



Legislative Assembly
of Ontario

Second Session, 40th Parliament

Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario

Deuxième session, 40^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 28 April 2014

Lundi 28 avril 2014

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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



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

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 28 April 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 28 avril 2014

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm thrilled to introduce to the House today some wonderful people from my riding: Heather Pham, Josh Pham, Tyler Pham and Jordan Pham. They're joined by Rebecca Stein, Heather's sister. We also have the president of OPPA, Jim Christie, and Patrick Armstrong from the Dave Mounsey Memorial Fund.

Hon. David Zimmer: It's my pleasure to introduce Chief Tom Bressette of the Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point First Nation. Ipperwash is located within his First Nation.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I've got a few guests here today from the Canadian Council of Independent Laboratories. I've got president Jeff Pike, executive director Derwyn Reuber, and board members Al Nathoo, Michael Maher and Stephen Walker. Please welcome them to the Legislature today, and don't forget the reception this afternoon.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I just have two brief announcements. I would like to welcome my friend from Elmira, Ontario: Ann Kendall, who is the mother of my legislative assistant, Shannon Zimmerman. I'd also like to just recognize for the House today that my friend from Windsor-Tecumseh is a grandfather to Katana. His daughter just had a girl. I want to congratulate them.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome two fine gentlemen from the region of Waterloo: Michael Brattman from Erb and Erb, and Doug Heaman from Advocate Insurance—two insurance brokers today.

As well, Ann, welcome also from Elmira.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I rise to introduce Mr. Chris Floyd, who is president, and Mr. Randy Carroll, the CEO, of the Insurance Brokers Association of Ontario, who are here today along with brokers' delegates from right across Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Mario Sergio: I'm delighted to have a gait and mobility consultant specialist in the House watching the proceedings. I hope that he's going to have a good time, Speaker: Rennie Terbogt.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I'd like to welcome to the gallery today several people from the Northumberland Child Development Centre. We have Clare Paterson, Lisa

Kirbie, Wayne and Robert Smith, among others up here. I want to welcome them here to Queen's Park.

Hon. John Milloy: I have a big group from my riding today. First of all, I'd like to introduce Mary Wright and Benjamin and Murray Schwartzentruber, who are with us for the day.

Also, Mr. Speaker, for the first time in 10 years, my wife, Sara Pendergast, and my eight-year-old son, John, are here today to watch the festivities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the member from Oshawa we have, to represent page Ashley Bowes, her mother, Katherine Bowes, here.

On behalf of the Minister of Rural Affairs: Page captain Kaia Douglas's mother, Yvonne Leicht; father, Cameron Douglas; brother Jake Douglas; grandmother Janet Douglas; and grandmother Betty Leicht. Welcome to Queen's Park.

For the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: Page captain Thomas Brassard—his mother, Chris Brassard, and father, Mark Brassard, are here. Welcome to Queen's Park.

We welcome all our guests. Thank you for being here.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, my question is to the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, every morning when I wake up I ask myself a question: What can we do to create more jobs—more opportunities with better take-home pay for Ontarians, those who are out of work and those who are struggling to get by on a part-time job? On this side of the House, we believe that the first step towards providing a more prosperous province of Ontario with better jobs is to balance the books, to spend within our means, not to put more debt on the back of the next generation.

We're concerned that you're going in the opposite direction, that you have the belief on that side of the House that you're going to try to spend your way out of deficit.

I have a document here, which my colleague Mr. Fedeli from Nipissing found called Fiscal Plan Information. It appears to be a cabinet briefing from February 13, 2013, which indicates that the Liberal plan to balance the budget, according to finance officials, is a sham. Was the minister briefed on this document?

Interjections.

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

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Before I respond to the question, I do want to extend my condolences to the family of Herb Gray. For four decades, Herb Gray dedicated his life to public service. He served as a minister under three Prime Ministers, a Deputy Prime Minister himself. On behalf of the Liberal caucus, and I think all members of this House, we extend our condolences to the family of Herb Gray.

Speaker, to the question: This is a clear division between the Conservative Party and the Liberal Party. The Conservative Party thinks that they can cut their way to prosperity. On this side, we believe in investing in people. We believe in investing in infrastructure.

We've seen this before. Let's just remind ourselves how many jobs were lost the last time they had the opportunity to do that. It's not just how—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Of course, we echo condolences to the family of Herb Gray, a great Canadian, a great public official.

We also extend our condolences to the family of Kimm Fletcher, who, sadly, Speaker, passed away. My colleague Mr. Chudleigh and my health critic, Christine Elliott, were fighting hard for Ms. Fletcher.

I'm going to pass on, through one of the pages, if I could, the document, Minister, that you would have been briefed on. Again, it's confidential advice to cabinet from February 13th. I refer you to page 9. Page 9 in this document indicates that you had no plan to balance the budget. The numbers are no more than a fiction.

Page 9 also will tell you that the finance officials—this is not us, not Mr. Fedeli, although he would tell you the same thing—indicated it was going to take, potentially, another six years to balance the budget.

1040

Could the minister confirm that is actually your plan: another six years to balance our budget?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: If the Leader of the Opposition is sincere when he says he wakes up every morning wondering how he can create more jobs, he's demonstrating that in a pretty bizarre way, because his promise is that he wants to fire 10,000 education workers—gone; fire 2,000 health care workers—gone. He wants to cancel full-day kindergarten. He wants to end the 30% tuition grant. He doesn't want to move forward with the investments we're making for children or people with developmental disabilities. He wants to cancel job-creating partnerships—for example, OpenText: 1,200 jobs.

The Leader of the Opposition's jobs plan is to kill jobs. Our jobs plan is to invest in jobs. We are on track to balance, but we will not do that at the expense of the people of Ontario.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Minister, I think I've been absolutely clear each and every day. I've got a plan to create a million good jobs in the province of Ontario—good, solid, middle-class jobs. If the minister wants to know more about my plan, I'm glad to send a copy across the way. Again, Speaker, I think I've been very clear.

The concern I have is that the minister has been briefed. The Premier and the finance minister had these documents over a year ago. He buried them. Mr. Fedeli, the member for Nipissing, has done a good job at uncovering them. This is serious advice from finance officials who have said that you have no plan to balance. In fact, we're risking another six years. These are finance officials who brief you, the Premier and the finance minister.

I worry that when you're using these types of fiscal sleights of hand, these card tricks that undermine confidence in our province, people are watching: job creators, investors.

Minister, if you have no plan to create jobs in the province of Ontario, but put us further in debt, isn't it time to change the team that leads this province—

Interjections.

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

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: People won't need a great memory to remember that the last time they had the chance, they actually hid the deficit from the people of this province: \$5.6 billion. That deficit was hidden from the people of this province.

We are going to deliver a budget on Thursday. It will be a budget that invests in people, invests in prosperity and invests in infrastructure. The party opposite last time filled in a hole for the Eglinton Crosstown subway. I just hope they're not planning to halt production at the Cambridge Memorial Hospital.

FISCAL ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, it is telling when the Deputy Premier won't even come close to answering a very direct question. She won't acknowledge if she was briefed on this document, as the Premier and the finance minister were. I suspect you were. It is a confidence-in-cabinet document that we've now made public.

I'd refer the Deputy Premier to page 5 of the document that she read at least last year, if not more recently. Page 5, also from finance officials, indicates that the economy has still not yet regained the strength of pre-2008. There are fewer jobs relative to population and more unemployed in our province, and per capita output of the economy remains below the pre-recession level.

When I hear the Premier and the finance minister, they say the opposite. Quite frankly, based on this track record—the gas plants scandal—I believe the finance officials. I think they're on the money here. The problem is, you're ignoring them.

Do you agree or disagree with Ministry of Finance officials that we're still behind where we were as recently as 2008?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are on target to balance. What I can tell you is that we have implemented—
Interjections.

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

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we're moving forward with 80% of Don Drummond's recommendations. We're the first government since 1996 to actually reduce spending. We've got the leanest government in the country, with the lowest program spending per capita.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, come to order.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said, there is a stark difference between their plan and our plan. For them, the holy grail is to balance the books as quickly as possible, no matter the cost to the people of this province.

We are committed to investing in people. We are committed to making those investments that will create a prosperous economy for all.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'll point out a very stark difference. The minister uses that term. Minister, as you know, every province and the federal government will be in balance before the province of Ontario. Six of those provinces and the federal government are already there. Talk about a stark difference. We all were hit by the same international circumstances in 2008, but everybody else is back on track.

Another stark difference: We will balance the budget to pave the way for job creation and put people back to work in the province of Ontario. You're going to spend us into bankruptcy.

Let me make this point. Again, these are finance officials who are pointing out that your job numbers are not even above where we were six years ago—six years ago, going backwards—so tell me who's right and who's wrong. The finance minister and the Premier say one thing; the finance officials say the opposite. My money is on the objective advice of senior civil servants.

Why aren't you putting the facts on the table? Why won't you admit they're right, you're wrong, and it's time for new leadership?

Interjections.

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

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's very important that the people in this province understand what's at stake. The Leader of the Opposition has made it very clear that his only priority is to get to deficit—I can only assume that means he will halt the infrastructure projects that are moving forward, including Cambridge Memorial Hospital. I can only assume that means he will not sup-

port increased support for families caring for people with developmental disabilities.

We are moving forward with a plan that creates a bright future for the people of this province. We are not going to accept the slash-and-burn, get-to-balance, right-to-work-for-less attitude of that party. It's not the right way forward. We will continue to do what we know needs to be done.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, it's true: I have a plan to put a million people back to work in the province of Ontario, with less debt, affordable hydro and lower taxes. The plan is going to work, and I'm ready to put that before taxpayers to decide if they want to stay on the current path or forge boldly forward to a more prosperous province.

Let me make one last point on the document that you were briefed upon. I think what's important in the document—confidential advice to cabinet—Fiscal Plan Information, was that it ties the lack of job creation with the fact that you're increasing debt in the province of Ontario, and it's an important economic lesson that the Liberal Party seems to miss.

We just fundamentally believe that if you spend within your means, just like families do every day, you send a signal of confidence that Ontario is a place to be. And make no mistake, we are bound and determined to put less debt on the back of the next generation—and more jobs—on the path to prosperity. That is a clear difference. We understand that. We say let's get on with it. Why won't you?

Interjections.

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

Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, with respect, the Leader of the Opposition doesn't have a plan. What he has is a sound bite, and anyone who has looked at the plan very quickly discovers it is no plan at all. It is a sound bite and only a sound bite.

Let me repeat the jobs that he has already committed to cutting: 10,000 education workers, 2,000 health care workers—and ending the 30%-off tuition grant. He's not supporting families with developmental disabilities. I'm just curious about whether cancelling the expansion of Joe Brant hospital is in your plan as well.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: My question this morning is to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. Good morning, Minister. Thank you for acknowledging the birth of my granddaughter Katana.

The minister has said that as soon as he found out that the girders on the Herb Gray Parkway were faulty, he acted immediately. Does the minister still stand by that statement?

1050

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It's interesting that the gentleman opposite put out a statement, but he left one page out of all the documents he released. He neglected to share with the media this one note: "Although the note reflects that the minister's office staff were present in meetings, it should be noted that discussions at those meetings focused on project milestones and evolving issues related to the project agreement. There was not sufficient information during the time periods referenced in the note to make definitive recommendations to the minister or his staff regarding the safety and durability of the girders. Further, the minister's office staff were briefed on the safety and durability issues regarding girders on the Herb Gray Parkway on June 14, 2013, and the minister was briefed on June 19, 2013," for the first time.

That's the piece of paper you kind of forgot.

The other reason is, I actually heard about this outside of government in the month previous, and when I researched it, I addressed this with my deputy minister in the first week of June, which is when she organized the review and discovered the—

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: According to documents released through a freedom-of-information request, both the Office of the Premier and the office of the minister knew the girders were not up to code and posed a threat to safety before they were installed.

The minister's office learned about the substandard girders in December 2012. High-level, biweekly meetings were held afterwards to discuss them. The meetings included senior staff within the minister's office, and as early as April the executive director of policy in the Premier's office was sent the minutes of these meetings.

Is the minister saying that senior staff in his own office, the same senior staff when Minister Chiarelli held the file, did not tell him about public safety concerns on the largest infrastructure project in Ontario's history, which he's responsible for?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm saying even more than that. Not only is that wrong, it was my office that first heard of the problem from people outside of government. When I went to my deputy minister in the first week of June, she told me she was unaware of the problem, as was the Deputy Minister of Infrastructure. It never actually landed. As a result of my inquiries, a briefing was held for my staff on the 14th.

I'll even go further for the honourable member. If you actually go through the paperwork, you will find that the public administration was divided about whether there was a safety issue until late August, when I ordered independent destructive testing and it was revealed that one of the girders was faulty. That was the last week of August, Mr. Speaker.

There's your paper trail. If you want to tell the whole paper trail, then I think, just for integrity reasons, you would release all the information.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Again to the minister: We know that senior advisers from the minister's office were in meetings that discussed the problem girders and that senior advisers in the Premier's office were being sent minutes of the biweekly girder meetings as early as April and possibly even earlier.

Does the minister expect the people of this province to believe that senior advisers or the Premier's senior advisers didn't alert him to a potential scandal surrounding faulty girders being installed on this project?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I have respect for the member opposite, and I think the truth matters, Mr. Speaker. The note, which I have here and will gladly send over to him, clearly and explicitly says that any discussions prior to June 14th were not about safety issues. They were about commercial applications of the project and had nothing to do with safety issues, and the member knows that.

The member also knows that it wasn't until the last week of August that there was even a consensus amongst public officials that there in fact was a safety problem, and it wasn't until I ordered independent testing in late July that resulted in the girders being destroyed that we actually discovered that.

My question is: Where was the opposition? I was doing your job. The member from Windsor West raised this issue before, and it sounds like the member for Tecumseh is trying to play catch-up.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've got it.

The member for Windsor–Tecumseh.

Interjection.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you. Somebody's got to do the job of the government.

Speaker, in a July 21, 2013, confidential memo to the Premier on the girder issue, it states: "There has been some chatter about this situation in Windsor construction circles and we understand that the Windsor Star may be coming out with a story on this matter this week. It may break during the Premier's visit to Windsor on July 22."

Minister, why did this government fail to take action for months on public safety and allow the faulty girders to be installed, and only act when a scandal was about to break that could put five Liberal seats at risk in impending by-elections?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm going to try this again, really slowly, Mr. Speaker.

The paper trail is very clear, as are the discussions. There were active conversations about this project and any other. To be very clear, there was no discussion—no word, iota of discussion—of safety issues or briefings until June 19 with politicians, because I was the first one.

The reason those discussions happened is because I heard rumours in May that there may be a problem. I did

not hear those rumours inside government. I heard it from meeting with stakeholder groups who asked me to investigate. The first week of June, I went to my deputy ministers, both of them, and asked them if they knew anything. They both said clearly that they were not aware of any particular safety concerns. Both of them undertook a review and, two weeks later, I was briefed that the things I had heard may have merit.

Finally, we had an independent review which tried to decide whether or not those safety issues were consequential, and that was very public.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: We know from internal correspondence that this government didn't act on public safety concerns for seven months after it knew girders on the Herb Gray Parkway were faulty. This government only acted after political staff found out that the Windsor Star was asking questions about girder safety and the Premier might be confronted with a question on her scheduled visit to Windsor.

Had the Windsor Star not been investigating these girders, would these unsafe girders continue to be quietly installed to this very day?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, both of us come from a municipal background, and in a municipal background you do not attribute motive. As a matter of fact, you're thrown out of the council chamber for attributing motive. I'll just say I had almost no weekends away with my family through this period of time because I was working on this through the entire summer.

As late as August, senior officials were not convinced that there were safety concerns, including the engineering—it was only when we did the destructive testing. But, Mr. Speaker, the member has the note from the officials that he did not release that tells the public that what you're saying is so inaccurate, it bears no resemblance to the actual events.

If you want to read this document where the officials say, prior to June, there was no—zero—not a word of discussion—

Interjection.

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

Final supplementary.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you, Speaker.

The Premier, when she was Minister of Transportation, awarded the project agreement for the Windsor–Essex parkway through alternate financing procurement, a fancy name for privatizing public projects.

According to internal documents, this government prioritized the Premier's contract with a private consortium over the ability for MTO to enforce public safety rules. Why did this government set up a project agreement that threatened public safety?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: It is, first, patently inaccurate. I don't want to use unparliamentary language, but there's another word that's floating around in my head, Mr. Speaker.

The reality is, there were absolutely no concerns around safety through that particular period of time. The first person to raise a safety issue at the ministerial level was myself, based on concerns that were given.

I will not read into the record again the bureaucrat's note, the official's note on this.

Mr. Speaker, the member has been given a full and honest answer. I've always respected him as a person with integrity.

1100

I would like to point out that all of the documentation shows that the first safety discussion with me was on June 19, and I took more than strong action and more than immediately.

POWER PLANTS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Acting Premier. This week, the gas plant committee, in the justice committee, has the opportunity to sit on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings. We have requested that the former government House leader and the former transition chair to Premier Wynne testify. Monique Smith, however, is unwilling to do that, and we are experiencing very much difficulty trying to have her come into the committee.

Let me be very clear. The former government House leader would have known about Peter Faist's contract with the Liberal caucus bureau, and Peter Wallace said and testified under oath that Monique Smith, as the transition team chair, would have known about the gas plant emails and passwords.

So given that she is a crucial piece of the gas plant puzzle, will you compel Monique Smith to testify? You've got her appointed to a government job; bring her back to Ontario and have her—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Cambridge will come to order.

Before we proceed, it's always helpful to address your questions to the Speaker.

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader.

Interjection.

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

Government House leader?

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member is wrong. Ms. Smith was asked to appear in front of the committee. She has agreed to appear in front of the committee. She has given several dates to the Clerk, and I am advised, in fact, that she's able to attend. The week of May 5 or May 12 have been two timelines that she has been given. I think members would appreciate that Ms. Smith is actual-

ly located in Washington, D.C., and has to make travel arrangements.

I would remind the honourable member that we asked the Leader of the Opposition to appear in front of the committee. It went on for week after week after week after week, and he's in the same building. And when it comes to the Conservative candidates—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Rural Affairs is not being helpful. The member from Leeds–Grenville is not helpful. The member from Kitchener–Conestoga is not helpful. The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex is not helpful.

Mr. Michael Harris: I didn't say anything.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You just did.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: When it comes to the Conservative candidates, the same ones who said “Elect us and we'll get rid of the gas plant”—we're still waiting on them. In fact, we've asked one of them over 16 times to appear.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I would like to remind the government House leader that it is his party under an OPP investigation, not mine. It was their former House leader and their former transition team chair who were responsible for dealing with the gas plant scandal during a certain period of time, not the leader of the official opposition.

It is his party that sent Monique Smith to Washington during the OPP investigation and the search-and-seizure warrant, where she is outside the Speaker's jurisdiction for a Speaker's warrant.

I ask him again—we are sitting this week. Monique Smith is key and pivotal to getting the answers that the committee needs in order to complete its work. Will you compel her on her government job to come back to Ontario this week and appear before the committee on Thursday morning? Yes or no?

Interjections.

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

Government House leader?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, Mr. Speaker, the honourable member is wrong.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That will just be the end of it. You asked the question; listen to the answer.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs is not helpful. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, second time.

Carry on.

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member is wrong. She stood up and said that Ms. Smith will not appear in front of the committee. She will appear in front of the committee. She is travelling related to her job—a very important job—and she has given a series of dates over

the next several weeks, in fact, when she will appear in front of the committee.

Where she is also wrong is when she notes Peter Wallace and his testimony. In fact, what Mr. Wallace said is that he did not brief the transition team on this matter.

So two strikes, Mr. Speaker, and I think she's out.

Again, we are looking for the PC candidates to come forward. We are looking for them to explain their policy analysis and their costing.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: My question is to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure.

