provincial government recognize that heat and hydro are essential commodities for Ontario; and

"We, the undersigned, further ask that the provincial government immediately investigate the 40% increase, take action to ensure temporary increases caused by an exceptionally cold winter do not become permanent, and also ensure affordability of natural gas for consumers for Ontario consumers."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Zohaib, one of the new pages here.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition that reads as follows—and it has been stamped by the Clerks' table:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontarians are subsidizing the export of cheap electricity to other jurisdictions; and

"Whereas more than \$1 billion has been wasted by the government in the cancellation of natural gas plants for purely partisan reasons; and

"Whereas there have been unchecked increases in the pay and bonuses of hydro executives;

"Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to act as follows:

"(1) Stop the \$1-billion annual subsidy of electricity exports to jurisdictions like New York and Michigan by taking Ontario hydro sales out of the hands of speculative energy traders.

"(2) Cap executive pay and cut down on waste and duplication by merging Ontario's hydro agencies.

"(3) Stop private power giveaways and have Ontario's Auditor General conduct an immediate review of all

private power contracts in the wake of the \$1-billion gas plant scandal.”

I'm in agreement, will sign my signature, and send it with page Megan.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario ranks ninth of 10 provinces in terms of the total per capita funding allocated to long-term care; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care data shows that there are more than 30,000 Ontarians waiting for long-term-care placements and wait-times have tripled since 2005; and

“Whereas there is a perpetual shortage of staff in long-term-care facilities and residents often wait an unreasonable length of time to receive care, e.g., to be attended to for toileting needs; to be fed; to receive a bath; for pain medication. Since 2008, funding for 2.8 paid hours of care per resident per day has been provided. In that budget year, a promise was made to increase this funding to 4.0 hours per resident per day by 2012. This has not been done; and

“Whereas the training of personal support workers is unregulated and insufficient to provide them with the skills and knowledge to assist residents who are being admitted with higher physical, psychological and emotional needs. Currently, training across the province is varied, inconsistent and under-regulated;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“(1) immediately increase the number of paid hours of nursing and personal care per resident per day to 4.0 hours (as promised in 2008);

“(2) develop a plan to phase in future increases so that the number of paid hours per resident per day of nursing and personal care is 5.0 hours by January 2015;

“(3) establish a licensing body, that will develop a process of registration, accreditation and certification for all personal support workers.”

I sign this and pass it on to page Urooj.

YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

Mrs. Julia Munro: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas youth mental health in the province of Ontario is rising at an alarming rate. According to the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, 70% of mental health problems and illnesses have their onset during childhood or adolescence. Research shows that early identification leads to improved outcomes;

“Whereas pursuant to the Ontario Ministry of Children and Youth Services, studies suggest 15% to 21% of children and youth, approximately 467,000 to 654,000 children and youth in Ontario, have at least one mental health disorder. The consequences can affect children

and youth now and into adulthood, their families/care-givers, schools, communities, employers and the province as a whole;

“Whereas the 2010 Ontario report by the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, entitled *Navigating the Journey to Wellness: The Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Action Plan for Ontarians*, made specific recommendations that would address the growing mental health and addiction crisis among youth in the province, but no further concrete steps have been taken;

“Whereas waiting lists for help are at a crisis level and our schools do not have the resources to deal with the growing incidents of bullying, addiction, anxiety, depression and suicide. Education and awareness is critical to remove the stigma;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to prioritize funding and resources for our schools and communities to help our youth with mental health and addiction illnesses and the resulting consequences.”

I will give this to page Eli to present to the table.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly should establish a select committee to review Ontario's winter road maintenance contracts with a view at improving winter road conditions before the 2015 winter season.

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

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I'm pleased to introduce motion 70, which reads, “that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly should establish a select committee to review Ontario's winter road maintenance contracts with a view at improving winter road conditions before the 2015 winter season.”

This winter, the northwest in particular has experienced the worst winter in memory in terms of unsafe travelling on highways across our region. I have heard concerns like tragic accidents, jackknifed tractor-trailers and the inability of emergency vehicles and crews to safely arrive on-scene. What's worse is that these conditions weren't only experienced at the time of or shortly after a winter storm, but these subpar conditions have been experienced consistently since the region's first snowfall on November 18. The only break in the treacherous conditions people living in the northwest have received was when spring hit the region and the snow receded.

That said, the winter hasn't been all that extraordinary in terms of weather; the inadequate maintenance of most

of our highways by all but one contractor, however, has been. Yet the poor conditions persisted despite the repeated pleas from northerners and MPPs. It hasn't seemed to matter that the Minister of Transportation has been alerted to the problem conditions being experienced across the north or that he has been given numerous suggested solutions, because he has still failed to take any meaningful action short of funding a few more plows and making mention of considering bringing some privatized services in-house sometime in the future. But with no dates in sight, northerners aren't confident that change will come in advance of next winter.

The bottom line is that reforms need to be made, and they need to be made soon, in advance of next winter, so that we don't see history repeat itself. As I mentioned, my offices have been flooded with hundreds, if not thousands, of emails, letters, calls, tweets and Facebook messages about the poor conditions across Kenora–Rainy River alone.

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There is a wealth of information and expertise that needs to be considered when making reforms to these private contracts, and I believe that a group outside of the ministry is needed to conduct this review. A select committee will be able to listen to the insights provided by people across the province as well as experts working in the field across Ontario and in other jurisdictions that have similar climates and weather patterns.

Just to give people in this House and people watching a sense of the issues that northerners have been facing this year and some of the issues that may be discussed by the select committee, we've heard a range of issues dealing with contractors: Again, not all contractors, but the vast majority of contractors in northwestern Ontario aren't fulfilling their contractual obligations.

We have heard from people that contractors aren't providing up-to-date information on road conditions, and that, instead of being able to go to the MTO before starting their journey, people across northwestern Ontario have actually had to contact and listen to the media—CKDR is a radio station that people have had to pay attention to, to see if there are actually road closures. We've heard that contractors aren't maintaining roads to the standards that are set out in the contract.

I wanted to highlight three highways in particular: Highway 17, which is the Trans-Canada Highway that runs through my riding; Highway 105, which connects the Trans-Canada through Ear Falls up to Red Lake; and Highway 502, which connects Dryden to Fort Frances.

On Highway 17, the plowing frequency should be every 2.2 hours, and 16 hours after a winter event, we should be seeing bare pavement. But in Kenora–Rainy River, weeks after a snowfall, we're still seeing that the highway is covered with snow and is still icy.

In terms of Highway 105, the plowing frequency varies between 3.3 hours north of Ear Falls and 5.5 hours south of Ear Falls. After 24 hours, that highway is supposed to be restored to bare pavement. But the conditions have been so bad that we've actually seen a

Facebook group pop up with about 2,000 people from the area who have joined. The Facebook group is called "Highway 105. Residents for better roads."

When it comes to Highway 502, the plowing frequency there should be every 10 hours, and after 24 hours, that highway shouldn't necessarily be restored to bare pavement, but should be restored to a snow-packed condition. Just to give you a sense of what a snow-packed condition is, there's a section of the contract that the Ministry of Transportation gave me, which defines a snow-packed condition as "a means achieved when the driving surface of the road has been plowed and is free of loose snow, potholes, rutting, washboard and slippery areas."

The folks at home who are watching this are going to say, "That does not describe Highway 502 at any point since November 18 of last year." We have seen washboard; we have seen glare ice. Transports that travel down that section of road are driving down the centre lane just so they don't go into the ditch. We also transport schoolchildren down that road. There's basically a suburb of Dryden that's down that road, and people rely on being transported over that section of highway to get to work, to school, to medical appointments and to get groceries each and every single day.

In terms of some of the conditions we may want to consider at committee that fall squarely on the shoulders of the government, there are problems with the contracts themselves: with patrolling, enforcement, penalties and even the clarity of the contract.