Despite the minister's office knowing the safety risks, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure allowed faulty girders to be installed and construction to proceed for months, and only took action to halt construction on July 21, 2013.

My question is this: What prompted the minister to take action in July?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: What prompted me to take action was—when I became minister, which was only a couple of months before that, I invited all of the stakeholders into my office. I started meeting with all of the construction parties in Windsor, London and Ottawa. Mr. Speaker, you always hear people raising concerns. All the people who didn't get the contracts complain about the people who did, so you have to take a lot of what you hear with a grain of salt. But what I did start hearing was repeated concerns about the process and the installation of girders. When I validated that that was, in fact, a concern that had some legitimacy and was different than the background noise one hears about in the construction industry, I called in the CEOs of four different construction companies and asked them for their advice.

Based on the advice of different individuals, I went to my deputy ministers in the first week of June. Both deputy ministers said they had not heard of any safety concerns nor had staff raised them with them. Based on that, I asked them to investigate. That's what happened.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: Speaker, the minister's office knew by December 2012 that girders to be installed were not up to safety standards. During a February 14, 2013, meeting in the minister's office, girders were on the agenda, and the minister's office staff confirmed that they would not be intervening or speaking to the issue directly. The minister says he didn't find out about the girder safety issue until May 2013.

Is the minister saying that senior staff in his own office, who knew about girder safety concerns for months, never spoke to him about it at all?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I am saying much more than that. I'm saying they did not know about it. The Deputy Minister of Infrastructure and the Deputy Minister of Transportation both did not know about it. As a matter of fact, after I raised this issue with my officials in June, I

had dissenting views in the ministries, where people felt—still, as late as August—that there were no safety concerns.

It was not until the destructive testing which I ordered, quite frankly and quite assertively, in late August that they were convinced. You've heard their testimony. If you look at all the paper, you'll know that.

Both you and I, the member opposite, have worked in universities. We know the importance of searching for the truth and getting accurate information, and not, I hope, when we get into politics, losing the rigour of that review and evaluation.

I am quite happy to provide you with any documentation, but I will tell you there was not even consensus that there was a safety problem until the last week of August.

HERITAGE CONSERVATION

Mr. John Fraser: My question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Minister, in the coming months, from May to October, communities will open the doors of some of Ontario's most intriguing and charming heritage sites, as part of a great program called Doors Open Ontario. This provides all Ontarians with a chance to visit many of the heritage sites and heritage homes in our province.

There are many sites in my hometown of Ottawa to visit, especially the Billings Estate National Historic Site in my riding of Ottawa South.

Doors Open Ontario is a great initiative of the Ontario Heritage Trust, as it's important to remember our past to appreciate the present.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please tell us more about Doors Open Ontario?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the member from Ottawa South for asking the question. He is a passionate protector of our heritage, and I want to thank him for that.

Speaker, in 2002, the Ontario Heritage Trust launched Doors Open Ontario, the first province-wide event of its kind in our country.

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In the last 12 years, great success: Over five million visits have been made to heritage sites participating in this exciting initiative. It has grown to over 55 events in 170 communities, with over 1,200 sites and 500,000 annual visits as of last year—and it will keep growing.

Residents and visitors are invited to discover first-hand our province's hidden heritage treasures, some of which have never been open to the public. Best of all, admission is free.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you, Minister, for that response.

The Ontario Heritage Trust's efforts to organize and support such a wonderful program for all Ontarians to participate in is commendable. In fact, through Doors Open Ontario, visitors will learn that the Billings Estate

in my riding of Ottawa South is Ottawa's oldest wood-frame house and was built between 1827 and 1829.

The Ontario Heritage Trust's most recognizable symbols are the blue-and-gold plaques that have been unveiled at over 1,200 sites in our province, which tell the stories of the people, places and events that helped shape Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, again, through you to the minister: Could he please tell us about the important work the Ontario Heritage Trust engages in?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you for the question again. Since 2003, our government has invested \$74 million through the Ontario Heritage Trust to support and protect heritage across the province. Some of their other programs include:

—the provincial register program, with over 6,300 bylaws and 15,000 properties entered from heritage conservation districts;

—Trails Open Ontario, which provides province-wide profiles for 48 partner organizations and opportunities for the public to explore trails during 56 events in 54 communities; and

—to coincide with the World War I centennial this year, on February 14 we launched Ontario Heritage Week at CFB Borden. Lest we forget.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mrs. Jane McKenna: My question is for the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, last week, the Ontario PC Party learned that Patrick Dillon of the Working Families Coalition is preparing a lawsuit against Her Majesty's loyal opposition for alleged defamation. That letter coincides with your action against our party leader, Tim Hudak, and the member from Nepean–Carleton.

Working Families spends millions of union dollars on personal attacks and misrepresenting our party's policies. Isn't this just another example of Working Families, a well-connected special interest group, working hand in glove with the Liberal government to silence the opposition?

Interjections.

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

I'd like to provide the member with an opportunity to tie that into government policy or to maybe reword that so that the government can answer a question that's based on—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. I'm quite concerned with the personal conversations that are going on while I'm trying to do a ruling. While it's not considered unparliamentary, it sure is disrespectful.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't need the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs injecting his own wisdom any time.

I'll give you an opportunity to fix that question, please.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'll retract with, Patrick Dillon was appointed by your government to the Ontario College of Trades and multiple agencies.

Interjections.

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

That's not the depth of the question. The question is about a lawsuit. The question is about that circumstance. I'd like you to see if you can do that. If not, you'll have to redirect it. Try again.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: How many agencies does Patrick Dillon sit on?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That's appropriate. Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: That's an interesting question: "How many agencies does Pat Dillon sit on?" Mr. Speaker, I know he sits on the referral board for the College of Trades.

I think that Ontarians get tired when politicians start raising individuals in the House when they're not in a position to be able to defend—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: He doesn't know what his job is. How much more pathetic can you be?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe North, come to order, please.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't need assistance on this side.

Finish, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, if my memory serves me right, as I recall, the first people to appoint Pat Dillon to anything around here were the PC Party.

It's unfortunate. When people dedicate their lives to public service, when people dedicate their lives to serving on boards and committees, they really deserve better than that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: You didn't answer the question: How many?

Acting Premier, Ornge might have created untold suffering and wasted billions if the member from Newmarket–Aurora hadn't doggedly unearthed truths that you want to bury. Today Ornge is the subject of an OPP investigation. Taxpayers might have believed the Liberals' \$40-million estimated cost to cancel two gas plants had the member from North Bay not demanded an accurate account. Today we know the true cost was \$1.1 billion. Your government's evasions have led to a second OPP investigation.

Our questions are serious. These lawsuits are frivolous. What makes you think the courts will back your schemes to silence opposition critics and stop us from telling the truth?

Interjections.

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

Given the circumstances that we are faced with, I think I'm going to allow that question to be asked as a question of government, whether or not they believe that what their—

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: In free speech?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean–Carleton is very close.

So I'm going to allow that to happen.

Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Well, Mr. Speaker, asking a question about health care in a supplementary to a question that involves something completely different kind of puts a minister at a bit of a disadvantage, because I'm not the Minister of Health.

I'll respond to this very curtly and very shortly, referring to the first question. It's very easy: People don't have to worry about others anywhere being concerned about lawsuits if they simply tell the truth.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the Minister of Transportation and infrastructure. Despite the fact that biweekly meetings on the girder issue were occurring within his office from December 2012 onward, which included his political staff, his chief of staff, the deputy minister, deputy minister's staff, and with minutes that were forwarded to the Premier's office, and despite the fact that a decision was made in the minister's own office on February 14 not to take action on safety issues surrounding these girders, is the minister telling this Legislature that not one single member of his political staff briefed the minister or sought guidance from the minister on this public safety issue, the biggest infrastructure project the minister was responsible for?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes, that's exactly what I'm saying and that's exactly the truth, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to be very clear about this: There have been discussions about every single project ongoing. There were no discussions at all with me, and when I asked my deputy in early June if there had been any issues with the girders requiring safety or concern, there wasn't.

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When I did become aware of it, I took extremely strong action, including an independent review, hiring independent legal counsel. As a matter of fact, much of that work going on with the review of those events still continues in looking at how to improve oversight on projects, and this government will be advancing ways to do that.

The public safety concern is always number one. That's why we panelled the leading engineers in the country. That's why we did an independent review. That's why there were two studies that were done. The government acted once it understood the situation—

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Is it true that the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure tried to quietly

sweep the issue under the carpet and allow substandard girders to be installed, only to stop the installation when the Windsor Star was going to expose the safety concerns?

L'hon. Glen R. Murray: Probablement, c'est plus facile que je réponde en français parce que l'autre côté ne comprend pas l'anglais. Je vais expliquer très lentement. Il y a des réunions chaque deux semaines. Ce n'est pas sur le sujet des « girders », que les « girders » sont saufs ou non. Ça, c'est très peu.

I'll try it now in English. There were biweekly meetings. They were not about the safety of the girders. There is a public inquiry, two supplementary reports. There is more paper on this. Prior to June, there were no discussions in my office relating to safety of girders. There were many discussions about girders biweekly, because it's a big project and it would be pretty hard to go through years without talking about the project.

Mais, en fait, j'espère que quand je parle français c'est plus clair qu'en anglais.

NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATIONS

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Ontario has more than 50,000 not-for-profit organizations that deliver vital services and help build prosperous and vibrant communities.

In my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, Agincourt Community Services Association is a not-for-profit organization that provides quality services for children, youth, homeless and newcomer Canadians.

I know our government recognizes the contributions of the Ontario not-for-profit sector, and our government and the not-for-profit sector share similar goals. Over the past few years, our government has launched several initiatives to build better understanding of the government in terms of strengthening the relationship with this sector.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please share with the House the information about the volunteer strategy consultations? What is the goal, and who is participating?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the hard-working member from Scarborough–Agincourt for that excellent question.

I really enjoy this aspect of the ministry because I get to see what Ontarians can do at their best. The not-for-profit sector is filled with individuals who embody true, active citizenship.

In 2011, our government released the Partnership Project report. It included six key recommendations to create a stronger relationship between the not-for-profit sector and government. In this spirit, we've launched the Ontario Volunteer Strategy consultations. Consultations have taken place in Ajax, Thunder Bay, Mississauga, Ottawa, Markham, London and Toronto.

Consultation participants were not only from the not-for-profit sector but also from the private sector and

education. We spoke to other ministries and other provinces. In fact, we consulted with other countries.

We know that the not-for-profit sector here in this province is filled with individuals who invest their time, energy and skill, and we are proud of our not-for-profit volunteers here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to thank the minister for his response and for helping to build important social infrastructure in our province.

Through the 2010 Partnership Project round-table discussions, almost all of the non-profit participants told us that they often had some difficulty accessing relevant government information. This information is important for their operations, administration and annual charitable status reporting.

I also know that not-for-profits need information that is easily available and comprehensive when it comes to government programs, resources and funding opportunities.

I know the minister has been working very hard and passionately over the past year on this file. Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please tell the House more about the initiatives that our government has undertaken to support the not-for-profit sector in Ontario?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Again, I'd like to thank the member for that great question, and I do have some great news. Along with our partners in ServiceOntario, we're putting the final touches on an online channel for the not-for-profit sector that will provide easy access to information on funding, regulations and legal information.

I had a great time earlier this month taking part in the launch of the province's Pan/Parapan Am volunteer legacy. We've created a certification program that recognizes skills acquired through volunteer placement, as well as a first-stop gateway for volunteers looking for opportunities in the games.

Additionally, we're working with other ministries to find ways to reduce the administrative burden and ensure that government initiatives consider the business needs for the not-for-profit sector. For example, we're participating in the government's Open for Business strategy in the not-for-profit sector and various ministries to find ways to simplify the transfer payment process for not-for-profit agencies.

Mr. Speaker, our government prioritizes what's most important to our citizens: the right to the best health care and education. But we also know that we have to make investments in the not-for-profit sector and social enterprise, and we're proud of the work we're doing on this side of the House.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is to the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, over the week-end Ontario residents learned that your government gave the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, the

Registered Practical Nurses Association of Ontario, and Working Families Coalition member union the Ontario Nurses' Association \$40 million, supposedly to assist nurses your government is firing to get retrained and find new employment. This money was given using an extremely unorthodox trust arrangement, which allows two of the nursing groups to keep any unspent money. In other words, you created an incentive for them to not spend this money on front-line nurses, and, Minister, they didn't. In fact, they only spent \$236,000 on front-line nursing jobs, but racked up \$6 million in expenses.

Acting Premier, what are you doing right now to get the \$40 million back to the people of this province?

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

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

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker, and I appreciate the opportunity to respond to that allegation.

I think it's important to remember where we were back in 2005. Six thousand nurses had been fired by the previous government and, in fact, their plan is to do the same again, if they have that chance. The nursing workforce was unstable, and I think we would all agree there was an instability there that was resulting in nurses leaving Ontario. Hospitals were running massive deficits. They were projecting that they would need to lay off 750 nurses.

This fund was created, and it is a protected fund. That money must be used to retrain nurses who are moving from one area of specialty to another. That fund is protected.

It turns out that the need that was at that time expected to be used within a year—Speaker, it turns out that need was not there, because of other changes we have made. I'll speak more to it in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Acting Premier, the most generous possible interpretation of the Nursing Retention Fund boondoggle is that the RNAO, RPNAO and ONA are utterly incompetent project managers and cannot be trusted to serve as stewards of taxpayer money.

Acting Premier, according to public accounts, volume 3 from 2012-13, the RNAO and RPNAO received over \$18 million of taxpayers' money combined, ostensibly to run various programs.

Given their terrible performance with the Nursing Retention Fund, Acting Premier, would your government immediately freeze the flow of taxpayers' money to the RNAO and RPNAO, and order immediate value-for-money audits of all these programs?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: If anyone had any doubt that the attack on nurses would continue, that doubt is now erased, Speaker. I think it's outrageous that the party opposite would attack those nurses who are on the front

lines of our health care system, caring for the people in our system.

Just to be clear on the Nursing Retention Fund, I have met with the management committee. I have asked them to come back. I met with them in January. They have until the end of May to come back with an idea on how that money can be used to support the transformation in our health care system that is now under way.

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On this side of the House, we value our nurses. We understand we are in a time of transition. That's a difficult transition. We are there to support our nurses as we move services from acute-care hospitals into the community.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Infrastructure. According to the Premier's own press release during the Liberal leadership race, she bragged that as Minister of Transportation, she oversaw the construction of the Windsor-Essex parkway. The current minister, in July, wrote of the agreement negotiated—and I quote you directly from your own writing: "We may have compromised our ability to enforce the law by negotiating our authority away."

Why did the minister fail to act when he knew that he was compromising public safety on the Herb Gray Parkway by negotiating away any kind of authority you had?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I'm going to read very slowly again from the note, the one piece of paper that the members opposite didn't want to have the public see: "Minister's office ... staff were first briefed on the safety and durability issues regarding girders on the Herb Gray Parkway on June 14, 2013, and the minister was briefed on June 19, 2013."

This is a piece of paper written in the file by officials, independently of any politician or minister, to make it very clear that all the other references to the Herb Gray Parkway were not discussions about the girders. I know that fact is unpleasant and uncomfortable for the third party, but it is a fact that is really pretty hard to discuss.

As we went through the review over the summer and we looked at who was overseeing this project, a lot of decisions were made that caused me concern, which led me to the independent review, including the negotiation of the project agreement. That is all well documented, but that is all long after June.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: This minister wrote—and I quote you again—"We may have compromised our ability to enforce the law by negotiating our authority away." You wrote that yourself.

Documents released through freedom of information repeatedly show the Ministry of Transportation being critical of the project agreement because it does not allow the MTO to exercise its role and responsibilities as the legislated road authority and puts the public interest at risk.

Why did the minister hide the fact he knew that the project agreement on the Herb Gray Parkway put the safety of people in this province at risk?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, there is a review going on right now of the AFP process—as you probably know, because we've discussed this before—on how we can improve it, because it's a new and innovative project, and when we do new and innovative things, we review them.

There is a dispute resolution process in there. It was something that I had commented on, the entire time I was minister. That is a full stop. It is not relating to the issues that the member is confusing it with.

I first raised this issue in early June with my deputy. My deputy said very clearly to me that no specific issues had been raised around the girders' safety with her. I went to the deputy of infrastructure. I asked the same question; he told me the same thing. I asked them to review. On June 19, I got a briefing based on that review—

Interjection.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: —and they discovered the same issues that the member is now making reference to. I think that's clear.

J'espère que ce n'est pas nécessaire de répéter en français une autre fois, mais je choisis une autre langue si c'est plus clair—

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

FIREFIGHTING

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. Speaker, every member in this House knows how donations make a big difference. Ontarians contribute generously to a variety of causes. Their donations can do anything from feeding an empty stomach to saving a life. Without the thoughtful contributions of countless Ontarians, so many would do without. I've seen this generosity extended in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood.

As a province, we do our best to help those in need and to extend that help as far as our reach can go, including the global community. I understand that the government of Ontario recently donated firefighting equipment to the Dominican Republic. Speaker, will the minister inform this House and residents in my riding about this important initiative?

Hon. John Milloy: I want to thank the member for the question. It was through a surplus assets distribution program at Ontario Shared Services that the Ontario government was able to donate surplus firefighting equipment to the Dominican Republic.

Ontario Shared Services first received a request from Firefighters Without Borders Canada in January. This is a registered charity whose goal is to assist emergency services worldwide.

Working with Firefighters Without Borders Canada, Ontario Shared Services identified about 270 coats, 282 pants, 46 boots and 42 helmets that will be donated to the Dominican Republic to help fight fires. These items come from the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, fire protection services in Thunder Bay. Firefighters Without Borders Canada is in the process of shipping them to the Dominican Republic.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you to the Minister of Government Services for that helpful update. I commend the minister and the government for their generosity, and Firefighters Without Borders Canada for all the great work they do around the world.

The Ontario government's commitment to helping its neighbours around the world is admirable, as is the active role Ontario plays in the global community, supporting those in need.

Here at home, we appreciate the hard work of the Toronto Fire Services in Scarborough–Guildwood. Stations 231 and 234 are in my riding, providing comfort and security to our residents.

I know that this donation of firefighting equipment will help save the lives of Dominican firefighters and the people they protect. Speaker, I have heard of similar donations to countries around the world. It's a wonderful way to help those in need. Minister, have other provinces in Canada made similar donations?

Hon. John Milloy: I'm pleased to say that Ontario is not the only province to donate firefighting goods to countries in need. Through partnerships with Firefighters Without Borders Canada, New Brunswick has donated approximately 60 sets of firefighting gear to date. British Columbia has donated eight pallets of firefighting gear, and Quebec has two departments that are also making donations.

We certainly recognize, here in Ontario, the great impact of such generosity and know that by combining with other provinces, our impact can be even greater. Programs such as this exist so that surplus assets are not thrown away when others can make use of them.

Recognizing the needs of others, such as the Dominican Republic, can help save lives. We are proud to help the Dominican Republic, and we are grateful for our partnership with Firefighters Without Borders Canada.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: My question is to the Minister of Education. The Northumberland Child Development Centre has operated in my riding for over two decades and has always had an excellent record of service and care. They have built trusting relationships with the families they serve and have helped the children they work with take great strides in becoming valued members in our community.

These relationships are vital to the development of these individuals, and jeopardizing those established rela-

tionships would be hugely detrimental to their progress. Minister, would you agree with this?

Hon. Liz Sandals: One of the things that we do to help support child care—and I take it that this is related to a child care question. One of the things that we do to help support special-needs children in child care is to provide funding for special-needs resourcing, but the funding for special-needs resourcing is actually managed by the local service manager, because in fact money for child care flows not directly from the Ministry of Education to the child care operator. It flows from the Ministry of Education to the municipal service manager, and it's actually the municipal service manager that makes all decisions about which agency requires various services.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: Back to the minister. This government can waste billions of dollars on gas plant scandals, Ornge and eHealth, which have led to several OPP investigations, but when it comes to the reallocation of funds, your government has attacked our most vulnerable.

The NCDC's integrated funding model formerly allocated \$1.6 million for roughly 500 children receiving child care services in Northumberland. This plan was supported by the Ministry of Children and Youth Services for years. After the transfer to your ministry, though, the integrated model has been done away with. Now, \$1.3 million will be going to fund roughly 100 children in child care, with only \$167,000 left to service almost 450 remaining children.

Since your ministry took over, 90% of the funding is now servicing only 20% of our most vulnerable. This is Liberalnomics at its worst.

Minister, will you finally get a handle on the development services portfolio, step in and reallocate—

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

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

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

Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: One of the things, actually, that has happened since child care funding came to the Ministry of Education is that we actually have been working quite extensively on modernizing that file. Part of that has been the transition to all of our four- and five-year-olds being in full-day kindergarten, but we've also been working with our municipal service managers to modernize the whole child care sector.

Part of that has actually been putting, for the first time ever, an actual funding model in place. Previous to this portfolio coming to the Minister of Education, there actually wasn't a formal funding model. We now have a funding model. But there has been significant transitional funding allocated to each of the service managers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm in the process of dismissal. I'm sorry, we didn't have a chance to get a—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Okay.

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

This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1300.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

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

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I believe we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear ribbons in recognition of the National Day of Mourning for persons killed or injured in the workplace.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Labour is seeking unanimous consent to wear the ribbons for a National Day of Mourning. Do we agree? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: In addition to the folks I introduced earlier this morning, I'm pleased to recognize and sincerely welcome our chief of police from Wingham, Ontario, Tim Poole, who's just arrived in the gallery. Joining him is the vice-chair of the Wingham police services board, Arnold Taylor. Joining him are also Ron Ross, Inspector Dan Grant, Laura Grant, Katy Milne, John Collie, Lisa Derby, Josh Jutras and Deb Mellor.

I'd also like to give another warm welcome to the Pham family: Heather and Tyler, Jordan and Josh, who might be a future page, and Heather's sister Rebecca. Joining them is OPPA president Jim Christie and an OPP officer from Huron county who leads with his heart, Patrick Armstrong.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Was that the make-up from this morning?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We got it in.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Shalom. Today marks the solemn observance of Yom ha-Shoah, or the Day of the Holocaust.

The Holocaust refers to the state-sponsored systematic persecution and annihilation of European Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators between 1933 and 1945. During that period, six million Jews were murdered in the infamous death camps of Auschwitz, Birkenau and others.

Fifteen years ago, it was my privilege to table in this Legislature the Holocaust Memorial Day Act, which received enthusiastic all-party support and was proclaimed into law in Ontario in 1998. At that time, I am proud to say, Ontario became the first jurisdiction outside of Eretz Israel to establish the commemoration of Yom ha-Shoah as an annual one in accordance with the lunar Hebrew calendar.

As a result, ha-Shoah is and always will be an official day of observance by the province of Ontario. This is of crucial importance because this day provides us with an annual opportunity to reflect on the enduring lessons of the Holocaust and to continue to meet the challenge of the ongoing process of Holocaust education.

We welcome in the House today the heroic survivors of the Holocaust whose suffering tells its most relevant lessons about those years that our young people need to hear and learn from so that they, too, may combat the contemporary anti-Semitism, beginning with their own college and university campuses.

Mr. Speaker, by happy coincidence, the Holocaust Memorial Day Act was passed into law on December 10, 1998, which day also marked the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations, which was likewise inspired by those same lessons, the most important of which is summed up by the words "Never again."

NATURAL GAS RATES

Ms. Cindy Forster: My constituents are still reeling from the massive 40% gas hike approved by the OEB, and Enbridge Gas is already churning out the increased gas bills.

Seniors over 55, a group in my riding, have received their bill for the month of April that outlines the rate increase from Enbridge. I was under the impression, Speaker, that there was going to be a smoothing-out period to save people from being hit with the 40% increase instantly. It seems to me, though, from looking at the bill they sent to my office, that their gas supply rate will increase almost double, from 11.81 cents to 20.96 cents, by next month. This is not how they envisioned a smoothing-out.

As it is, consumer groups are still trying to make their voices heard by the OEB on this unprecedented rate increase. The special session would have opened up the process and ensured transparency and accountability. Unfortunately, the OEB refused to grant that special session and hear from consumers.

A petition is being circulated in my riding, opposing this increase and calling for that special session. I hope that the OEB can understand why the residents are concerned about this. I encourage the residents in my riding and across Ontario to call the OEB at 1-877-632-2727 and tell them the impact of this 40% hike in their lives.

ARMENIAN GENOCIDE ANNIVERSARY

Ms. Soo Wong: I rise today to recognize the contributions of Armenian Canadians and to reflect on the Armenian genocide that occurred 99 years ago.

In 1915, the Ottoman government began a mass extermination of Armenians. As a result, more than 1.5 million people were killed. During the genocide, approximately 1,500 Armenians found refuge in Canada. Many settled here in Ontario, in cities such as Brantford, St. Catharines, Windsor and Toronto. In the 1950s, a second wave of Armenians came to Canada, calling Ontario home.

We can be very proud of the contributions Armenians make to Ontario. Armenian businesses and working professionals benefit our economy, and Armenian Canadian artists have enriched our society: artists such as Atom Egoyan, who is not only an award-winning director, but also an Officer of the Order of Canada.

Yesterday, Minister Chan, the MPP from Oak Ridges–Markham and I attended the annual Armenian genocide memorial held by the Toronto Armenian community. This sombre occasion provides us with an opportunity to remember and to resolve anew to never let these atrocities happen again. It also gives us a chance to reflect on the importance of Armenian Canadians in our province.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to announce to the House today two recipients of the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Voluntarism in my riding.

On April 10, I was pleased to attend the presentation of the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Award for Voluntarism. The award is presented by the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration to honour 14 Ontarians and four organizations for their commitment to volunteerism and long-standing service to their communities. I'm proud to say that two constituents of mine, Captain Ryan Edgar and Enci Dhanoosingh of Port Perry, were among the 14 Ontarians to receive this very special honour.

Captain Edgar is a police constable and, for the past 17 years, a volunteer firefighter for the Scugog fire department. As a member of the executive board for Port Perry's firefighters association, Ryan has helped raise more than \$100,000 for charities such as Big Brothers and Big Sisters, Durham region Special Olympics, as well as local food drives and community organizations.

Ms. Dhanoosingh volunteers countless hours of her time to support a number of organizations in her community, including Community Care Durham, the Port Perry Seniors Club and the Scugog Shores Museum Village. A senior herself, Enci volunteers as a driver, helping other seniors get to medical appointments and complete errands such as banking and grocery shopping.

Edgar and Dhanoosingh serve as excellent examples of what can be done to help improve our communities by

helping others in need. I'm pleased to thank them and recognize them today.

ORGAN AND TISSUE DONATION

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Today I want to talk about the great importance of organ donation. In Ontario, nearly 1,500 people, and 171 people in the Peel region, are waiting for a life-saving organ transplant—this is something that we can definitely raise awareness about. One person dies every three days while waiting for an organ transplant, but deaths on the waiting list can be prevented. Each individual, each donor, can save up to eight lives through organ donation and can enhance the lives of up to 75 people through their tissue donation. Put simply, organ and tissue donation registration can save lives.

I encourage everyone to register at beadonor.ca. Registration is so important, because we found that, in the absence of donor registration, only 60% of families consent to organ donation. Families need to know what your intention is.

Again, I urge everyone to take the time to register at beadonor.ca. Registration is simple, it only takes a couple of minutes and it makes a huge difference in saving lives across Ontario.

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Again, I urge you all to take the time to educate yourselves and to educate others about the great importance of giving the gift of life. It is so vitally important, and it is one of the greatest examples of civic duty and civic responsibility.

VOLUNTEERS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Earlier this month, I had the distinct pleasure of attending the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum's annual volunteer appreciation dinner, which honoured a total of 46 volunteers for their hard work and dedication to the community. Among the 46 volunteers, 12 were being recognized for the first time and 29 were longer-term volunteers.

I would especially like to acknowledge and thank five volunteers in particular: John Aaltink, Sharon McFadden, Rick Preston, Lynne Rubben and Valerie Saunders, who all have given over 150 hours each to the museum.

The Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum opened its doors in 1971. It includes five historic structures from the former township of Whitchurch: the Bogarttown schoolhouse, a pioneer log cabin, a Victorian farmhouse, a barn, and Vandorf Public School.

In 2012, a community centre funded by all three levels of government was built to join the two schoolhouses. The new facility includes a research room, exhibition gallery and discovery room as well as rental spaces.

All the volunteers work closely with the museum staff in all areas of museum operations. These include the maintenance of the museum buildings and grounds, the planning of special events, education, exhibits and fundraising initiatives.

I couldn't think of a better way to end the month that includes National Volunteer Week than by celebrating the hard-working volunteers of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum.

AGGREGATE RECYCLING

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Today, I rise with a cautious sense of optimism. You see, last week we celebrated Earth Day, which also happened to be the one-year anniversary since I introduced Bill 56, the Aggregate Recycling Promotion Act. If enacted, Bill 56 would allow contractors to incorporate recycled aggregates when bidding on construction projects paid for with public money.

Increasing aggregate recycling and the use of recycled aggregates in Ontario is a very important initiative that has received widespread support. Bill 56 received unanimous support here in this chamber at second reading debate. It was a recommendation made in the Aggregate Recycling Act review. It has been passed by the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs and is now awaiting third reading.

Bill 56 has received widespread support outside of this chamber as well, where many businesses, municipalities and residents have called for the bill's adoption.

The bill has been debated, it has been examined and it has had public hearings at committee. Now all that remains is one final vote. That means that the Liberal House leader is now the only person standing between Bill 56 and royal assent. The government House leader is the member for Kitchener Centre. I know he understands the need for this legislation, and I believe he supports it. As we mark the one-year anniversary of Bill 56's introduction, the time has come for the government House leader to schedule Bill 56 for third and final reading. Let's get it done. Let's get this bill passed. Let's promote aggregate recycling in Ontario.

KHALSA DAY

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: This past Sunday I had the opportunity to attend the annual Khalsa Day parade along with our Premier, the Honourable Kathleen Wynne, and other colleagues. The parade was organized by the Ontario Sikh and Gurudwara Council.

The Khalsa Day parade celebrates the birth of Khalsa in 1699. It raises awareness about the Sikh philosophy, principles, values and heritage. Khalsa personifies [*Remarks in Punjabi*]—negation of casteism; [*Remarks in Punjabi*]—protection of the persecuted; [*Remarks in Punjabi*]—tolerance; justice for all; and an inclusive society.

The annual Khalsa Day is a day to celebrate these values and to offer prayers. It is a day for reflection and it is also a day for spiritual renewal. On this day, Sikhs around the world renew their belief that only tolerance, justice, equality, fairness and respect for difference can move us forward to the ultimate human goal: peace and prosperity for all.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Ontario Sikh and Gurudwara Council for organizing this wonderful event.

DAVE MOUNSEY MEMORIAL FUND

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Constable Vu Pham was an OPP officer of 15 years working out of the Huron county attachment. He was tragically shot and killed on March 8, 2010. Earlier today at Queen's Park, the Dave Mounsey Memorial Fund presented a defibrillator to Wingham, Ontario, chief of police Tim Poole, and vice-chair of the board Arnold Taylor, in memory of Constable Vu Pham and on behalf of his wife Heather and his boys Tyler, Jordan and Josh.

The Dave Mounsey Memorial Fund was created in 2009 by family and friends of Dave, an OPP constable also from Huron county who passed away in the line of duty as a result of an auto collision in 2003. Prior to his collision and untimely death, Dave and his wife, Brenda, raised funds through a marathon to purchase a defibrillator for a local fire department.

The fund was created to honour those police, military, paramedics and firepersons who have paid the ultimate sacrifice for the freedom and security that we take for granted. Upon the death of such a member, the fund will donate a defibrillator to the local emergency services or a public school, at the choice of the family. Given that Mr. Klees is giving a tribute on First Responders Day, Thursday, the presentation today is perfectly timed and fitting, for in the spirit of community safety, we are recognizing so many who have paid the ultimate price.

I would be remiss if I didn't recognize that we were joined today at the presentation by OPP commissioner Vince Hawkes, who stated, "Provincial constables Dave Mounsey and Vu Pham were fine officers who tragically lost their lives protecting the public. It is a very fitting tribute to remember them by providing equipment that other first responders can use to save lives." We were also joined, as I mentioned earlier, by OPPA president Jim Christie.

For a number of reasons, it has been an honour and a privilege to be part of this tribute today, and I thank my colleagues for their support as well.

SPECIAL REPORT, AUDITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table a special report from the Auditor General of Ontario entitled Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corporation's Modernization Plan.

ANNUAL REPORT, CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I also beg to inform the House that on April 22, 2014, the 2012 annual report of the Chief Medical Officer of Health was tabled.

CLAUDETTE BOYER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister responsible for seniors on a point of order.

Hon. Mario Sergio: Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to pay tribute to Madame Claudette Boyer, a former member of this Legislature from the riding of Ottawa-Vanier from 1999 to 2003, with a representative from each caucus speaking up to five minutes.

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

The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm honoured, on behalf of the PC caucus, to begin the tribute to Claudette Boyer, who served here from 1999 to 2003. Claudette had a life before Parliament as well. In fact, she served as a teacher in the Ottawa area for 30 years. It would be interesting, if we had a little more time for research, to look at the differences that she would have made in the lives of so many people in a 30-year career as a teacher. I've known so many teachers over my lifetime and know the difference that they have made.

In 1982, Claudette Boyer was elected as a school trustee for the Ottawa Board of Education, and she served for a term there. She also was known as a tireless volunteer and manager of multiple municipal, provincial and federal election campaigns. She was clearly devoted to the Liberal Party, Mr. Speaker, as she served on campaigns for Jean-Robert Gauthier, Bernard Grandmaître and Guy Cousineau. She was clearly very, very steeped in a political background before she had the opportunity to run for elected office here.

What I found remarkable and perhaps surprising—someone has to be the first, but I was surprised that it took till 1999—was that Claudette Boyer was the first francophone woman elected to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. I would have thought that that would have happened sooner, but the records from the library do not lie: The first francophone woman was elected in 1999, and that distinction today and forever will belong to Claudette Boyer.

She was a tireless advocate for French language rights, and that was clearly indicated and clearly demonstrated in her career here. She was very actively involved in the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens, the Franco-Ontarian Teachers' Association.

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While she was here, she served as the Liberal Party's critic for francophone affairs and women's issues.

I don't have a great deal of information from Ms. Boyer's legislative career here, but I do have some quotes that would indicate some of the things that she was passionate about. She was clearly passionate about French language rights and Franco affairs, but she was also very, very passionate about mental health and domestic violence. I'll give you a couple of her quotes.

Brian's Law was a mental health legislation reform: "Yes, I will be voting in support of this bill, but with a

certain degree of skepticism. I truly hope this bill will provide the groundwork for progressive action in the field of mental health. This government must provide sufficient funding and resources to ensure that Brian's Law is more than mere lip service."

Today, the fight for mental health goes on. It continues today, and I want to thank Claudette Boyer for being, at that time, more a less a pioneer, as we had turned very little attention to the issues of mental health in earlier days. It has become more and more an issue that we deal with more and more, and I think everyone does agree that it is a priority.

She sat as a Liberal MPP from 1999 to 2001 and sat as an independent MPP from 2001 to 2003. She did not seek re-election in 2003.

In 2004, Claudette was awarded the Prix anniversaire by the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens in recognition of her years of service to the community. She was recognized for that commitment for so many years.

In 2007, she became the president of the Ottawa chapter of the Francophone Assembly of Ontario.

Perhaps fittingly, she passed away in Ottawa in 2013 at the Montfort Hospital, which was also a passion of Claudette Boyer's. She fought very strongly and valiantly to ensure that that institution remained open in the Ottawa area. Not that anyone is looking forward to that time in their life, but it is probably somewhat poetic that she did have her last days in that hospital that she regarded as so important to the people of that area and that she fought so hard to maintain.

Her husband, Jean-Robert Boyer, did predecease her. She leaves behind her three children, Michel (Carole), Pierre (Linda Cardinal), and Julie, her grandchildren Jean-Sébastien and Jasmine, her sisters Nicole (Maurice Miljour), Lyse, and Francine (Gilles Gatién), and several nephews and cousins.

We want to thank Claudette Boyer for her commitment to the people of Ontario, particularly to the people of Ottawa-Vanier, and we want to thank her family for allowing her to give in this regard, as all members of the assembly do. We want to properly pay tribute to her for that service, and wish her rest in peace.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further remarks.

Mr. Michael Prue: As a young rookie arriving here in this Legislature, one of the first people I had the privilege of meeting was Madame Boyer. She was known around this place as the first francophone woman MPP. She was also, by the time that I arrived here in 2001, having her own personal difficulties during her tenure as an MPP.

I knew her personally as a warm, welcoming, caring and dedicated individual who spoke most often and most passionately about her riding, about the people who lived there, and about the broader Franco-Ontarian community in Ottawa and elsewhere.

She was a woman of passion for public service, particularly within the Franco-Ontarian community, but she could easily go outside of that community, and often did

so. She was a true champion of the people who sent her to Queen's Park.

As has been said, she was 30 years a teacher. She was with the Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens. She was a school trustee for four years.

She became a candidate for the Liberals in the new riding of Ottawa-Vanier. It was a brand new riding; it had just been set up. She ran on a strong platform—two things. One was saving seven schools within the riding, the majority of which were French-speaking schools that were scheduled to be shut down, and the other thing was to save the Montfort Hospital, which was the only French-speaking hospital at that time in the Ottawa area, and probably still is. She ran on that platform and was easily elected.

I'll tell you, in those years, in that time in 1999, she ran against the tide. We, as politicians, know how difficult it is to run against the tide. That was the time, of course, of Mike Harris's second election, where he was elected with a further majority government. To be a Liberal running against that tide and to win so handily speaks volumes about the respect she had in her community.

She was a strong voice in this House, even during trying times. I can still picture her sitting in a desk way up in the corner. She was an independent by the time I got here or maybe shortly after I arrived, and she sat in the corner. It was difficult to get the attention or the notice of the Speaker because, as we all know, we speak in rotation here. It's only every so often that a question would be given to an independent member or they would be allowed or be heard to speak on an issue. But she stood on every opportunity that was available to her to talk about the issues that had sent her here.

Until the last day here, she spoke of the needs and the hopes of those she represented. Again, as was said, after the Legislature she became the executive director for l'Association des communautés francophones d'Ottawa.

She died at Montfort. Again, as has been said, it was a place that she had championed. It is a place that she had spent her four years here to make sure that it stayed open, and it was there for her in the end. She came here to save that hospital and to defend the rights of individuals living in Ottawa who spoke French as a first language—and sometimes as an only language—to be served in French and to be able to understand the issues that surrounded them.

To her and to her family, I say: Merci pour toutes les choses. Merci à la famille, the family who shared her with us in good times and in bad. Most especially, thank you for being the champion she was for the Franco-Ontarian community and for all the broader community of this wonderful province and this wonderful country where we need to do so much more to protect the rights of minority francophones in Ontario and minority franco-phones wherever they live. She was the person who led the way to show us how to do it.

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

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: J'ai l'honneur aujourd'hui de rendre hommage à l'une de nos anciennes collègues ici, M^{me} Claudette Boyer, qui a été la première femme francophone élue à l'Assemblée législative en 1999, comme représentante du comté d'Ottawa–Vanier, et que la maladie a emportée bien trop tôt l'an dernier.