Patrolling: We found that the patrol areas are far too large. I've heard from contractor employees who say that they are expected to cover areas that are so large that it is impossible for them to assess each section of the highway more than one or two times a day. We all know that weather does not follow such a rigid schedule of only appearing once or twice a day.

In terms of enforcement, the section of the contract called "Outcome target indicators" specifies that contractor logbooks, records, plans and actions that the contractor has taken will be the only indicators used to apply consequences of non-compliance. Underpinning this whole system, no matter what kind of fines and penalties the ministry has come up with for a contractor not complying, it's based on the honour system; it's based on the records that the contractor provides. I think that is something very serious that we have to look at, at the select committee level.

In terms of the penalties themselves, clearly they aren't strong enough to get action or to get some of the problem contractors to really pull up their socks and take the job seriously.

In terms of the clarity of the contract, the contract states that conditions need to be "addressed immediately by the contractor upon detection" or being made aware of an issue, yet there don't seem to be any minimum requirements that are associated with patrolling areas, or frequency.

The contractor is also only required to use—and this is in the contract—"all available resources to maintain the

highways as safe as possible throughout the winter and to reach the prescribed level of service as soon as possible after winter events have abated or ceased.”

Winter events are defined—and again, this is a quote from the contract—as “the time when snow or freezing rain stops falling on any portion of a route, when drifting ceases to cause accumulation on the road surface of the road or when frost is no longer creating a slippery condition.”

Based on that definition of what a winter event is, I’m assuming then that people in Kenora–Rainy River can expect our winter event to end in April, when the snow goes, because we’re always going to have drifting snow. We’re always going to have the accumulation of snow. We’re going to have frozen sections of highway, including bridges, which the minister mentions quite often.

Another problem that we should also be looking at is the highway classifications themselves. In northwestern Ontario, we don’t have a single class 1 highway, despite the Trans-Canada crossing the highway. Two highways in particular have been identified as having classifications that need to be upgraded. That’s Highway 502, as I mentioned—that snow-packed condition just doesn’t cut it—as well as Highway 105, because the standards don’t reflect the fact that for some communities, there is only one way in or out of the community. There needs to be a remoteness factor that’s considered as well as the amount of traffic that is on the highways.

I do think that privatization itself is another issue that should be considered. The director of the Manitoba Ministry of Infrastructure and Transportation said that the reason why Manitoba decided not to privatize the delivery of their essential service is largely the result of an in-house evaluation that concluded that privatization would lower costs initially, but that it would ultimately be equally or more expensive than public highway maintenance.

We’re seeing this case in Ontario, where experts working for some of the large contractors in northwestern Ontario have suggested that the decision of contractors to not adequately maintain roads is intentional and that it is a means that they are using to leverage more money out of the provincial government. I think that it’s also a tactic that seems to be working, because we’ve heard from the minister, who has made statements in this House, that some of this inadequate maintenance has resulted in 52 plows and more crews being purchased, that are over and above the contract negotiations.

Of course, the most serious issue that we’ve got, that’s associated with poor highway maintenance, is the lack of safety for families, seniors and workers who travel our highways. This winter, we’ve seen serious collisions and crashes, including a 14-transport pileup where even emergency crews had difficulty accessing the collision site because the conditions were so bad. A first responder told me that the ambulance and fire trucks nearly went off the road, and even though the first responders had special gear, it wasn’t sufficient to enable them to respond quickly, and even while walking, the first respond-

ers had to literally inch their way to the scene from a quarter of a kilometre away, carrying the gear that they required to extract people from some of the wrecks.

Very unfortunately, we have also seen some fatalities. We know in this House that even one fatality is too many.

There are concerns for children being safely transported to and from school. I have a press release from the Northwestern Ontario Student Services Consortium, which is the board that does the transportation. It says, “During a routine ... stop on Highway 17 near Eagle River, a loaded school bus experienced a close call. The school bus was heading east and three vehicles travelling west were safely stopped and adhering to the flashing red lights.

“A fourth vehicle, also travelling west, could not safely stop and hit the ditch on the south side of the highway.” They go on to say that, fortunately, the school bus was not hit by the vehicle that hit the icy conditions and was not able to stop.