La famille de Claudette Boyer lui a toujours été chère. J'aimerais reconnaître ses enfants, Julie, Pierre et Michel; ses belles-filles; et ses petits-enfants, Jean-Sébastien et Jasmine, qui étaient pour elle une source de joie et d'espérance.

Claudette Boyer's life was guided by a singular mission: to promote the francophone community of Ontario.

Dès son jeune âge, Claudette Boyer avait la ferme conviction qu'avoir des racines françaises en Ontario prendrait tout son sens seulement si les francophones avaient la possibilité de grandir, de s'éduquer, de travailler et de vivre en conformité avec leur identité culturelle. Et cette mission devait se concrétiser, selon elle, dans sa vie familiale, dans ses activités professionnelles comme enseignante, dans la gamme d'activités bénévoles qu'elle organisait et dans toute la société civile francophone de l'Ontario et du Canada.

Elle s'est donc engagée cœur et âme dans les associations professionnelles enseignantes pour assurer une plus grande qualité dans l'enseignement. Elle s'est impliquée activement dans les organisations sociales et communautaires partout dans l'est de l'Ontario. Elle a aussi toujours travaillé pour les démunis, celles et ceux qui n'ont pas de voix sur la scène publique mais dont les besoins sont si criants.

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Claudette Boyer was also a pillar of the federal and provincial Liberal Party in Ottawa, serving as president of the Ottawa–Vanier riding association and brilliantly managing campaigns for Jean-Robert Gauthier, Bernard Grandmaître et Guy Cousineau. Her energy and optimism were an inspiration to candidates and volunteers alike.

N'en ayant pas encore fini avec son activisme, Claudette Boyer a aussi dirigé l'ACFO d'Ottawa avec l'énergie, la passion et le dévouement qui font qu'elle occupe une place de choix dans le cœur des Franco-Ontariens.

Tous ces engagements visaient la réalisation de sa mission pour que les francophones occupent leur juste place en Ontario et au Canada. Efficace et perspicace, elle ne ratait jamais une occasion d'influencer les politiques publiques en faveur du peuple francophone.

Dear colleagues, like many of us, Claudette Boyer gave her time and energy and shared her talent and ideas for the betterment of Ontarians.

Le cheminement de Claudette Boyer, l'épouse bien-aimée de Jean-Robert, la mère de famille, l'enseignante, l'activiste communautaire, l'organisatrice politique et la députée provinciale, fait que notre profession de politicien, malgré tous ses défis, est une profession noble. Je veux donc profiter de l'occasion pour remercier mon amie, Claudette Boyer, et remercier chaleureusement sa

famille. Merci pour son engagement. Merci d'avoir partagé cette grande dame humaniste avec nous et de nous avoir permis d'en ressortir tous plus grands.

En 2014, l'Ontario français ne serait pas le peuple fier et déterminé qu'il est devenu sans la mission bien accomplie que s'était donnée Claudette Boyer. Merci.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you very much. Merci beaucoup. As we always do traditionally, we'll have a copy of a DVD prepared with the tributes, and copies of Hansard presented to the family members. I thank all members for their thoughtful and heartfelt comments. It's much appreciated.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

RAISE A GLASS TO ONTARIO ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 POUR PORTER UN TOAST À L'ONTARIO

Mr. Smith moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 191, An Act to amend the Liquor Control Act /
Projet de loi 191, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les alcools.

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: An Act to amend the Liquor Control Act, or, as I like to call it, the Raise a Glass to Ontario Act, 2014, amends the Liquor Control Act. It will cut red tape for brewers, wineries and cideries operating in Ontario. The bill eliminates transportation regulations. It cuts warehousing red tape and allows wineries, breweries and cideries to sell the products of other wineries or brewers at their on-site stores. Thank you.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Today in Ontario and throughout Canada, we pause to remember workers who have been killed on the job or who have suffered work-related injury or illness. We lower our flags to honour friends, neighbours and those loved ones whose lives have been lost or affected by workplace incidents—incidents that are almost always foreseeable and almost always preventable.

Since the 1980s, the Ontario government has recognized the National Day of Mourning. It's a day of remembrance, and it's a day when all of us must strengthen our resolve to ensure that the tragedy of fallen workers and their families is not in vain.

Our government has almost doubled the number of workplace health and safety inspectors across the province. Since 2003, Speaker, the number of work-related traumatic injuries in Ontario has declined by 30%.

But we know that we need to prevent injuries before they happen. That is why we have appointed Ontario's first-ever Chief Prevention Officer, and we're increasing our efforts to ensure that all workers know their rights and all workers know their responsibilities under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

We are especially mindful of newcomers, and those whose first languages are not English or French, by providing information in a number of different languages. We also conduct annual health and safety blitzes into a variety of sectors and industries, to ensure that workers are safe on the job. For example, to protect young workers, the Ministry of Labour health and safety inspectors conduct inspections in workplaces where students and young people typically have summer jobs—often their very first job.

These efforts are a part of our newly integrated strategy to promote healthy and safe workplaces by trying to assist Ontario's most vulnerable workers, such as recent immigrants and young people. We try to support occupational health and safety improvements in small businesses. We address workplace hazards that are known to be severe and widespread.

We're making progress, but we must do more. As of July 1, workers and supervisors must be trained in workplace health and safety awareness.

We also know that falls from heights are a major cause of fatalities and injuries, so the ministry is consulting widely on the implementation of Working at Heights training standards.

We're also conducting comprehensive mining safety reviews in consultation with mining stakeholders, especially employers and workers, to further improve the health and the safety of workers in that particular sector.

Since October 2012, all provincially regulated workplaces have been required to display a poster outlining the rights and the responsibilities of workers, supervisors and employers on the job.

Together, Speaker, we must strive to build a strong workplace health and safety culture, one that focuses on injury and illness prevention. That is what the ministry is doing, and we're reaching out at the same time to all Ontarians to help us.

Whenever adversity comes to Ontario, we see Ontarians step up and work together for the greater good. Whether it's an ice storm, a flood or a forest fire, we are people who look out for one another. That's an important part of being an Ontarian.

Today, we ask that Ontarians don't wait for adversity. Today, we ask that all people of this province commit to taking every possible measure to prevent work-related injury, fatality and illness so that Ontario workers—all Ontario workers—get home safe and sound at the end of each working day.

Mr. Speaker, shortly I will ask that we observe a moment of silence for those who suffered workplace fatalities, injuries and illness in our province. Let us pay our respects and honour their memories, and let us renew that commitment to one another to ensure a future that is free of workplace fatality, injury or illness.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries? It is now time for responses.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I, too, am pleased to rise this afternoon to recognize the National Day of Mourning. April 28 each year is a time to commemorate workers who have been injured, killed or suffered any illnesses due to workplace incidents and related hazards. It is important for all of us to pay tribute to those individuals whose lives were affected by a workplace injury or illness and who are now striving to move forward with a better future.

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Today is also a day to remember all those whose lives were cut short. These tragedies affect not only a worker's family but also one's co-workers and an entire community.

Across Ontario, there will be many events and ceremonies held as a visible tribute to all this day. The purpose of this day of mourning serves as an excellent reminder to all of us to renew our commitment to improving the health and safety of all those in the workforce so we can prevent any further deaths, injuries and illnesses.

Speaker, it was back in 1984 that April 28 was established as the National Day of Mourning by the Canadian Labour Congress. In 1991, Canada's federal government passed legislation to recognize this day, and since then it has become an international movement. This year in particular marks exactly 100 years since the Workmen's Compensation Act was passed right here in Ontario—the important legislation that provides basic protection for workers and their employers to this very day.

Sadly, today reminds me of a loss close to home. A young man living in the Melbourne area, Jim Sanford, died in the hospital due to his injuries a few years ago. He was employed by an elevator business and had fallen while working on the elevators in the city of London.

While Ontario, and Canada overall, has made great progress in workplace safety, the number and rate of workplace fatalities and accidents is still unacceptably high. We may have some of the best health and safety legislation, yet the number of workers who are affected has failed to decrease. Many say that workplace health and safety is important, but the reality is that far too often, not enough is being done before incidents occur. Many of these workplace incidents are entirely preventable. Ontario can do better, and by enforcing the laws we have put in place, we can save even more workers' lives. We need to continue remaining vigilant that any legislation is comprehensive, monitored and strictly enforced.

While we take this day to honour the people who have passed away, we should also be reminded of our need to continue protecting and advocating for those who are

living. We should use this as a day to rally our workers to reflect on what needs to be done to further prevent deaths, injuries and illnesses in an ongoing initiative to maintain safe working conditions.

Speaker, on behalf of Tim Hudak and our entire PC caucus, I'm committed to continue standing up for hard-working individuals in Ontario and their ongoing safety in the workplace.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: On behalf of Andrea Horwath and the New Democrat caucus, I'm pleased to rise today to speak on this important issue. April 28 has been recognized across Canada as the International Day of Mourning for workers killed or injured on the job. The purpose is to remember and honour fallen workers and to renew our commitment to health and safety, to prevent further work-related deaths, injuries and diseases.

As provincial members, it's our duty in this House to ensure that we put good regulations and rules in place in Ontario to keep workers safe from harm while they're on the job. While directly affecting workers in Ontario, our responsibility doesn't end there, at the borders of our province. Our decisions and how we enact legislation and regulations can influence jurisdictions around the world and can help improve health and safety for workers across the globe.

On April 24, just a few days ago, we remembered the one-year anniversary of the terrible tragedy of the collapse of the Rana Plaza in Bangladesh that killed 1,138 people and injured more than 2,000—where workers were paid a dollar a day to be killed.

The tragedy has prompted much-needed action on worker safety in Bangladesh in the garment industry, an industry worth \$22 billion and the second largest in the world, behind China. An accord on fire and safety was created which spells out independent safety standards, and more than 150 companies around the world have signed on. Safety reviews are published on a website, and if a factory fails, signatories are required to suspend manufacturing. While these steps are promising, Speaker, much more needs to be done to protect these workers, who play a huge role in the global economy.

But much more can be done in Ontario as well. In 2013, we lost 243 Ontario workers in fatal workplace accidents, and 232,249 claims were filed with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. The latest statistics were released, and in the past 25 days alone, three more workers have died at the Vale Copper Cliff smelter in Sudbury, a construction site in Ottawa and a plastics plant in Vaughan. We need to reduce these numbers to zero and also provide support to the families of these workers who have lost their lives.

I know that my colleague and our labour critic, the member from Essex, would have loved to have been here today addressing this House on this issue. I thank him for his work every day while he tries to protect the safety of workers in this province.

In 2010, the Dean report was presented to the Minister of Labour at the time. A list of recommendations to im-

prove health and safety was laid out clearly. Some have been addressed, but the government has been dragging its feet on implementing important regulations that would go a long way to protecting workers. These regulations can save lives and need to be acted on as soon as possible. As representatives, we must lead the way in protecting Ontarians.

I want to take a moment to recognize the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for her work on fighting for improvements on the fall safety standards, after a young worker from the Kitchener–Waterloo area was killed during a construction accident not that long ago. And while some action has been taken by the ministry, the regulations have not gone far enough. Participation in safety training has taken too long to implement and is on a voluntary basis only. It needs to be mandatory. In order to ensure that standards are met, training has to be mandatory and there need to be enough enforcement officers to make sure that enforcement is actually taking place.

While I still have a moment or two, I want to just talk a bit about my riding, where we have a rich shipping history in Welland on the Welland Canal, constructed between I think 1913 and 1933. A life was lost every two months in the building of that canal. In 1928, the worst year for deaths during that construction, 28 workers died. The youngest to die was Antonio Collini, who was 15, and he was buried in a suit that he purchased with his very first paycheque. So the importance of remembering these lives is paramount as we continue our efforts to protect workers. In fact, a Fallen Workers Memorial Task Force was created, with a goal of erecting a memorial to all the workers who lost their lives while constructing the Welland Canal.

There is much work to be done, and I hope all three parties make workers' safety a priority to ensure that we are doing everything we can to create the safest working environment in Ontario.

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

The Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Speaker, I would seek unanimous consent that the chamber observe a moment of silence for those whose lives have been forever changed by a workplace injury, illness or fatality.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Labour is seeking unanimous consent for a moment of silence. Do we agree?

Could I ask all people in the chamber to stand?

The House observed a moment's silence.

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

It is now time for petitions. The member from Durham.

PETITIONS

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'll soon be known as Mr. Petition. What a tragedy.

"Whereas Roseplain Solar Farm Partnership has applied to the Ministry of the Environment for an update in its renewable energy approval application for a solar farm development at 5240 Concession Road 4, RR#1 in the township of Uxbridge;

"Whereas residents adjacent to the proposed project strongly object to a large industrial development on" class 1 "valuable agricultural land and woodlands;

"Whereas possible adverse impacts include reduced property values" due to the appearance of the solar farm development in rural Ontario;

"Whereas the province of Ontario has announced cancellation of two proposed nuclear reactors because of surplus generating capacity and furthermore we, as citizens, are concerned that the paying of a large subsidy to a foreign company for many years to come will add to the already enormous public debt incurred for building additional generating capacity" like the gas plants;

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"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature not to proceed with this large scale industrial development, in view of the adverse impacts it will have on our community and our province."

I'm pleased to sign in support of this and present it to Meaghan, one of the new pages here at Queen's Park.

ÉCOLE ÉLÉMENTAIRE CATHOLIQUE ALAIN-FORTIN

M. Phil McNeely: « À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario:

« Attendu que la capacité de l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin est de 464 déterminée d'après la formule du ministère de l'Éducation;

« Attendu que l'effectif actuel de l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin sera de 692 élèves à l'automne 2014, excédant la prévision du Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est (CECCE) qui était prévue à 616 élèves pour la rentrée scolaire 2014;

« Attendu que, selon le taux de croissance et fréquentation des quatre dernières années, la prévision pour 2015-2016 est de 740 élèves;

« Attendu que la construction d'une nouvelle école pour désengorger l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin est la priorité principale du CECCE;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario et le ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Nous demandons que les fonds nécessaires à la construction d'une nouvelle école élémentaire catholique soient octroyés au Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est par le ministère de l'Éducation via les fonds

en investissements d'immobilisations prioritaires pour le secteur d'Avalon à Orléans. »

Je l'envoie en avant avec Victoria.

COAST GUARD AUXILIARY

Mr. Todd Smith: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Coast Guard Auxiliary units are oftentimes the first responders to any emergency situation that occurs on our waterways;

"Whereas the use of green flashing lights by Coast Guard volunteers in their vehicles would help to cut down on their response time by alerting others on the roadways to their presence;

"Whereas these flashing green lights are currently prohibited from use in Coast Guard volunteers' vehicles under regulations in the Highway Traffic Act that restrict the use of flashing green lights to only the vehicles of volunteer firefighters and ministry-prescribed medical responders;

"Whereas the flashing green lights cost nothing to the government as they are bought and paid for by the volunteers themselves;

"Whereas, if the Coast Guard Auxiliary units were allowed the use of these flashing green lights in their vehicles, it would cut down the transportation time on the roadways, and this cut in time could very well mean the difference between life and death;

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

"That Coast Guard Auxiliary units either become prescribed medical responders, or a change to the act that adds ministry-prescribed volunteer first responders access to the use of the flashing green emergency light."

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

ÉDUCATION EN FRANÇAIS

M. Michael Prue: I have a petition that is very lengthy, so I'm only going to read the "be it resolved." I have read it into the record several times already.

It is in French, though, so you'll have to bear with me.

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

fréquenter une école secondaire située dans leur quartier. »

Je suis d'accord, and I will send it down with Ethan.

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 Lavanya.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the horse racing industry employs approximately 60,000 people, creates \$1.5 billion in wages and \$2 billion in recurring expenditures annually; and

“Whereas the partnership that was created between government and the horse breeding and racing industry has been a model arrangement and is heralded throughout North America, with 75% of revenues going to the provincial government to fund important programs like health care and education, 5% to the municipalities and only 20% goes back to the horse business; and

“Whereas the horse business is a significant source of revenue for the farming community and rural municipalities;

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

“That the Ministry of Finance continue the revenue-sharing partnership with the horse racing industry for the benefit of Ontario's agricultural and rural economies.”

I fully support it, will sign it and send it to the Clerk with page Frank.

FRENCH-LANGUAGE EDUCATION

Mr. Michael Prue: I have the identical petition again, although this time it's in English, with a couple of copies in French. I will only read the “be it resolved” because it's very lengthy.

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 affix my signature thereto and send it with page Gabriel.

ÉCOLE ÉLÉMENTAIRE CATHOLIQUE ALAIN-FORTIN

M. Shafiq Qadri: J'ai une pétition adressée à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Attendu que la capacité de l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin est de 464 déterminée d'après la formule du ministère de l'Éducation;

« Attendu que l'effectif actuel de l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin sera de 692 élèves à l'automne 2014, excédant la prévision du Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est (CECCE) qui était prévue à 616 élèves pour la rentrée scolaire 2014;

« Attendu que, selon le taux de croissance et fréquentation des quatre dernières années, la prévision pour 2015-2016 est de 740 élèves;

« Attendu que la construction d'une nouvelle école pour désengorger l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin est la priorité principale ...

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario et le ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Nous demandons que les fonds nécessaires à la construction d'une nouvelle école élémentaire catholique soient octroyés au Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est par le ministère de l'Éducation via les fonds en investissements d'immobilisations prioritaires pour le secteur d'Avalon à Orléans. »

Merci, monsieur le Président. Je vous l'envoie avec page Ayesha.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: “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

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

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

“Immediately provide Esbriet as a choice to patients with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis and their health care providers in Ontario through public funding.”

I agree with the petition, affix my signature and I'll send it to the table with our new page Kaitlyn.

OSTOMY SUPPLIES

Mr. Steve Clark: I'd like to thank Susan Hunter from Brockville Pharmasave and Jennifer Barnes for their advocacy on this important issue. They did this petition themselves. It's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas inflation has risen almost 37% in the 21 years since 1993, and with the cost of ostomy supplies rising, on average, 2% yearly;

“Whereas there has been no increase in the ADP base amount;

“Whereas according to the 2009 survey, the data indicates that the average ostomy pouching system wear-time (flange and pouch) is five days;

“Whereas with an average suggested retail price of \$15 for each change, many persons with an ostomy are spending a minimum of \$1,500 and an average of \$2,400 per year, far exceeding the ADP grant and the intent of the 75% coverage;

“Whereas additionally, people with temporary ostomy receive no government support, adding an additional burden to their health care needs;

“Whereas they may have their temporary ostomy for a number of years, they receive no assistance through the ADP grant as the ostomy may one day be reversed;

“Whereas the association frequently receives phone calls from people who are unable to find the money to buy ostomy supplies;

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

“To act now and to raise the ADP grant amount to increase the coverage for ostomy supplies back to the

75% level that was set in 1993, and to increase coverage to include people who have a temporary ostomy.”

I'm pleased to affix my signature and send the petition to the table with page Zahra.

ÉCOLE ÉLÉMENTAIRE CATHOLIQUE ALAIN-FORTIN

M. Shafiq Qadri: J'ai une pétition adressée à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario.

« Attendu que la capacité de l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin est de 464 déterminée d'après la formule du ministère de l'Éducation;

« Attendu que l'effectif actuel de l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin sera de 692 élèves à l'automne 2014, excédant la prévision du Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est (CECCE) qui était prévue de 616 élèves pour la rentrée scolaire 2014;

« Attendu que, selon le taux de croissance et fréquentation des quatre dernières années, la prévision pour 2015-2016 est de 740 élèves;

« Attendu que la construction d'une nouvelle école pour désengorger l'école élémentaire catholique Alain-Fortin est la priorité principale ...

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario et le ministère de l'Éducation de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Nous demandons que les fonds nécessaires à la construction d'une nouvelle école élémentaire catholique soient octroyés au Conseil des écoles catholiques du Centre-Est par le ministère de l'Éducation via les fonds en investissements d'immobilisations prioritaires pour le secteur d'Avalon à Orléans. »

Je vous envoie cette pétition avec page William.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham that reads as follows:

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

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

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

“Whereas these OHIP policies are discriminatory in nature forcing university/college students”—

Hon. John Gerretsen: They are not.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm trying to read on behalf of my constituents. The minister should not interrupt me, the minister without portfolio—“OHIP-funded physiotherapy;

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

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

I sign it and support it and present it to Brendan, one of the new pages here at Queen’s Park.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time that we have available this afternoon for petitions. Orders of the day? I recognize—

Hon. John Gerretsen: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): A point of order, the Chair of Cabinet.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I understand that we have unanimous consent with respect to a motion regarding private bills. I would like to put that motion forward without notice at this point in time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Chair of Cabinet is seeking the unanimous consent of the House to move a motion with respect to private bills. Is there agreement in the House? Agreed. I recognize the Chair of Cabinet.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I move that the orders for second and third reading of the following private bills shall be called consecutively and the questions on the motions for second and third reading of the bills put immediately without debate: Bills Pr22, Pr23, Pr27, Pr28 and Pr29, and that Mr. Delaney—who is sitting beside me here—may move the motions for second and third reading of Bill Pr22 on behalf of Mr. Balkissoon, and that Mr. Delaney may move the motions for second and third reading of Bill Pr29 on behalf of Mr. Colle.

I move that, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Gerretsen has moved that the orders for second and third reading of the following private bills shall be called consecutively and the questions on the motions for second and third reading of the bills put immediately without debate: Bills Pr22, Pr23, Pr27, Pr28 and Pr29, and that Mr. Delaney may move the motions for second and third reading of Bill Pr22 on behalf of Mr. Balkissoon, and that Mr. Delaney may move the motions for second and third reading of Bill Pr29 on behalf of Mr. Colle.

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

Motion agreed to.

434753 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2014

Mr. Delaney, on behalf of Mr. Balkissoon, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr22, An Act to revive 434753 Ontario Ltd.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

434753 ONTARIO LTD. ACT, 2014

Mr. Delaney, on behalf of Mr. Balkissoon, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr22, An Act to revive 434753 Ontario Ltd.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

1360906 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2014

Mr. Kwinter moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr23, An Act to revive 1360906 Ontario Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

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1360906 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2014

Mr. Kwinter moved third reading of the following bill: Bill Pr23, An Act to revive 1360906 Ontario Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL INC. ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2014

Mr. Marchese moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr27, An Act respecting Toronto International Film Festival Inc.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

TORONTO INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL INC. ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2014

Mr. Marchese moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr27, An Act respecting Toronto International Film Festival Inc.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

YMCA OF
HAMILTON/BURLINGTON/BRANTFORD
ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2014

Mr. Delaney moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr28, An Act respecting YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

YMCA OF
HAMILTON/BURLINGTON/BRANTFORD
ACT (TAX RELIEF), 2014

Mr. Delaney moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr28, An Act respecting YMCA of Hamilton/Burlington/Brantford.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

394557 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2014

Mr. Delaney, on behalf of Mr. Colle, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr29, An Act to revive 394557 Ontario Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

394557 ONTARIO LIMITED ACT, 2014

Mr. Delaney, on behalf of Mr. Colle, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr29, An Act to revive 394557 Ontario Limited.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AMENDMENT ACT
(LEAVES TO HELP FAMILIES), 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI
(CONGÉS POUR AIDER LES FAMILLES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 7, 2014, on the motion for third reading of the following bill:

Bill 21, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver, critically ill child care and crime-related child death or disappearance leaves of absence / Projet de loi 21, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour les aidants naturels, le congé pour soins à un enfant gravement malade et le congé en cas de décès ou de disparition d'un enfant dans des circonstances criminelles.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated third reading of Bill 21, the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane had completed his speech. Further debate. The member for Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Very good, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. That was scintillating action that we just witnessed here in the Legislature, as we took care of business, and you did an excellent job looking after that as well.

I am pleased to stand and speak to Bill 21, which is the Employment Standards Amendment Act. I haven't had the opportunity yet—there are a number of members of the Legislature who haven't had the opportunity—so on behalf of my constituents in the Prince Edward–Hastings riding, stretching from Maynooth in the north to Milford in the south, I'm pleased to stand and bring some comments on this very important piece of legislation which, incidentally, the members of the Progressive Conservative caucus will be supporting when we get to a vote on this.

This is the Leaves to Help Families, and I understand that the aim of this bill is a good one and a very noble one. We want to provide some opportunity for family members who have an ill or deceased child or family member the ability to stay at home and provide the care that they need. It is a great intention and again, we do support this bill.

I believe that all of us in our ridings know families that are undergoing extremely difficult circumstances, where a family member, in many, many cases, is afflicted with cancer. I have some good friends right now back in Prince Edward county who are dealing with this exact situation: The individual is off work.

For about a year now, we've been debating this bill. It's actually an improved version of the bill that was presented in the last session, and I believe it was Bill 30 at that time; it's now known as Bill 21. But there were changes that were made as a result of the ongoing debate

on this bill, and it's an improved version that we will be voting on this time around. It's an improvement that wouldn't have been possible, though, without some of the comments that have come from members of both the official opposition and the third party. There are all kinds of reasons and good ideas that come from the opposition parties, and we haven't seen a lot of real good ideas coming from the government on a whole matter of different issues.

We look forward, as we often do as members of the official opposition, in putting forward ideas on how we can get the province back on the right track. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has put forward his million jobs plan that we have been talking about a great deal. When we're losing the jobs that we are, we understand that a piece of legislation like this is very important for family members who are going through a trying time to continue to hold on to their employment in a very troublesome time in the life of their family.

We're often lectured, and I'm sure we'll be lectured by members of the government a little bit later on, about why we're debating this bill in spite of the fact that we support it. But it's because we are standing here representing our constituents and making sure that their voice is heard in this Legislature, which was the job that we were fortunate enough to obtain in the elections in 2011, and some of us a lot longer than that. Right, member from Durham? We want to make sure that we get the pieces of legislation right, and there will be some changes from time to time. We all spend time listening to residents in our ridings, and we want to bring those changes back here to Queen's Park.

I know that I received a phone call just a couple of weeks ago from a member of my Canadian Cancer Society administrative team in the Belleville area, Amy Doyle. She's a wonderful lady that I had the opportunity to work with at Quinte Broadcasting for a short time a few years ago. She's in charge of promotion for the Canadian Cancer Society and running many of the programs that the Canadian Cancer Society provides, raising funds in the community, and they're doing a fabulous job. We have members from the Canadian Cancer Society and many other agencies that are supporting people in a time of need, in the Legislature talking to us on a regular basis. They want to ensure that this piece of legislation actually gets passed. I can tell you that, when I was talking with Amy—and I look forward to participating in a fundraising and awareness event called Pedal For Hope, which is a Canadian Cancer Society initiative. I hope to be there in the riding to participate in that fundraising and awareness activity in the next few days.

We've heard from not just Amy, who's with the Canadian Cancer Society, but from family members who are dealing with cancer. Bill 21 has received, of course, the endorsement of the Canadian Cancer Society, and I understand why they would, because it makes a lot of sense. We have so many people in our province, in our country and in the world dealing with cancer that there needs to be supports in place.

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A lot of the burden, though, is being placed on the doorstep of the federal government to provide the services. All of the money from this is coming from the federal government. There's nothing really here from the Ontario government, except ensuring that the caregiver will have their job after they take care of the individual in question.

There are many stories, and I know we all get them: family members taking time off, and, as has been alluded to many times here in the Legislature, those family members who are taking time off aren't getting any financial support from the province. They are able to take the time off and look after their family member, which is fantastic.

I get dozens and dozens of calls from residents in my riding who are on fixed incomes, and many of them are seniors or they're on some kind of a support program—which in many cases is from the provincial government—and they are being nickelled and dimed at every turn. We just heard a petition read by the member from Leeds–Grenville. Whether it's for the materials that they need for their ostomies or in a diabetic situation—they're dealing with a lack of funding for diabetic test strips. Many other programs that used to provide financial support are being cut as a result of the actions of this government, not to mention the rising cost of electricity and the impact that that is having on family members, and the impact that that is having on our business people as well.

What also has been happening in my local area of Prince Edward and Hastings counties is that we have seen a lot of supports that are intended to be there for people in the community that simply don't exist yet. So the CCACs, the community care access centres, just a few short months ago actually sent out a notice saying that they were no longer going to be able to provide daily service to those who needed that daily health care attention in their home. They were no longer going to get that, and it's because of the actions of this current government. They were advising those who need help in their home that they weren't going to be able to get it.

Meanwhile, the province is continuously running up huge deficits and huge debt, but they're telling the CCACs that they have to live within their means, which, of course, is a noble message if it comes from a messenger that is operating in the same manner.

I can also tell you that there is a huge increase coming in the number of seniors that we have. A decade from now we'll have 43% more senior citizens in Ontario who will require care. Long-term-care beds simply haven't kept up, and there is a huge backlog in Hastings county, in my community, of long-term-care facilities. Really, there haven't been any additional long-term-care facilities.

I want to mention the good work that is happening at the hospices across my region. They are providing incredible care to families at a very important time in their lives, when they are about to lose a loved one. Only one of them is actually receiving funding from the LHIN, and

that is Prince Edward county. This is for a residential hospice, I should say, and it's only on a pilot project.

So there are many families out there, as I mentioned, who need this bill to be in place. Some of the issues that we discussed previously have been altered, as I mentioned earlier, in Bill 21, but there are still improvements that could be made. What we needed to do, actually—and there are still concerns, I should say, that need to be heard from, and these are our small business people. We have concerns about how they are going to be able to implement this type of a program when it becomes put in place. I had considerable concerns with the potential impact that this bill is going to have on small businesses.

At the end of the day, though, as I mentioned, there are many, many families across my riding and many others who are looking forward to this bill passing. I know we have heard from many members of the Legislature about this. These are the kinds of things that I believe we should be looking at to ensure that we have the assistance there for families when they need it most. Making sure that we get our economy started again, though, would also be a good message to take to people across the province, and I look forward to hearing from my colleagues here in the Legislature more about Bill 21 as the afternoon progresses.

The Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families): We'll be supporting this bill at third reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's so good to hear the member from Prince Edward–Hastings as he talks about his concerns for seniors. I'm happy to hear that, because every time the Tories are in opposition, they sound so human. It's really important to hear that and to see that.

He's concerned about seniors, of course, which is admirable, concerned about the fact that there is a long-term-care backlog in his riding. That suggests that, should he form government with his colleagues, he is going to take care of that somehow. We don't know how, quite yet, but he and his colleagues are going to be looking at the backlog in a way that will be good for senior citizens.

He noted we're going to have more and more senior citizens. As you know and he knows and many of the women MPPs in the Conservative caucus know, a lot of the seniors are women, and they're not very wealthy; you know that, I imagine. How we help them as they age is going to be tricky.

But when I hear the member from Prince Edward–Hastings, it warms me up a little bit to know that I am in good hands. As I get older, I know that, should they form government, he has got my concerns right in front of his hands and his heart. I need to hear those things, because, I got to tell you, I get worried. Some of us are getting older.

So I want to hear more and more Conservative members talk about how much they worry about seniors and what they are going to have in place to help them out, or

to help us out as we get there. Congratulations on that nice speech.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to join in the debate on Bill 21, which is the Leaves to Help Families Act. I was very heartened to hear the member from Prince Edward–Hastings say that when we get around to voting on this bill, in fact he and the other members of his party will be supporting the bill. I'm quite pleased to hear that. In fact, I think what I've heard members from all three parties say is that they look forward to supporting this act.

I would like to note that we are actually at third reading, which means that it's too late for all the marvelous suggestions about how we might amend the act. It has already been through second reading and out at committee.

What is interesting is that we have now been debating this bill for a total of 13 hours. Nine of those hours have been post-committee at third reading. In fact, let me amend that. I think we have actually spent a total of 22 hours: nine hours at third reading and 13 hours at second reading—anyway, extensive debate on this bill; 75 different members have spoken.

May I suggest that it isn't "When we get around to voting on this bill, I'll support it." It is "We need to get voting on this bill so we can get around to passing it." Twenty-two hours is enough.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: It's my privilege to listen to the member from Prince Edward–Hastings, Mr. Smith. He talked about respect for his community, and he wanted their voices to be heard. He talked about people who work voluntarily for various organizations. Specifically, he mentioned Cancer Care Ontario. I think all of us members on this side continue to speak, advocating on behalf of a better understanding of what the government's actually doing with the bill.

I do want to put on the record two points particularly, in response to my colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings.

For the last few days, I've been presenting two types of petitions. One is for the access for people with idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis. I have asked the minister personally to approve, under the recommendations of all of the experts dealing with respiratory ailments, and have asked the Minister of Health to look at the funding more seriously of Esbriet, the drug that gives these people—otherwise, they die because they are waiting for a lung transplant. The medical experts, not politicians, have said this drug is worth requiring.

1430

Another issue that I have been advocating—I read a petition today on improving post-stroke physiotherapy eligibility. Recently, this government cancelled the way they were funding physiotherapy and changed to a new model. What they've done is they have eliminated access

to physiotherapy, which is absolutely required for a recovery post-stroke.

One of my constituents will be here next week to speak directly to the minister. He's a 50-some-year-old gentleman who's an engineer from Queen's and who was a consultant. He had a stroke when he was in his 50s. He's no longer eligible for access to OHIP-funded physiotherapy. That is absolutely shameful. This gentleman has given his life and his profession. This is one more example of why there has to be more voices put to the discussion on Bill 21.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I'm pleased that the opposition is in support of this bill. Obviously, we have said before that we believe this bill should go forward. I had an opportunity in the last two weeks to talk to a constituent of mine, a young man with multiple sclerosis, an ambassador for MS, who came to see me because, in fact, he needs this kind of bill to go forward.

We've spoken about the weaknesses of the bill, and as we go through debate this afternoon we'll talk about what we see as the limitations before us, but he was very clear with me that even with limitations this is a bill that he wanted to come forward, have a vote and be put into place.

For those who have been struck with a debilitating long-term or life-threatening disease, whose lives are already facing huge challenges, who are dealing with tremendous psychological and mental stress, the idea that they would be able to get some support from their family members who would be able to take time off work without worrying that they'd lose their employment, the idea that they would get that support in the home that they desperately need is something that they really are reaching out for.

We have said before that this bill needs a lot of improvement, that there needs to be financial support for people, that there are difficulties that will be posed here for individuals, but as my colleague from Trinity-Spadina had to say, we think it's a good sign that the opposition is willing to move forward on this bill, as are we. We think it is promising that there is concern for seniors, those who are ill. We think it is positive that this Legislature has an opportunity to take a step, even if it is very small, to help people deal with profound illness.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments for this round. I'm pleased to return to the member for Prince Edward-Hastings for his reply.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you to those who have provided comments: the member from Trinity-Spadina and the member from Toronto-Danforth, as well as the Minister of Education and my friend the member from Durham.

Indeed, we do have a lot of seniors on the doorstep. We are going to see that population balloon significantly over the next 10 years, and we need to ensure that we have the resources in place to look after all of those

people. Unfortunately, with the mismanagement that we've seen from the current government, it has put every single health care program that we have in the province in jeopardy. That's just the honest-to-goodness truth. The costs have spiralled out of control, Mr. Speaker. But has the health care actually gotten any better? I think the answer is no. As a matter of fact, I know that the answer is no, and the supports aren't in place.

So this is a nice gesture and it's a nice baby step, I guess you could say—or a small step, as the member from Toronto-Danforth put it—in looking after this one situation, but I can tell you that people in my community are having their home care cut back right now. They're in need of having people come to their home and provide the health care services in their home. I can tell you, because I used to work in a long-term-care facility before I got into broadcasting a few years ago, that on a wing of 32 people at that time, there might have been three or four who had severe cases of dementia. out of the 32. I can tell you now that 32 of 32 are dealing with severe dementia. Have the staffing levels gone up? No. We're dealing with the same number of staff.

The health care system in Ontario is in a mess. We support this bill. It is a small step, but we can do so much better if we get our fiscal house in order, something that this government has been unable to do over the last 10 years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's good to have the opportunity to speak to this bill again, I think. If I recall what I said in the past with what I'm about to say, this is not a revolutionary bill. This is a modest little bill that will help some people, and I say God bless, because at least it does something, which is always better than nothing.

What does it do? The bill provides an unpaid, job-protected leave of absence to provide care or support to certain family members who have a serious medical condition. What this means is that we are passing our obligation as government on to individuals and to families to take care of their own. That's all this bill does. We have shifted our responsibility as government and we have passed it on to the non-profit sector to do the job. We've passed it on to churches, synagogues and mosques; we have passed it on to volunteers; and we're passing it on to family members to take care of their own. If they have the money, great; if they don't have the money, "Too bad, so sad" is the new reality in this province of ours and in this country of ours.

I do not see it as a pretty future at all. What we are seeing, more and more, is income insecurity, income instability and income inequality, which is providing a great deal of stress to individuals and to families, unlike what I have ever seen before.

In the 1960s, people at least—their income was not great in the early 1960s, but throughout the 1960s and the 1970s incomes were going up. They were able to buy homes in a couple of years, or at least three, four or five. Today, you can't afford a home. Today, you can't even

afford to pay rent in the city of Toronto with the incomes that you earn. More and more people are working part-time. More and more people are working on a contract, especially in the public sector.

I often refer to colleges and universities as a sector where people used to work full-time, and now more and more of those college professors are on contract; so too with our university professors—on contract. Why? Because they don't get the funding from our government to be able to provide full-time support and full-time teaching jobs for the people who serve our colleges and universities.

More and more people are working part-time, which means that they don't have the income to take care of themselves. Some 70% of our people do not have a private pension. Many of our seniors, who are women, are poor. That's why you often hear me say in this House that I don't want to be a senior citizen, and I rage against it each and every day because I don't want to find myself a senior citizen in this province, where, if we don't continue working to have the money to be able to provide for some support, it means we are on our own, having to find family members to take care of us.

When people do not have the income, we are left with a bill that says that you can have up to eight weeks to go and take care of your own. That assumes that the employer knows about this law, that the employee knows about this law and that the employee will not be afraid of employer repercussions should he or she say to the employer, "By the way, the law allows me to do that," should he or she have the power or the confidence to be able to say to the employer, "I have, by law, up to eight weeks to take care of one of my family members." You understand that that power relationship with the employer is a very, very subtle and fragile one. Very few employees have the power and confidence to say to the employer, "The law allows me to take eight weeks"—of course, a leave without pay.

1440

We're saying to people who are financially insecure, "You have, by law, the power to take up to eight weeks to take care of one of your own." Thanks very much, government. You are so kind. God bless that you are so good to me that you allow the employer to give me up to eight weeks so that I can take care of my own, assuming I have the income—

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: It's a great thing.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, I know. It's a great thing, isn't it? Isn't it great that someone who earns \$18,000, \$20,000, \$30,000 is given the freedom—

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Seniors calling you.

Interruption.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes. But you good members are so eager to listen to me, you don't hear the sound of this phone. And maybe you want to hear my phone more than you want to hear me—very likely.

But so good and so kind you are as a government that you will allow people who earn \$30,000 a year to be able

to take eight weeks to take care of their own. You are too kind. You Liberals are just too kind.

That's the nature of the Liberal Party. They pass these little bills that they claim to be revolutionary, and they do so little—so little—especially for those who are low-income.