What I’m going to do is I’m going to pause here, and I will continue the rest of my speech—it was very difficult to condense all of the points I wanted to make, so I think I’ll continue it and share a little bit of it with my caucus colleagues.

1400

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I’m very happy to speak today about the winter highway maintenance. In northern Ontario, I’m sure they are experiencing many of the same things that I’ve seen in southern Ontario. A number of times, I’ve driven the highways in my riding, 417 and 401, and I’ve yet to see plows on the highway. My trip from Ottawa to home is about 45 minutes on the 417 if the weather is good, and not one time, looking at both sides of the highway, have I seen a plow. That’s much different than I’ve seen before.

I know that you just can’t have a storm in this country where you get two, three or four inches of snow an hour—when your circuit time is an hour and a half, you just can’t get around before there’s enough snow.

Of course, we’ve seen, I think, a hundred vehicles in the pileup at Gananoque this year; similar on the 400, north of Toronto, as well as near Belleville. It goes with a change in highways.

We had a meeting with the Ministry of Transportation. Before the meeting, we received a letter from the ministry showing that the number of plows in the eastern region had gone from 59 plows down to 32, as of April of last year. A new contract was signed by the MTO. That’s almost a 50%—45% or 46%—difference.

Then I come to the House and what do I hear? First of all, they blame it on Mike Harris. This is how far back—we can’t change results.

There is a new contract on 50% of the plows. It’s time that we look at the reason for it. It’s dangerous. I don’t know how many accidents we’ve had. I know this has been a bad winter, but I don’t have to go back very far, to

2008, when we had a much more severe winter and we didn't have the accidents we had this year.

Coming from eastern Ontario to Toronto, it's a real problem for me, because I don't know what the weather is going to be like. I just know that if it's a snowstorm, the highway is closed. That's just what we've seen numerous times this year.

We met with the contractors—well, first of all, they blamed it on Mike Harris; then they blamed it on the contractors, for not meeting the contract. We tried to meet with them. The next thing that happened is very typical of this government: They threatened them. They cancelled meetings with them and said they didn't want to talk to them because, “We talked to the PCs, we talked to the public.”

That's just the wrong attitude. I've seen that before in health care, where clinics are told that they're getting cuts but “We don't want to see it in the paper.”

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry to stick to the motion that is in front of us.

Mr. Jim McDonell: My point of the motion is, the contractors are being threatened. They're told not to release the terms of the contract; they're told not to talk to the public. But you can't get by the one fact that's there: Snowplows are 50% less than they were last year.

I don't think it takes much of an education to know that when you have severe storms in Canada, in Ontario, on a 400-series highway, if you're starting to get close to a foot of snow in the middle of the road, all that equals is 10, 15 or 20 cars in the ditch. As this goes on the highway, it easily gets up to—around Christmastime, I think it was around a thousand vehicles, so imagine the damage.

I saw the contracts. The contracts today are costing less than they were 10 years ago, if you can believe that. The cost of the contract per year is less than it was 10 years ago. You can imagine the inflation over that time period. Think of the damage that goes on when you have a thousand vehicles off the road—that's a lot of damage—in one event, millions of dollars, more than the cost of the savings we've seen.

I think it's time to stand up and make the changes required. There's lots of time to work with the contractors and get the snowplows up to the proper levels. Maybe 59 was too many, but 32 is not enough, and we've seen clear evidence of that.

Thank you, Speaker. I know there are other people who want to speak to this.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Today I thought it was important that I read a constituent's letter into the record. His name is Rob Burns, and he lives in Wawa. He's a volunteer fire department individual. He talks about an accident that he reported to on November 20, 2011, where they were called to extract a passenger out of a vehicle.

It says, “On Sunday, November 20, 2011, we were called to a particularly sad car accident on Highway 17 south of Wawa. A 13-year-old boy lost his life....”

“We were called ... to extricate the front seat passenger of a mid-sized SUV.