If I make \$70,000, \$80,000, \$100,000 and I ask my employer, "I need eight weeks," it's not so bad. I can probably handle a leave of eight weeks, unpaid, if I'm earning \$70,000, \$80,000, \$90,000, \$100,000, \$150,000, \$200,000. You know that the ones who are going to take advantage of this are the ones, of course, who are making the good bucks. These are the people who are going to take advantage of it, because the poor folks are going to be so stressed out by not having enough money and so stressed out that they have to take care of one of their own that they won't know what to do.

So we want to thank the Liberal government for their kindness—magnanimity—and that they continue to give so much to working people such as these kinds of bills.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Rosie, where would we be without you?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We embrace ever so fondly, you Liberals and we New Democrats.

This doesn't do very much. I often love the opportunity to say this because this is so typical of what Liberal bills are always all about. They do little, as always, and they proclaim it as a big, big thing for people.

I often talk about home care as a serious, serious problem. I often talk about my experience, and my father, who had Alzheimer's. If it were not for my mother, who took care of my father for seven painful long years, what would we have done? It was through the sacrifice of a mother to take care of her husband that we got through that. But how many people today have the strength to do that, to take care of their own, as my mother did? There aren't that many people. There aren't that many people today who can do that, and financially there aren't too many people who can take on that responsibility.

The shifting away of government responsibility and obligation to individual members is, to me, the worst thing that has happened to us in this decade. It used to be that we had a great socialized system that used to take care of our seniors and used to take care of those on low income—not anymore. So people struggle on their own to find a way to survive.

While organizations such as the Alzheimer Society argue that this bill is a small step and, indeed, in their view, a positive step, they argue that other measures should be taken to support people further. They suggested a non-refundable tax credit as a way of easing their burden. They talked about flexible respite as a way of supporting people.

By the way, my mother looked for respite care in many, many institutions in our area, and they didn't like to provide respite care where I took my father because they finally said, "It's too much of a burden for us to take him up to the second floor and bring him down to the first floor each and every day." They suggested that the

best solution was for my father to be institutionalized. We need respite care, and we need it everywhere across Ontario. A non-refundable tax credit would certainly help struggling families who are finding it very, very difficult to take care of their own. This bill is a tiny little step, and it's hardly revolutionary.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It is a pleasure to rise today on Bill 21, the Employment Standards Amendment Act. I think what I'm hearing from the opposition parties is that they agree we should move forward on this. There is a variety of other words that go along with that, but I think, even if it's a small step, it's a step that should be taken. In my opinion, it's a larger step than others are saying that it is. Certainly, I think we all agree that it's a positive step.

There have been a number of representatives along the way from the Ontario Caregiver Coalition who have helped us to get to this point and, I'm sure, have advised all three parties in this House. We've heard from the Alzheimer Society, from the MS Society, the Cancer Society, and the Heart and Stroke Foundation amongst others, who have told us we should do this, that this is a good thing to do. It's going to make our society a better place.

Some of the people who have been telling us to do this—Florentina Stancu-Soare, who is with us today; Dr. David Daghli; Janet Daghli; Joanne Bertrand; Abidhan Lalani; Jean Ann Lowry; Delia Sinclair Frigault; and Cristin Napier, amongst others—are people who have come forward, given us their best advice and told us that this would be a positive step forward, especially this afternoon, Speaker, if this was allowed to move forward to a vote. I would ask the House to allow that to happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Mr. Speaker, I was listening closely to what the member from Trinity–Spadina was saying, specifically when he said that this has shifted care on to non-profits. We only have to look at our history books and see that government was mostly in charge of security: armies and things like that. They weren't in the business of education. They weren't in the business of health care. It was non-profits that did these things.

The whole reason government grew and really ballooned to the state that we're in now is because it was decided by the people—it was decided democratically—that we should have government take care of things, because these non-profits often don't cover everything. They have their own agenda, and they can be very limiting. There were a lot of people who fell through the cracks and didn't get the care that they needed. That was government's job, and taxes were implemented to pay for those services.

What we have now is a situation where people are paying the taxes, paying for the services, and not getting the services. That's the real crux of the matter that I think needs to be addressed. People wouldn't mind if they

didn't pay personal income tax, gas tax, municipal tax and on and on—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Carbon tax.

Mrs. Gila Martow:—right, whatever taxes you're paying, sales tax—if people didn't have to pay all these taxes, and then they had to pay for the care of their seniors or for their health care or for educating their children. It should be one or the other. It should not be a situation where people are paying for the services, paying such high taxes, and receiving so little. Things are being removed from OHIP. Every year, people feel that something is removed without anything else being added.

Thank you for letting me make my comments, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Again, it's an honour to stand in this House on behalf of my constituents in Windsor–Tecumseh, and especially to stand today and to speak to the comments freshly made by the member from Trinity–Spadina.

The member speaks with so much passion. Every time he stands in this House, all the parties are riveted as to what the member is going to say. He has a wealth of experience, a breadth of knowledge. He speaks from the heart, and he speaks to the people.

I know the people at home watching on television this afternoon would never even dream of changing the channel when the member from Trinity–Spadina is on his feet in this House, because he speaks to them. He makes them think, and he should be making all of us think, with the points that he raises about the state of the health care system in our province and where we're headed.

1450

This bill, as he said, is a great step and a small step, but it's in the right direction, because there is so much more that could be done to improve our health care system.

Hon. John Gerretsen: So let's vote on it.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I think we should move on it this afternoon, and after I give you 10 minutes of my thoughts on it, I'll be prepared to give you that. But at the moment, I'd like to speak to the member from Trinity–Spadina. I thought he was great. I am ready to move, but I'd like to have my comments later on as well.

I think it's important for all of us, when we speak about democracy—the reason people send us here, Speaker, is for us to bring the voice from our communities to this location, to this Legislature, to this great provincial Parliament, and we all have one voice when we leave here.

I just want to comment and commend the member from Trinity–Spadina for making us think this afternoon about what more we could be doing with this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, I certainly agree with my colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh on the presentation from my good friend and colleague from Trinity–Spadina. Talk about animated, Speaker: Sometimes he is

so animated, we worry that in the flapping of his arms, he might actually take off. And we were missing his trademark word as he talked about costs. I was waiting for the pecunia, but it never actually occurred.

We've debated this bill now for 13 hours during second reading and nine hours at third reading, for a total of 22 hours. Seventy-five members of the Legislature have spoken. I'm not sure that there's a great deal left to be said, and I think we should just vote and get this bill to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We now go back to the member for Trinity–Spadina for his reply.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thanks to all the MPPs who have spoken. Of course, I want to listen to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh as well, because he has a lot to say.

I have to admit that some changes were made that were positive, and that's part of the debate. It's part of listening to the opposition, I think, so that it makes for better bills.

Two changes have been added as to allow not just physicians to determine whether the condition of the family member is serious in the meaning of the act, but also to allow nurses to make that determination, which I think is very helpful and good, because in some provinces, we don't have that many physicians close by, so a nurse might be the only person that is available. That was a good thing.

Providing for flexibility is equally good. Instead of a four-week chunk of time, a person might only need half a day or a day, so providing for that flexibility was also useful. That's part of the debate, I think. It's part of listening to the opposition in determining that there are some things that we've said that, hopefully, you like and then we make changes. All of that is very, very useful.

I have to say to the member from Thornhill that while she agrees with me about the government's responsibility to take care of people—because I think that's important—I am not sure that I agree with the whole idea of yes to government supporting seniors but no to the idea of not paying income taxes or property taxes and so on. That is, in my view, an extreme position that is difficult to support because, as we all know, we raise \$52 billion for our health care system. That's indeed a whole lot of money. I wish we spent more of it on prevention. But it's hard to take that money away.

Speaker, I thank all the members for their contribution to the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It's my pleasure to rise today to offer my points on Bill 21. I think I need to start off—I'd be absolutely remiss, Mr. Speaker, if I didn't say we're glad the Liberals finally listened to us. As a result, they amended and made some changes to improve their original bill. As a result, we're here today debating Bill 21.

This legislation—we recognize its merit and this is why we're supporting it. This legislation actually elimin-

ates inconsistencies between the federal labour code and our provincial labour laws, instead of creating more bureaucracy and mayhem and inconsistencies. We're actually looking at a bill, Bill 21, that is harmonizing the similar changes that the federal government has made to the Canada Labour Code. And to that we feel good and actually thank the Liberal Party for listening to us, because we do have our feet on the ground. We're the party with a plan. Not only are we focused on a million jobs that this economy in Ontario so badly needs, but we're also focused on getting health care right in Ontario as well.

Bill 21 reads “An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver, critically ill child care and crime-related child death or disappearance leaves of absence.” We recognize that it does a number of things. In terms of flexibility, it's introducing a proposal for family caregivers to leave up to eight unpaid weeks per year to care for a loved one. To qualify for that leave, the employee must be caring for an individual whom a physician has deemed to have a critical injury or illness and cannot care for themselves. The leave will also mirror the family medical leave significantly, except it will not include the provision of significant risk of death within a 26-week period. It also introduces a critically ill child care leave and unpaid job-protected leave for up to 37 weeks for parents caring for a critically ill child. It also introduces a crime-related child death or disappearance leave, an unpaid job-protected leave of up to 104 weeks for an employee whose child dies, if it is probably the result of a crime, or up to 52 weeks for an employee who has a person disappear, if it's probably the result of a crime.

I can't help but think of families that have experienced that type of loss and would benefit and appreciate that so much. But when we're talking about giving health care, I find it interesting that the member from Trinity–Spadina talked about and referenced the people who are financially insecure, and at a time when we're sensitive to that. The member is very correct. There are many people in Ontario that are financially insecure right now, and this government of the day—albeit they're trying to make a small step with Bill 21—is turning an absolute blind eye to what really matters. People cannot afford to live in a Liberal Ontario any longer.

Just a week or more ago, we understand, from one of their own agencies, the Ontario Energy Board, as of May 1—guess what?—electricity rates are going up again. I bring this up because there are so many little band-aid initiatives that just are nothing more than smoke and mirrors in terms of announcements that were made over this last week, when the fact of the matter is that OEB has referenced specifically—

Hon. John Gerretsen: So what did you do? More wind power. More solar power. That's what we need.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: We're hearing from the member opposite, “We need more wind and more solar.” Well, guess what? OEB actually has said the reason for

their electricity rate going up on May 1 is renewable energy. And you know what? When you check—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm having difficulty hearing the member for Huron–Bruce. I think it's important for the Speaker to point out that the comments need to be relevant to the debate.

I would return to the member for Huron–Bruce.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I raise the concern over the rising rates on May 1 that OEB has attributed to renewables, because when we're talking about people being cared for in their homes, I think of people who are on conservers or they need a particular air conditioner going. People are, at the Liberals' recommendation and encouragement, to age at home, yet to age at home you need a variety of devices, and those devices are going to use more and more energy. I'm speaking on this from personal experience, and no one dare heckle or try to refute what I'm about to say. If you have a conserver in your home, your energy rates go up. If you have to be permanently on oxygen, your energy rates go up. And what is this Liberal government doing? Turning an absolute blind eye. They're using energy as a social policy and ideology as opposed to an economic pillar.

1500

To go back to what the member from Trinity–Spadina said, people are financially insecure. These very folks who we're talking about supporting, in terms of leaves to care for their loved ones in their final chapters, are going to incur a lot more expense because of the mismanagement we've incurred through this government and this decade of despair.

With regards to aging at home, I find it interesting that my colleague from Vaughan was very, very astute to recognize what the role of government should be.

Interjection.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: From Vaughan. You're always very astute. Yes, and I look forward to hearing from you tomorrow.

But my colleague behind me here, she was very, very astute to also share that the role of government has lost its way. Once upon a time non-profits, as she noted—the member from Trinity–Spadina was noting not-for-profits took care of their own.

It made me think about a meeting I was at last Tuesday in Seaforth hospital; it was a great evening. The room was jam-packed as people celebrated the efforts of the Huron Hospice Volunteer Service. They recognized that they need to do more because this Liberal government isn't. They are trying to fill a gap. As a result, they kicked off a strategic plan to recognize the growing needs of the local palliative care population in Huron county.

There are so many more people who are standing up and telling this Liberal government, "Enough. We've got to get our priorities straight."

I think of Barbara, just a couple weeks ago, in this very hallowed hall. She was here representing a group of people who are looking at advocating for an expanded

use of Esbriet in Ontario. Barbara's up against the wall. She may be facing a double lung transplant, but it's about quality of life in her final days. We don't have a government right now, I'm afraid, that is tuned in, connecting the dots and listening to the people who are living examples of why we need to do better.

Bill 21, while we talk about leaves for caregivers, is very, very admirable and it's on the right track. As I said before, I'm glad the Liberal government finally listened to us and made some astute changes upon our recommendation and reintroduced this initiative under Bill 21. We would be remiss if we didn't point out the fact that this Liberal government continues to not connect the dots and they're missing the mark.

Not too long ago in my riding I had a wonderful person contact me. They were concerned. Their husband suffers from dementia. They contacted CCAC. They want to care for their husband at home. Guess what kind of support they're getting? The CCAC offered 45 minutes a week. All she could do was just hang up the phone and roll her eyes and in despair contact our office and say, "Really? Is this what our government of the day can offer us?" She's so frustrated with the mismanagement of funds that are going anywhere but our front lines.

I found it very interesting over the weekend, when the news broke out in the London area, in the London Free Press, about the \$40 million that was to be specifically targeted for training for nurses. All of a sudden, there have not been a lot of nurses trained. It turns out that it's probably another slush fund. It's totally, totally unacceptable.

This government is out of gas. It's out of time. People are standing up and calling them accountable for their antics and their self-induced arrogance that thinks that taxpayers could just stand by and award tax dollar after tax dollar so that they could do their bidding. It's so frustrating because we need to do better.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The member spoke about this bill, and spoke, I would say, even more about energy policy. I want to just address the bill briefly and I think my colleagues may have other comments as we go along.

As you are well aware, Speaker, the bill provides an unpaid, job-protected leave of absence to provide care or support to certain family members who have a serious medical condition. As many have said in this chamber previously, this is a very small step. It's positive, but frankly, we think there's going to be low uptake unless the federal government changes employment insurance regulations so caregivers who take advantage of the leave actually have access to an income that will allow them to stay away from their employment for any length of time.

Most employees don't understand their rights under the Employment Standards Act. The government of Ontario, when and if this bill is passed and put into law, needs to inform the public that in fact the law exists, that there's an opportunity for them to take this leave, and

frankly, they need to know that employers can't take reprisals against employees for taking this leave.

Right now, everyone who would be covered under the Employment Standards Act would have the right under this act to take leave. As I've said, it's not a bad step, but a very small step, given the difficulty many people would have in missing one, two, three or four paycheques. That poses huge difficulties for people to give the care at home that family members need and, frankly, deserve.

There wouldn't be a requirement that an employee be employed for a particular length of time with an employer. That's a positive angle.

Speaker, when it's my opportunity to speak again, I will enlarge on these comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Fraser: I don't want to say it's a pleasure to rise today to speak again to Bill 21. Let's go back and take a look at the facts. We all agree it's something we can do for families. It's an important step. We've all agreed on that. We debated it, I think, for 13 hours here in the House, for second reading. It went to committee: We heard from stakeholders. We had a great public consultation session. We amended the bill. We all agreed to move the bill forward to this Legislature, and now we're in our 10th hour of debate—10 hours.

This is a bill that's important to families, to people who have a loved one they need to support. It helps them to protect their jobs. It's not something we should continue to debate. The message we are sending by continuing to debate, with an exclamation mark, is that we don't want to get things done in this House. It's not that we don't agree on this bill, but we're not agreeing on this bill because we don't want to bring forward another bill. In my books, that is absolutely wrong.

I think people send us here to get things done. We have an opportunity to do that now, and we should be moving forward and getting this piece of legislation passed so that families are supported and their jobs are protected when they have a serious situation in front of them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: I just have a diligence to remind the people listening at home and those in the House that that party there controls the agenda. Their leader prorogued government. Most of the bills that we're debating now could have been in two and a half years ago. Four months, Mr. Speaker, they prorogued.

Dalton McGuinty prorogued Parliament, Mr. Speaker. We aren't the problem here, so we shouldn't be getting these little prayers and speeches to us. This is a bit sanctimonious from that government who has prorogued.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Now that I've made that point very clear for the people at home, we're doing our due dili-

gence. We're representing the needs of our constituents as we need to.

It's my pleasure, absolutely, to rise on behalf of my colleague and neighbour from Huron—Bruce. She's one of the most conscientious, caring members of this assembly. Every day she focuses on the people in her riding. She puts the needs of the people first, and she comes to this House every day to do that. I'm proud to stand beside her, arm in arm, on this bill especially.

We did bring some changes, some much-needed changes and amendments, to this bill because, like a lot of bills that the Liberals have done, they brought them without stakeholder consultation. They've rushed them to this assembly, trying to steamroll, employing—to be honest, the whole thing beyond us. We really need time to slow some of this down and make sure we're doing it right before we enact it and have to fix it, which is what we've had to do with lots of the legislation they've brought here.

1510

I think that what we brought as another practical piece that was fair to both the employer and the employee, one of the key ones, was a time allocation. Not everyone gets sick in a consecutive week, so we brought that in and said they should be able to use it when they need it, when the person at home needs the care, so that we have that ability to have the leave—not just consecutive weeks, because, again, they had an ideal coming out of them.

I think the last point she raised was that it is time enough. They've doubled the debt. There are 600,000 people out of work. Mr. Speaker, we just can't afford more of a deficit from this government.

We're looking forward to this bill being enacted and we will support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I was listening to my colleague across, and he talked about: 13 hours; it went to committee; amendments to the bill; 10 hours of debate; important to families; not to continue to debate.

I've been here all afternoon. If you want to put a motion forward, maybe we can see what happens there. Put a motion forward and see if we can move it forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the questions and comments. I return to the member for Huron—Bruce for her reply.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I certainly appreciate everybody's perspective, and it's their right to share comments based on my concerns and reflections on Bill 21.

I appreciate that the member from Toronto—Danforth found that I spoke on energy. You can't talk about caring for people in their homes or in a hospice or in respite without recognizing that that cost, under the Liberal watch, is going through the roof. Enough is enough.

The member from Ottawa South talked about how it's important to look at the facts. Well, do you know what? Not only do we have to protect people and their jobs—he talked about that very instance—but I would also suggest that we have to take it further and we need to be talking

about protecting pocketbooks. Again, life has become totally unaffordable because of the direction this Liberal government has taken.

I appreciate the comments from the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, my neighbour and friend. He was very astute in recognizing that it's our right to stand up and debate. Perhaps the member from Ottawa South does not recall prorogation because he was working at 180 Elgin Street at the time—and we all know the significance of 180 Elgin Street, people who have been paying attention to the gas plants.

The member from Niagara Falls says that we need to get on with business. It is all very important—because we have had enough of the hoodwinking. We've had enough of their arrogance. We've had enough of smoke-screens.

Bill 21 is a small step, and we have to do so much better for the folks from Ontario. We need affordability, we need jobs and we need to have a climate that enables people to care for their loved ones at home.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 21, the Employment Standards Amendment Act.

Speaker, if I may, to the Minister of Labour: Thank you, Minister, for the ribbons for the day of mourning this afternoon, recognizing the people whose lives have been forever changed by workplace injury, illness or fatality.

I would have much preferred to be in Windsor this afternoon. We have an annual ceremony there at 5 o'clock, and then we go down to the riverfront, to the Peace Fountain, and lay flowers in memory of those who have been killed or injured on the job. My best wishes go out to those who will be taking part in that ceremony this afternoon. I normally attend. This will be the first one I've missed in several years. As a councillor, I always seized the opportunity to be there.

This bill provides an unpaid, job-protected leave of absence to provide care or support to certain family members who have a serious medical condition. I'm happy to see the bill come to the House on the third reading. I think so much has been said about it, but it's always good to remind people, especially those at home, just what we're talking about here.