“While I was assisting with the removal on that side of the vehicle I noticed the extensive damage to the upper rear passenger area of the SUV. The blood smears and tissue made me think that a moose may have been involved in the collision.

“I was wrong.

“I noticed a blanket laying out against the guardrail about 30 feet from the vehicle ... with a shoe sticking out from under the blanket. I have been at a few fatal accident scenes,” so he knew what he was dealing with right away.

“The second part of the accident was ... another north-bound tractor-trailer that lost control while attempting to brake and stop. It ended up about 100 metres south of the accident, 30 metres from the highway completely jack-knifed. The driver later said that he just barely touched the brakes and the truck slid out of control.

“The point of this letter” to you, Michael, is that I want “to inform you of the sole reason this accident occurred.

“The deplorable condition of Highway 17—the Trans-Canada Highway—in your riding is what caused this accident and took that young boy's life.

“After speaking with the MTO representative on-scene, the Wawa MTO had elected not to use salt to clear the highway for this particular storm event. The attendant had told us that it was ‘too cold’ for salt to work.

“Most northern residents know that road salt is not very effective at temperatures below -20° or -25° Celsius.

“However, on this particular morning, the temperature was approximately -12° Celsius when I noticed the outside temperature in the morning before we got the call.

“Interestingly enough, after being at the scene for an hour or two, it became apparent that a salt truck had driven through and spread salt at the scene after it happened but before the fire department and ambulance arrived.

“I came to that conclusion because the salt pattern had driven around parked and broken vehicles.

“How nice of the MTO to assist us in walking on the highway to clean up such a devastating mess to the family involved.

“Too bad they hadn't done their job properly that morning to prevent such a totally preventable car accident.

“I have lived in Wawa for about 12 years now. I grew up in Toronto and return frequently to visit friends and family. The difference between winter maintenance there and here is laughable.

“We regularly get forecasted snow events over 20 centimetres and I have never seen any pre-treatment of the Trans-Canada Highway 17. I have a unique perspective about territorial road service differences.

“The fact that the MTO and our new service provider ‘Transfield’ (an Australian company) failed to use salt to correct the state of the road boggles my mind.

“Even one of the attending OPP officers at the scene told us that he phoned the MTO at 9 a.m. that morning

and advised that the road condition was very, very slippery and quite unacceptable.

“Nothing was done to correct this situation, and an innocent youth was killed two and a half hours later.

“As drivers we never have any control over what other drivers do, but you (the politicians) do.

“You decide the policies. The policies govern the road policies, rules and road maintenance workers and actions. The workers either put sand and salt on the road or they don’t. You politicians made a bad decision on this policy, and this young boy’s death rests squarely in your hands.

“You need to come up with a better policy for the conditions of different types of winter road maintenance, and consistent criteria for use of salt, sand, plows or any combination of these.

“I have spoken to the MTO people and they tell me that the climate is different and budgets are different,” and all this is all—I won’t use his term, but BS. “The climate doesn’t change over 10 metres on Highway 17, and the budget should make sense and promote safe highways instead of saving dollars. As an Ontarian, I pay a huge amount of fuel tax, and there seems to even be an unwritten ‘northern Ontario fuel tax’ most days too, although you guys don’t get a cut of that, it all goes to the big oil companies. Use a bigger fraction of that money to keep the roadways safe!

“Another MTO employee informed me that Highway 17 in this area is a class 2 highway. It is the Trans-Canada Highway! It is the 401 of northern Ontario!

“This is the main reason for its poor condition most of the winter. You guys should get your acts together and fix this problem. It is a simple problem and a very important lifeline to the people of this area. It should be a class 1 highway. So what if gas costs three cents more a litre? We’re already paying 15 cents more than in southern Ontario....

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“Mike et al, I thank you for your time and hope that your aides have enough sense to give this to you to read yourself. I am also carbon copying the Minister of Transportation, their critic, the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines and their critic, and the Premier.

“Please think about this letter and this preventable accident whenever you are driving your family around on our class 2 highways, and be sure to drive safe when in northern Ontario. The Wawa fire department will always be available to help.

“Sincerely yours

“Rob Burns

“Senior firefighter.”

I thank him for sharing his story with us.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill.

First off, I do want to introduce my wife, if I may use this time. My wife, Patty, is here visiting us today, for her, I think, second or third appearance in my two and a half years here.

Mr. Bill Walker: It seems like the first every time.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes, it seems like the first. We’re really pleased to have her here today, and I want to say thanks to the dozen MPPs who joined us for lunch today. It made for a little bit of fun.

I will speak in support of the member from Kenora–Rainy River’s bill. However, I do want to say that our MPP from Leeds–Grenville has already successfully moved a motion in the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to direct the Auditor General to review the delivery of winter road maintenance. The Auditor General is to complete her review by the end of the year. So while I support this bill, I can tell you, Speaker, how important it is that we take the Auditor General’s results to heart before we move on any thoughts about what needs to be fixed or what doesn’t.

The auditor will tell us a couple of things, and contrary to what the member from Kenora–Rainy River said, the current condition of the roads has absolutely nothing to do with privatization. They are going to study two things: the contract standards and the service levels. Those are the areas that need to be addressed. The contract standards have not changed since outsourcing. Based on the class of highway, the MTO sets the time frame in which the road must be cleared and meet bare pavement standards. Speaker, I repeat: The standards have not changed since outsourcing, so blaming it on that is a little premature, I would think, and incorrect, according to what the auditor will look at.

Service levels, I think, are another important area. I can say that three winters ago, when I first was elected, the highway conditions were deplorable. We had almost a dozen fatalities in northern Ontario, and I asked for the coroner to be involved. Sadly, that was not something that this Legislature wanted to see happen, but I can tell you, this past year alone, my wife, Patty, and I went to Mattawa in my riding to go to the opening of a restaurant, Le Voyageur, and it was like taking your life in your hands. It was a dangerous drive for 45 miles to Mattawa. The snow had stopped. We were there for four hours in the lovely community of Mattawa, and on the drive back, the roads were even worse. Now, the snow had stopped for four hours. This is the kind of thing that we find deplorable.

A few weeks later, Patty and I went to Magnetawan for the cattle farmers’ luncheon—we do get a lot of these eating opportunities, Speaker—and it was like taking your life in your hands to drive to Magnetawan down Highway 11 south. Again, the snow had stopped for hours. We were returning home, and it was deplorable conditions.

We went on a 30-city tour of Ontario since Christmas, and I was witness to that 72-car pileup in Napanee. The drive from Ottawa to Belleville was awful, the drive from Belleville to Kingston was worse, and the drive from Kingston into Cornwall was a very scary experience.

So while we do support this bill, we’re really encouraged that our member from Leeds–Grenville was so successful in getting the Auditor General to look into this, and I thank you.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's more than an honour to be able to speak today in support of my colleague regarding winter road maintenance; it's a duty, because in the north—and, I think, across the province, but specifically in the north—and since I've been elected, it has been a battle. When I first got elected, we had all kinds of complaints that roads were closed. Highway 11 through Timiskaming–Cochrane is the Trans-Canada Highway. When it's closed, the only way through the province is to get out of the province and go to Quebec. And we do that on a regular basis.

You wonder why. Some people blame it on privatization. I'm not sure. I'm looking forward to that audit. Some people say, "The contractors bid too low. They can't fulfill the contract. They can't fulfill the standards." But that begs the question, because it should be the due diligence of the Ministry of Transportation to make sure that the contracts bid for—that they have adequate provisions and adequate funds and adequate equipment to actually complete the contract. Likewise, if you bid for a government building and your bid comes in at half what your people know it's going to cost to build that building, alarm signs should rise.

There's a total disconnection between the police, who actually close the roads; the contractors; and the MTO. I will give you an example. Right outside my door, we have one of those big interactive signs on Highway 11. Down here, the 400 highway—you know, "Collectors moving slowly"? Ours usually says, "Drive with care." They will close the highway and it will still say, "Drive with care." It won't say, "Highway closed." The trucks will all be stuck on the highway for hours where there are no facilities, and it's already too late to take the cut-off to go to Quebec.