I remember reading the notes when the former Minister of Labour first introduced the bill. He said, "Our government recognizes the challenges that hard-working Ontarians face when they must provide care for a loved one while also working full-time, and we," meaning the Liberal government, "believe that the last thing Ontarians should worry about when the health of their loved one hangs in the balance is the stress of work or the fear of losing their job. That's why our government already provides Ontarians with a personal emergency leave for up to 10 days or a family medical leave for up to eight weeks to care for a family member at risk of death.

"But we know that there is a gap for those hard-working Ontarians who are increasingly caring for their elderly family members with a chronic acute medical condition, not to mention other family members facing serious illnesses that do not necessarily pose a risk of death."

So the bill gets tabled, the family caregiver leave, and it amends the Employment Standards Act. The Ontario Liberals prorogued the Legislature for their own reasons, and that's why we're here today. Although we keep hearing from members opposite that people on this side of the House should sit down and be quiet, we wouldn't be here today speaking to this; this would have been handled some months ago.

I sometimes get the feeling, when we debate in the House and the government says we've had enough debate—so many hours, so many speakers—it's like when you go to a concert and people are lined up to get a ticket to get in. Of course, the Liberals are always first in line, and so they get in. They get a ticket to get in. Then they say, "Let's close the door and start the concert." Well, what about the rest of us, who want the opportunity to either get in and listen to the band or the entertainment, or to have a say in what's going on? I'm still in line. Thank you.

There are several things in this bill that we could be talking about this afternoon. I'm happy that the government has finally realized that family members require a bit more flexibility in this day and age to support the ones they love the most. I remember listening to the member from Prince Edward–Hastings earlier today, and he talked about the hospice in his riding. It reminded me, as the member from Windsor West would know well, of the hospice village that we have in Windsor, one of the first in the province, and the wonderful services they provide to our community.

I often think, when I read the obituaries in the newspapers on a regular basis, that more and more these days, we're hearing about people who have passed away quietly at home, or peacefully at home, surrounded by their loved ones. Although we have a great hospice, we can't always get in there—I mean, there's only so much room—so people these days are deciding they'd much rather pass away at home, in familiar surroundings, surrounded by the ones they love.

It makes you think the need for this bill is even more so, because it doesn't happen overnight. You are actually attending to the person in their final hours. It may take weeks; it may take days; it may take months. But the loved ones are gathered, and it gives us a great opportunity to say our final farewells and, as you know, to say, "I love you, Dad. I'm going to miss you. Thank you for everything." That's part of this bill. That's part of the makeup of this bill as well.

The scary thing, I guess, is that we know the Ontario demographic is shifting, and that's not a disputed fact at all. Information about the Ontario population projections, based on Canada census data, tells us that the number of seniors aged 65 and over in Ontario is projected to more

than double from two million, or 14.6% of the population, in 2012 to almost 4.2 million, or 24%, by 2036. That says that the growth in the share and number of seniors will accelerate from the 2012 to 2031 period as the baby boomers turn 65, as I have done.

We have an aging population, simple as that, and it requires more folks to need more care and attention than ever before, and that need will continue to grow. I don't think anybody will dispute that. We know that this will put significant pressure on our health care system and on our families, who require that flexibility to take care of family members in their ill health at that time of need. I make no bones about it. I'm part of that aging demographic, and it would be comforting to know that my children would have the ability to take the time off work to care for my needs. But, Speaker, let's hope I don't require their services any time soon for that specific purpose.

1520

I know that in our NDP caucus meetings, we have had much discussion on this topic, and I know that my colleagues spoke up at committee on this bill as well. We know that having time off is critical for those who are in a difficult situation, and we need to take that time off: time off in the form of a protected leave of absence, so individuals can provide care and support to family members who have serious medical conditions. But I question the enforcement of this bill. Probably the biggest obstacle to employees taking advantage of this leave is a fear that an employer could take some form of reprisal. I certainly hope that's not the case. I seriously hope the government addresses this concern. That would defeat the purpose of the amendment. Most employees don't understand their rights under the Employment Standards Act, and the government must ensure that Ontario workers know more about the leave and that there are no employer reprisals for employees wishing to take the leave. That's my biggest fear.

We know that there's a number of other leaves granted under the Ontario Employment Standards Act, and we must not get this new caregiver leave confused with the family medical leave. The family medical leave provides for up to eight weeks to provide care to a family member who has a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death occurring within 26 weeks, and since 2004 there's been employment insurance support for that leave. We know things are tight right now. People are getting squeezed at their wallets or their purses, and people are living paycheque to paycheque in many cases these days. The province seems to be involved in scandal after scandal, and yet we hear about the latest revelations, as we talked about all morning, on the Herb Gray Parkway.

So we need the government to get some things right, and I think it's that time. This bill is going to do some of that. It's too bad, though, that we don't see an enhanced type of income support mechanism with this leave, like we do with the family medical leave. There's no employment insurance support for this leave, but I did hear about

the province talking to the feds about possible EI support, and that is certainly a great step in the right direction. I certainly support that. The Liberal government must push the federal government hard to change EI so that there is some form of income support for those taking this leave. Let's hope those discussions are ongoing and that we do see some action. Let's turn our minds to a perfect example of increased care required by our families.

I have more to say. Maybe I'll get into that further on. I want to talk about the Alzheimer's Society and all the special needs that they have coming up with an aging population. Thank you for your time and your attention this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I want to respond to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh and just say that it was good to hear many of the comments that were positive about this legislation. We've heard that in the House from all three parties, together with some criticism thrown in on other subjects from time to time. I believe 78 members have spoken on this for a total of 23 hours, and it seems to have good support, so I think it's time to call on the opposition to quit delaying this bill. Let's stop the stalling and let's pass it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It is a privilege to stand before this privileged Legislature and to talk about Bill 21, Employment Standards Amendment Act. I listened to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, and you can tell, just by listening to the tone of his voice and so on, that he's a compassionate man. Of course, we are going to be supporting this bill as a caucus.

The points that he made were very, very strong as far as I was concerned. It's a small step, though. This is a very small step, but I'm glad to see that the Liberal government has, in fact, been listening to comments of the opposition.

Hon. John Gerretsen: We listen all the time. Every day we listen.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Hearing is one thing; listening is something totally different, to the minister without portfolio.

However, again, when we talk about Bill 21, I like the fact that family caregivers will get up to eight weeks of unpaid leave per year, and I think that's good for them. Also, I see it as two-sided, because not only is it helpful for those who can provide care to the individuals, but also I think there's a side note in there to help businesses as well. They obviously don't want to feel like they have to lose a good employee; they'll grant them up to eight weeks. There is a catch to this as well, and that is that physicians must have deemed it a critical injury or illness and the fact that the sick person cannot care for themselves.

As I said earlier, we will, in fact, support this bill, but it's unfortunate that the former Premier, Dalton McGuinty—McGuinty, sorry—prorogued this Legisla-

ture. When he did that, he wiped out all the bills that were, in fact, before this Legislature—costly to all taxpayers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the words from my colleague the member from Windsor–Tecumseh. He speaks about the need for this kind of care and the reality that a large percentage of this population is aging and is going to require these services. I know that the government likes to present itself as compassionate. I want to note that there is a very large sector of our public service, the managerial and professional services, AMAPCEO—you may know them—who are engaged in negotiations with the Liberals right now and who have been told they're going to have to live with substantial cuts to their health care benefits—substantial rollbacks.

We've been through this before; we saw it with teachers and education workers. When you don't deal with people on a respectful basis—everyone knows you have to be tough, but also everyone knows you have to be fair and respectful—then you demoralize a workforce.

Frankly, we're talking about a law here that will require public servants to deal with companies, to deal with employers, and to stand up for people who are going to be, I'm sure, at times, denied these benefits. They are going to want to go to those public servants, get their support, get them to advocate for them and get them to enforce the law. We can't, on one hand, say that we're going to look after people, and on the other hand say that we have to take it out on those who we actually expect to deliver the services, to protect the public and to enforce the law.

This small step is nothing that we object to. We're willing to see it go forward, but we also say that those who do that managerial and professional work, who make sure these laws get put in place and enforced, and those who give us advice so that we can actually govern in this province, deserve to be treated with respect and deserve to have negotiations that reflect the value of what they give to this province.

This bill may be compassionate; the way our senior civil servants are being treated is not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Monte Kwinter: The opposition parties are needlessly extending debate on Bill 21 by continuing to put up speakers. The bill has now been debated for 13 hours during second reading and 10 hours at third reading, for a total of 22 hours. Over 79 members of the Legislature have either spoken to this bill or participated in the debate during questions and comments. In listening to the debate, it has been clear that the majority of members are in support of this bill.

The opposition parties are needlessly extending debate on Bill 21 by putting up speaker after speaker. This signals that there's no true desire to have further meaningful debate on this bill and that their only goal is to delay. I'm

calling on the opposition parties to stop stalling and help us pass this important piece of legislation.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That ends our questions and comments for this round. We return to the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for his two-minute reply.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Thank you to the members from Ottawa–Orléans, Chatham–Kent–Essex, Toronto–Danforth and York Centre.

Just a quick comment to the member from York Centre: My colleague from Niagara Falls, a few minutes ago, asked the government to bring forth a motion so we could vote on this bill. He called your bluff, and you kept saying so many speakers, so much time. He asked you to put forth a motion so we could vote before I spoke. Nobody made a motion. If you want a motion, bring it forward. We'll vote on it. We'll get this done. Let's get it done.

Speaker, I ran out of time the last time. I want to talk about the Alzheimer Society, that Ontarians with dementia will require more complex care as the number of cases increases by 40% in the next 10 years. The responsibility of care falls largely on the shoulders of family members who will provide 144 million hours of unpaid care per year by 2020. We know that, today, Alzheimer disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians and that will continue to grow.

I have a petition in my community that has been circulating for a few weeks and the signatures keep pouring in. It speaks to creating, in Ontario, a provincial dementia plan. But just think about all the other diseases and illnesses that have an impact as well.

This bill deserves our support. Bring it forward. We will vote on it. We will be supporting it. But we also recognize that our greater medical community needs more support as well. I know our nurses—I met with our community care nurses—need support. Nurses across the system and personal support workers can really use our help. There are a lot of things in our health care system that need improving. This is a small step in the right direction.

As I say, we will be voting on it. We will be supporting it whenever the government brings forth the motion. Let's have it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'm very pleased to speak on this bill for a very short period of time because this bill is about only one thing, and that is compassion—compassion that we need to show to people in need, our family members who need the assistance of other family members. When you put it all together, that's really what this bill is all about.

Now, according to the count of the table and according to the highly efficient staff of the House leader's office, more than 80 members have spoken about this bill. Out of the 107 members here, 80 members have spoken about this bill. Each and every member has said they're going

to support the bill. So I am quite sure that the people out there in television land who may be watching this on an ongoing basis are probably saying to themselves, “How can it be that a bill that has been spoken to by 80 members, who have all taken the same position, that they support the bill”—Speaker, in all honesty, there aren’t too many bills in this House that you can say the opposition agrees with, the Tory opposition agrees with and the third party, the New Democratic Party, agrees with. This is one of those bills that everybody agrees to because it speaks to compassion.

During the time that those 80 members have spoken, they’ve spoken for something like 13 to 14 hours on second reading and a further 11 hours or 10½ hours during third reading. That means, in total, about 24 hours. Think about this: One whole day of time has been taken up talking about a bill that we all agree to.

The bill has been supported by all sorts of good caregiving organizations in our community. The Ontario Caregiver Coalition agrees with the bill. The MS Society—and I know we’ve all done functions from time to time with the MS Society in our own communities. They support the bill. Parkinson Society Ontario supports the bill. The Alzheimer Society supports the bill. I just heard the member from Windsor–Tecumseh talk about how important it is to do something about the issue of dementia which is growing on an ongoing basis in our society from one generation to the next. They agree with this bill. The Canadian Cancer Society—and there are so many different wings to the cancer society—supports the bill. The ALS Society, the Ontario Home Care Association, the Crohn’s and Colitis Foundation of Canada, the Saint Elizabeth organization—every good organization in this province agrees with this bill. It is about time that we finally put it to bed and that we all vote the same way so that this bill can be given royal assent and can be proclaimed as soon as possible so that the people of this province who need the support of this bill, who need to look after family members in their homes who need the help, can actually start implementing this bill, and so that the employers, in effect, can be subjected to the bill as well.

Speaker, as you know, the bill was introduced more than a year ago—March 5, 2013. That is a long, long time ago. The bill has had a tremendous amount of debate, as I’ve already talked about before.

What will the bill primarily do? It will help Ontarians provide care and support for family members with a very serious medical condition, for a critically ill child—and what better way to look after your child, when that child is critically ill, than for a parent or a close relative to actually take time off from work so that the child can be looked after properly, preferably in the home, but in some circumstances in a hospital setting where the child needs the help of that particular parent or caregiver. The bill will also allow that person to take some time to deal with the death and disappearance of one’s child as a probable result of a crime. There can be no more horrify-

ing situation than that, when a child has either disappeared or has died as a result of a crime.

With all that being said, it’s time that the bill passes third reading and becomes law today, or as soon as we pass it here and as soon as we can send it over to the Lieutenant Governor.

There are many other important bills that we should be discussing. Let’s talk about Bill 131, the Youth Smoking Prevention Act. I think everybody, every adult, will certainly agree with that—maybe not every youth that wants to smoke; let’s hope there aren’t that many of them. But certainly Bill 131 needs more debate, so we can do that once we pass this bill. How about Bill 141, the Infrastructure for Jobs and Prosperity Act? That’s another bill that we should be talking about. The Ontario Immigration Act, Bill 161; or Bill 165, the Fair Minimum Wage Act, which will set in motion a definite scheme whereby annually, on a given date, the minimum wage in Ontario will increase, rather than doing it the way we have in the past, every four or five years.

Having said all of that and with all of the time that we’ve spent debating this piece of legislation, I move that this question now be put at this point in time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I’m going to recess the House for 10 minutes. This House is in recess.

The House recessed from 1538 to 1548.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): During the debate on Bill 21, this House has heard over 13 hours at second reading. Bill 21 has had full consideration at committee stage. We have now had over 10 hours at third reading. Given these statistics, I’m prepared to allow the motion.

Mr. Gerretsen has moved that the question now be put. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed to the motion will say “nay.”

In my opinion the ayes have it. The motion is carried.

Mr. Naqvi has moved third reading of Bill 21, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver, critically ill child care and crime-related child death or disappearance leaves of absence. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

I wish to inform the House that I have received from the chief government whip a notice of deferral asking that the vote be deferred on Bill 21 until tomorrow at the time of deferred votes.

Third reading vote deferred.

ONTARIO IMMIGRATION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR L'IMMIGRATION
EN ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 26, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnett): When this bill was last debated, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke had the floor. Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm happy to speak on Bill 161. As many of us are aware, Ontario was the number one destination for immigration in Canada. That is certainly no longer the case. I believe that immigrants believe that there are jobs. They may arrive here. They may believe that we're the destination and they want to be here, but unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, they find out it's not so easy to find a job in Ontario. The streets aren't paved with gold, as they were told. They often head out west or to the Maritimes, where job growth is certainly happening with some of the manufacturing that seems to be leaving Ontario at a very alarming rate. It's not a joke that immigrants are coming here, and youth are graduating secondary schools, universities and colleges and unable to find meaningful work. In fact, adults who may leave the work force, either to take time off to be with their children or take care of their elderly parents—or just maybe their company has left the province—are not finding an easy time to find employment that's meaningful; and they have the job experience, so imagine how it is for youth or immigrants to find meaningful employment in Ontario.

There's no point talking about another government bureaucracy to aid immigrants before and after they arrive in Ontario, if we're not going to have the jobs in place for these future citizens of our province. This really is putting the proverbial cart before the horse. We need to grow our economy. We need to have the jobs available before we contemplate spending money to attract and settle immigrants in Ontario. There was talk previously, on the previous bill—I think it was the member from Trinity–Spadina who brought up the fact that we're heading towards a disproportionate number of seniors in the province of Ontario as the baby boomer cohort ages; we're seeing a disproportionate number of people in the province, a higher and higher percentage every year. We don't have to be actuaries to see where the demographic changes are happening. We're seeing a future for Ontario that's very scary, that we're going to have a large number of seniors requiring additional health care in hospital, as well as home care, physiotherapy—things that the government keeps cutting back on. There are a lot of seniors in my riding who are very concerned. They've seen their

physiotherapy under OHIP cut back just quite recently, this past year or two.

If we cannot attract and keep youth in our province, either by immigration or the youth who were born here in Ontario or other parts of Canada—youth used to travel from other parts of the country to come to Ontario; now our youth are leaving to other parts of the country. If we don't have jobs for the youth and for the younger immigrants, I think the member from Trinity–Spadina is right to be worried and ring the bell of caution and say we're going to be in a situation where we have seniors who require care. Where does the care funding come from? It comes from tax revenue. If we don't have high employment, where are we going to get that tax revenue from? So we're definitely right to be concerned.

I think that this government has had 10 years to work with the federal government and ensure that we had good immigration programs in place. They've had 10 years to grow our economy and lower our jobless rate and grow our industries. Instead, we're seeing shrinkage in the job sector.

High energy costs are of great concern, not just for homeowners but for business owners, and just in the newspapers this week, hospitals are worried that they're seeing their energy costs soar and they don't have the funding for that. All this new technology that we use for health care requires energy, requires electricity and generators. If natural gas and electricity rates are the highest in North America, that's another drain on our health care dollars, that instead of the money going for front-line health care, we're seeing the money directed to energy costs.

I think we all want to have a great balance in the province of Ontario. Certainly Thornhill—I invite all the members of the Legislature from all parties to come up and see Thornhill, what a diverse community it is, how successful it is. We've got two great cities—municipalities—in Thornhill that provide services to immigrants in more languages than I can even list. Our hospitals, as well, provide a lot of translation, just through the staff who work in the hospital because they offer their services to do a lot of translating work just as part of their day-to-day job. I, myself, speak two languages other than English well enough to do my job, which used to be—as an optometrist, I was able to provide care in both Hebrew and French, in addition to English, in my office.

When we talk about welcoming immigrants, people don't really picture the individuals and what those individuals have to offer to our province, not just in low-paying minimum wage jobs, but immigrants who come with incredible skills, incredible experience and incredible knowledge. Once they come to Ontario and they're unable to find a job, they move elsewhere, they put down roots, and it's not easy to entice people back. Once our youth graduate university, college and secondary school and they go out west to find jobs, they're not necessarily coming back. We need to ensure that we have the climate, that everybody has a meaningful job, that we have

the economy that can fund the health care system that we all need and we all rely on.

I think that we cannot blame it on a recession when the rest of the country is thriving. We cannot blame anybody but ourselves. We're all responsible for the government that we elect. I think that we've had a government for 10 years that, I believe, has shown—

Interjection.

1600

Mrs. Gila Martow: I guess the Speaker is returning. I thought maybe I had to sit down. We're just switching Speakers now, for the viewers at home, so I'm pausing.

Welcome back, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Oh, we're doing a rotation of Speakers.

Interjections.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Yes, I was just going to say I hope it's not a reflection on anything I'm saying or doing.

Interjections.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I thought maybe the opposite.

We'll return now to the discussion at hand, which, for those of you who weren't following perhaps, is about having a friendly environment for immigration and how I'm concerned about the cost of this new bureaucracy. I haven't seen any numbers of what it would cost.

I think that we've got a very bloated government.

As I said earlier, we only have to look at fairly recent history, 100 to 200 years ago. That's not that far back. It was a time when government was not in charge of health care, was not in charge of education, was not in charge if you had a senior who needed home care. This was done by family members, by non-profit groups, by religious institutions and organizations. Rightly so, it was felt that too many people weren't getting the care that they needed, the education that they deserved, and the recognition and the fairness, maybe, that was required in a fair and just society. And rightly so, it was felt that government would take over a lot of these institutions and ensure that things were done in a fair and non-discriminatory fashion—and also, to regulate all of the different institutions and all of the different professions, as well as immigration, to keep an eye on things. Obviously, revenue had to be generated by the government to manage all of these public institutions, and income tax was implemented. At the time, taxes were raised to fight wars, but they weren't lowered after the wars were over.