We have a community group called the Northern Safe Roads Coalition. We had a meeting with the police. We're still trying to get a meeting with the local MTO, but I've had several meetings with MTO. They've been good to deal with, my local guys. We asked, "Just for starters, why don't you change that sign?" The police told us, "We don't have access to the sign. We can't change it." "Okay. So why don't the contractors change the sign?" "We don't have access to the sign. The MTO has access to the sign, and we can never get them on the phone."

It might be a half-million-dollar sign on a part of Highway 11 that is closed at least 10 times a year, and it's absolutely useless because there's no coordination. I'm glad the minister is here to hear this, because it's absolutely deplorable.

We have people in towns like Temagami. They have a little volunteer brigade, because when trucks and cars are stopped there for hours—we all have our little blanket pack now, but they have no place to go to the bathroom. They have a little volunteer brigade to help people.

This committee—along with the Auditor General. We have to find a way, because this isn't a little issue. Yesterday, we spent a lot of time and the minister brought a

bill forward on safer roads, on bicycling. I commend him for it. But a big part of safer roads is actually having them clean in the winter. I've lived in northern Ontario my whole life. It hasn't been like that all the time.

One thing: In our riding, if you want to know how safe the roads are, you go on Facebook to the Northern Safe Roads Coalition. They will tell you if the road is closed. I've had it several times that you call 511, "Roads are fine," and they're actually closed. That is a huge problem.

Those are the things that we have to look at, and I'm very proud to be able to stand beside my colleague and support her motion.

Debate deemed adjourned.

JIM FLAHERTY

Mr. John O'Toole: A point of order.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: It's with deep regret today that—I'm a friend of Jim Flaherty, and it has just been announced that he is deceased. On behalf of the Conservative caucus and Tim Hudak, we extend our deepest regrets and deepest sympathy and support to Christine and his family and thank him dearly for all he has contributed. At 64 years of age—it's too young to lose such a wonderful person and leader. Thank you.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I just want to join the member for Durham. Jim was a friend. As many of you know, Jaime Watt and I were business partners, and Jaime was very close.

He was one of Canada's most remarkable public servants, one of our greatest finance ministers, someone who has contributed to the life of Canadians and Ontarians, someone I had huge respect for and had the pleasure to seek his advice from time to time.

To Christine and to the family, this is a terrible loss for all of us.

On behalf of the Liberal Party and the Premier, we express our deepest and most profound condolences to all of you, especially to our friends in the party opposite, to Christine and to her family.

I think that Jim provides a role model for so many of us in public service. I'm sure we'll have time to reflect on his remarkable contributions to our country. Thank you. God bless.

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

Point of order, the member from Windsor–Tecumseh.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Just before I ask for a moment of silence in recognition of the passing of Mr. Flaherty. I didn't know him well. When I was a reporter covering provincial elections or throne speeches, or when visiting ministers would come through, I really enjoyed spending time with Mr. Flaherty. As you know, his personality was effervescent. To me, he was always very friendly, very approachable. I was saddened last year, or whenever it

was, when we first heard that he had a serious health condition. I followed his political career quite astutely, and I'm just shocked. I can't believe the news we just heard here.

If it is in order, I'd would ask that we rise for a moment of silence.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask everyone in the chamber to stand and observe a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: Given the devastating news, and Jim having served in this House in an incredibly positive way, it can't be business as usual. I think we've got to have at least a 15-minute or half-hour recess. It can't be

business as usual. We've got to have at least a recess in respect.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I have a request from the member for unanimous consent for a 20-minute recess. Agreed? Agreed.

The House stands recessed for 20 minutes.

The House recessed from 1424 to 1446.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Having received representation from the House leaders, I presume leave of the House to carry over the private members' business to a later date and that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs adjourn.

This House stands adjourned until 10:30 a.m. on Monday.

The House adjourned at 1446.

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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
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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
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Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
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