We keep seeing new taxes. This government brought in a health premium tax when they promised not to raise taxes. They just call it—

Interjection.

Mrs. Gila Martow: It's still a tax. If it's money out of your pocket that goes to the government, then it's a tax. Otherwise, we are just arguing the—

Interjection.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Well, the problem isn't about raising taxes or not raising taxes. The problem is the collection of taxes and not providing the services that are supposed to be provided with those tax dollars. We all

pay our income taxes, our gas taxes, our health premium taxes, our municipal taxes.

Ontario is the highest-taxed jurisdiction, I believe, in the world. The rate of taxation in Ontario, according to a recent study that was announced just this morning—we are taxed the highest in the world. That would be all right if we also got the best health care in the world and the best education in the world. I see a lot of cuts to health care. I see a lot of cuts to education. And I see soaring costs, not just in terms of taxes, due to government policies. Maybe that's not a direct tax, but in my mind, if money comes out of a family's budget to pay for something that rose in cost because of the government's policies, that might as well be called a tax. If people are seeing their hydro bills double because of a government policy, it doesn't matter who gets that money; the cause is government policies, and we might as well start to call that a tax.

We cannot entice immigrants to come and stay in Ontario if the cost of living is too high and there aren't meaningful, well-paid jobs for them. So, to develop a new bureaucracy at huge cost to the taxpayers of Ontario in order to welcome immigrants to Ontario because it's felt that we need a workforce to provide the revenue tools for our aging population—and the immigrants are willing to come. That's what's so incredible. They're willing to come, even with the knowledge that we want them here to boost our economy so that we can collect the revenue that we need in order to fund all of our social programs and to care for our seniors, even though they've left their seniors back home and often have to send money back to care for them because they can't always sponsor their older family members or bring them when they do come.

I think it's unfair of us to expect the taxpayers of Ontario to pay for another bureaucracy in order to entice immigrants who aren't going to stay in Ontario. So unless we can show that we have the jobs and the quality of life available that the immigrants expect, they will not stay in Ontario. They will move to other parts of the country, and the Ontario taxpayers are footing the bill.

I think that we really need to re-examine the big picture of what we want for our future, for our future seniors, for ourselves. We're all going to be seniors, and quite a few of us in the room are already seniors and grandparents, as we said this morning. We congratulated the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, who was speaking earlier, on becoming a grandparent. We're all in that situation where we're about to be seniors, I think, or are worried about our aging parents.

I'm sure that people in the Legislature and people at home watching are worried about how they're going to care for their parents in the current climate, where jobs are precarious, where businesses are suffering. Even if people are willing to spend their own money to care for seniors, they need to have the money to spend. If they deplete all of their savings caring for their own parents, and if their children aren't able to find meaningful work and are just working two part-time jobs without benefits and a chance at long-term employment, it's not unreason-

able for people to feel anxious and to raise that concern that perhaps their government isn't looking at the big picture and isn't concerned enough with the future of the province and, perhaps, doesn't quite understand how important each and every person is.

Maybe we get too caught up in talking about constituencies and ridings and demographics, and we forget that when we talk about numbers, we're talking about individual people. I think that that's why it's so meaningful when the little girl Madi came, who had cystic fibrosis. When it puts a face to the issue, that we're all human beings, from all parties—and we start to really pay a bit closer attention to the issue when we're faced with the actual person who is having difficulty.

We all know that there are limits. There are limits to what governments can do, what doctors can do, hospitals and even education systems, but the question is, can we do better, and should we do better? We definitely can do better, and we definitely should do better. I think that it's shameful if we're all here to take care of not just one patient but every single person in the province, their health, their education and their quality of life.

We should have an incredible, happy province of Ontario, and there are far too many people who are looking for work in what should be the best place in the world to find employment. In fact, we have the highest unemployment in the country of Canada, which means we probably have some of the highest unemployment in North America, and it's not acceptable.

1610

We really have to not just look at creating more government bureaucracy, which takes money out of health care and takes money out of education when we have additional government bureaucracies, and we have to keep as much money as possible where it's needed, where it should be and get that economy moving and focus on creating the jobs and the growth.

If we have to go company by company and say, "What will it take to get job growth without costing the taxpayers of Ontario?"—because of course we all know that the government could just borrow more money from the bank, which we see this government is very good at. We could just borrow money from the bank tomorrow and just write a cheque to everybody in the province for \$1 million and just say, "Whoopee; everybody is rich." But we all understand that when the government of Ontario borrows money, as has been going on—we have the highest deficit. In fact, the debt in Ontario is pretty much equal to the debt of every other province combined in Canada. That's unacceptable for the province that used to be the driving force, economically, of the country, of Confederation. It's not acceptable.

We have to focus on the economy and we have to stop talking about what we're going to do in terms of growing government bureaucracy when we haven't addressed the important issue, which really is the jobless rate in the province and not just the high unemployment but the type of jobs.

Thank you, Madam Speaker. I'm—

Mr. Bill Walker: One of three.

Mrs. Gila Martow: One of three speakers, yes.

Mr. Bill Walker: You should thank them all.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Yes, thank you to all the speakers. I'm one of the newest elected. Two of us were elected just a couple of months ago. I had a lot to learn, but I've really had support from the PC caucus as well as from members from the other two parties—just learning by watching, often. As I'm speaking to the Speaker, I'm wondering if I'm supposed to say Madam Speaker or Mr. Speaker, depending on the gender. Isn't that funny? But thank you, Madam Speaker.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Thornhill. I think there are a couple of things here that have to be corrected for the record. Maybe she can comment on them when she has two additional minutes.

She said that the majority of immigrants are no longer coming to Ontario. While it is true that it has fallen below 50% of the total immigrant intake into Canada every year, it's still above 40% or 43%. No other province comes anywhere close, including Alberta and Saskatchewan, which are lucky to get about 15% apiece.

She talked about creating a bureaucracy. This bill is very timid in its nature. It is going to choose only 3% to 4% of the immigrants coming to Ontario. The balance of the bureaucracy and the balance of everything that is done is done federally, abroad, through the visa departments. If there are any workers in this, they would choose the provincial nominees and the economic class. Those people are not coming here to a bad economy—I will agree that there is some bad economy in some parts of Ontario—they are coming here to improve the economy. That is why they're provincial nominees. They have a specific skill which is in demand in order to help an industry or a commercial operation for which there is a great need, or they're in the economic class and their responsibility is to come here with money in order to set up businesses and employ Ontarians. So I think that the arguments that have been made are perhaps not as correct as they should be.

This bill is a very timid bill. I've already spoken to it. I worked in immigration for 20 years before becoming a politician. It is very timid. What is being suggested here is only a small portion of what Quebec and other provinces are successfully doing. If we want to lag further behind Quebec, Alberta and Saskatchewan, then we need to do nothing, as has been suggested. If we want to move ahead—

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

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: It's a privilege to speak on the Ontario Immigration Act, Bill 161. As my honourable colleague from Beaches–East York has quite rightly cited, largely it's a federal responsibility.

Having said that, I think it's important for Ontario and our various government bodies to actually move into this jurisdiction, as was pointed out by other speakers, to be

selective of the immigrants who come and grace our province with their presence on an economic level—perhaps also skill sets, perhaps screening that would be done in a more efficient and long-term, beneficial manner as they come here to Ontario.

I have to just say also, Speaker, with your indulgence, sitting here, watching some of the changes that the federal government has been making, frankly speaking, to my mind, it seems as if they've almost essentially forgotten about Ontario. I think that there's an underlying ethos, thinking, philosophy on the federal side that Canada is now Alberta and maybe some surrounding environs, because from what I can see, they have been largely moving the resources, the incentives and the economic-class immigrants elsewhere. Whether that's a previous reflection of the number of MPs that were part of the Tory caucus federally or not, that's perhaps for wiser heads than mine to be decided.

But I think that this is an important tool, and we certainly support our colleague Michael Coteau, Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, as part of an integrated plan for the benefit of Ontarians. As I've said, whether we're looking for economic-class immigrants or skill set immigrants, the individuals will hopefully be more than just these temporary foreign workers that we seem to hear so many negative things about.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to compliment the member from Thornhill for her remarks as a regulated health professional herself. As an optometrist, she's well qualified to express whether things are present or not in the current system.

I think the important part is that this bill has seven sections to it. In each section there's a requirement of the government to set up some process. It sounds like a tremendous red tape bill, although I want to put on the record formally that we do support the bill and we support many of the accommodations here. Like in all things, we're calling on this government to actually have a jobs plan. This sounds like a red tape plan more than anything else.

When you look at the sections themselves—I think some of the comments made previously by the member from Etobicoke North are a good example of not having the interests of Ontario at heart. He shouldn't be talking about the federal government. They love to blame someone else for everything. They have no other motive out here but to blame someone else for all the problems in Ontario today. I think that they are taking the lead from federal skills programs and the fact that we have to now have what they call the “expression of interest.” This is extremely important when you're working in partnership with the federal government. They are trying to create jobs. In fact, they're trying to create access, if you read the section I'm looking at here, to persons who are coming to Canada and putting some pressure on the college of a health profession to make registration—numbers 5 and 7 both talk about “a reasonable time. The

registrar of a college is required to establish a process for dealing with” applications. So they need to recognize credentials from foreign workers, and I would support that as well as looking at the some of the modernization that they're trying to do federally in other programs.

I support the member from—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I particularly listened to the member from Beaches—East York when he did his lead-in on the bill on how important he felt it was that we aren't really pushing far enough to welcome new immigrants into Ontario and that we should be looking at other models in other provinces in order to be successful if we're going to attract new Canadians to Ontario.

Some of the statistics that we have: Currently, it's estimated that Ontario will face a shortage of 364,000 skilled workers by 2025. The aging population of our skilled workers is diminishing as time goes on and we need to make sure that we have a real, solid strategy in order to attract skilled labour into Ontario.

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Speaking from experience, my parents were new Canadians in Ontario—I'm trying to think here—over 45 years ago, anyway. My dad got a job as a labourer when he came. He learned that skill as he arrived here, but there were also very many new Canadians who came that did have skills that contributed to the construction industry, as one of the major industries that needed skilled labour. A lot of the Italian and Portuguese population in the London area really were a driving force in building the city, and they're very proud of that.

Knowing that we're going to have that skills shortage, of course we should cultivate our own students and our own population to make sure that those positions also flourish. But we can't meet those needs, they're so high. By 2025, if we're going to be making sure that we have that skilled force here, we need to encourage immigration in a smart way in order to make sure we don't have those gaps in skilled labour.

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

Mrs. Gila Martow: I want to thank the member for London—Fanshawe for reminding all of us that for most of us, I think, our parents were immigrants, or if not, our grandparents. I think Toby Barrett—sorry; I shouldn't say his name. What's the name of the riding?

Mr. Bill Walker: Haldimand—Norfolk. The duke.

Mrs. Gila Martow: The duke. His family goes back many generations on a farm in his riding.

It is important for the government of the day to ensure that immigrants are welcomed and to ensure that when immigrants come here, they're treated fairly. But the focus really needs to be on them finding jobs.

My parents both weren't born in Canada, and both went to university in Montreal at McGill at a time when the Jewish community had to earn 10% higher. So basically their marks were lowered by 10%, and that's a topic to remind us how important it is for the government to

ensure fairness and that immigrants come and that their expectations are met. But we do know that we don't have to worry about fairness in terms of our academic institutions for our immigrant population.

What we do have to worry is, we have to worry about their job prospects. That has really been the focus of what I spoke about earlier. The issue isn't about whether or not Ontario, as the member for Trinity–Spadina said—we're still, even though it's lower, one of the most attractive places for immigrants to come. That isn't the issue. The issue is, are the immigrants staying in Ontario? Again, there's no point having government bureaucracy if the immigrants are going to come to Ontario and turn and leave.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand up today to say a few comments about Bill 161, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, last updated in 1991, which I think is an important piece here. Certainly the Liberal government has had ample time to bring forward progressive pieces of legislation that would strengthen our immigration policies and practices and supports for new immigrants who are coming into the province.

Certainly they're very quick on certain issues. They were very quick to announce almost \$1 billion in Waterloo region last week—very, very quick to do that, very consistent with them making announcements that are actually reannouncements of funding that was already announced prior. One billion, though: \$1 billion. Not \$1 million, not \$50 million, not \$500 million; almost \$1 billion. It's just incredible to me how quickly they can spend money, even though we don't have it. Yet, here we are, 10 years—actually, it's almost now 13 years since a piece of legislation within their mandate has been brought forward with regard to immigration. It is very interesting for me, because the political context in the province of Ontario is incredibly challenging right now.

Also, at the federal level—and as has already been pointed out, this piece of legislation has very strict limitations based on the federal government. If anyone has been watching the news of late, the federal government has completely undermined any sort of progressive policy with regard to immigration policy in this country. One has only to have a read or to watch—and thank goodness for the CBC; a special shout-out for the CBC, because they broke the story on the temporary foreign worker program, which was supposed to target an economic gap or a skills gap in this country. You have primarily women who are marginalized, who are vulnerable, coming into the country and provinces, working at McDonald's. The last time I checked, there were some senior citizens working in a McDonald's and a Tim Hortons, because they don't have income security. Yet, here we are: We have temporary foreign workers at the McDonald's out in BC, and they're living in some sort of a motel, all congregated in the centre of a commune. This

is Canada in 2014. That's the federal government and their policy—and their failure to implement a progressive policy, I might add.

I mentioned the federal government within the context of this piece of legislation, because, of course, there are some caveats with regard to Bill 161. One of them is that any new programs would have to be approved by the federal government. There is no guarantee, of course, that this would happen. Just in case you missed it, I am firmly saying that I have no confidence in the federal government to implement a progressive immigration policy in this country. In fact, I would go so far as to say that I'm in a deficit position, from a confidence perspective, with regard to the federal government. That said, as we have approached every new piece of legislation which has come to this Legislature, we are committed to reading it, for instance, and examining it and conducting some research, and of course, we are happy to see some action.

To that end, though, we need to be very aware of the fact that this bill does not address many of the fundamental problems facing newcomers and it will not necessarily be successful in achieving all elements of the bill, such as meeting new-immigrant targets. So, at second reading, this is our opportunity to put forward some suggestions and some ideas as it moves forward to committee. Hopefully, we can fundamentally change some aspects of this piece of legislation.

But just to reiterate, the Liberal government has no excuse for not acting sooner.

What's in the bill? A previous speaker talked about the economic impact of immigration on the province and perhaps some of those skills gaps. This bill provides authority for Ontario to establish and govern immigrant-selection programs for both temporary and permanent immigrants. I'm sure the thinking is that they can do a better job than the federal Conservative Party.

It also allows Ontario to set target levels of number of persons selected by Ontario selection programs, in order to meet Ontario's economic and labour market needs. This is a good point. Any sort of new immigration should be targeted. It should be focused on some of those skills that are required in the province of Ontario. I was just speaking with the tech sector in Kitchener–Waterloo—Communitech—and currently they are fighting to get three qualified tech workers into Ontario, into Canada. So there is a notable disconnect between the federal party policy and the provincial policy.

There would have to be some coordination, obviously, to ensure that qualified people who are seeking employment opportunities in this province, and that those opportunities are clearly viable and needed—that they should be filled.

This piece of legislation also enables the minister to conduct research, organize educational and training programs, and appoint committees on immigration-related issues. I'm not sure that we need more committees. I'm not sure that we need more rules and regulations on this.

I think that I'll talk, in a few minutes, about the history of how we got to this place and this time with this piece of legislation.

What's interesting is the educational component. I sort of relay back my experience in the education system, with the Ontario public school boards and the Canadian federal level as well. There is a definite disconnect between accepting new immigrants and refugees into our province, into our country, into our schools, and not having a correlating level of resources to ensure that they can be successful. In many instances—and I think a report just came out today by People for Education—school boards and principals of elementary schools are sending home students who they don't have the resources to cope with and to ensure that they are getting a proper education. Some of those reasons are safety, but certainly they are resource-based. I hope that report sends up a red flag in the education sector.

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But it does relate to this piece of legislation, because if you are accepting new immigrants in, then you have to give them a level playing field and you have to give them a chance to be successful, and we have not seen that in this province.

It also allows the minister to establish registries for both employers and recruiters that are interested in participating in Ontario's selection programs, and this is good. There has to be some coordination; there has to be. There are businesses, obviously, in the province of Ontario that don't know that they could potentially access a skill set outside of the province.

But it also leads one to ask a very rational question: Why do we not have that skill set in the province of Ontario? Where is the job strategy? Where is the focus on training, especially with older workers? I went to an older-worker forum not that long ago, and it was heart-breaking. You have people who have worked in one particular field their entire lives. They want to be part of the workforce. They are willing to come to work; they want to be trained. They want the opportunities to enter a second or a third career, and those opportunities are just not there. I think that there has to be a balance going forward.

In particular, though, with the education component, just to go back to it for a second—Kitchener-Waterloo in particular is one of the fourth-largest draws for new immigrants and refugees in the country. A lot of people don't know that. When those refugees come into our community, we have to fight to get them the resources to deal with the experience that they have had in their host country. Usually, obviously, if you are a refugee, you have experienced some trauma. Post-traumatic stress disorder is an ongoing issue not only with children but the entire family, and it is incumbent on us, as a host province and as a host country, to provide some level of compassion, some humanity, some resources to help them transition successfully into our communities.

This bill also lays out a compliance and enforcement regime, including inspection, investigation powers,

offences, and penalties for both individuals and organizations. This piece is going to get pulled at and teased away, I think, at committee. I want to know more about these compliance standards, but I think it's also a pivotal piece for us as a party, New Democrats, to talk about what's not in the bill.

What's not in the bill is an ironclad guarantee that Ontario will be able to set their own targets in regard to recruiting immigrants, which, as I've already stated, is the goal or the intention of this bill. There is federal paramountcy when it comes to immigration in Ontario, and there is nothing that guarantees that the federal government will agree with this legislation.

In fact, we've seen a lot of conflict between the provincial Liberal government and, of course, the federal government. For some reason, the Prime Minister was in our riding last week, and he was asked about the relationship between the province and his government. Of course he's going to say, "Well, there is a responsibility on all parts to come to the table." This is an important cause for both the provincial government and the federal government to come to the table. It's not just an economic imperative, but there definitely is a humanitarian component as well.

What's not in the bill? The bill does not address the long-standing problems of ensuring that highly trained immigrants are able to work in their professional fields. I told this story the last time I spoke to this piece of legislation. In 2007, the former Premier, Dalton McGuinty—the fellow who will not be named, sort of like Voldemort in the Harry Potter series—came to my riding and said to a room packed with new immigrants and foreign-trained workers, many of whom were doctors, many of whom were driving cabs and taxis and working in labour, in menial work—they were told, "You will be able to practise in your professional field." That promise was made. They still talk about it to this day.

Here we are today, looking at a piece of legislation which, for all intents and purposes, probably has good intention. I believe that there are some good intentions with regard to this legislation, but the mechanisms to follow through on the legislation are not built into it. So, once again, when it gets to second reading, as I'm sure it will at some point—I mean, not second reading. When it gets to committee, we will try to build some supports into the legislation.

It does not deal with settlement issues, broadly defined. I think that this has been pointed out very well by OCASI. Also, the not-for-profit sector has not been built into this piece of legislation as well. What a missed opportunity. The not-for-profit sector knows this field so well. They know the people. They know their communities. They know how to connect people. They have not, for some reason, been incorporated into this piece of legislation. I think there is definitely room for improvement. New Democrats believe strongly that the not-for-profit sector has the capacity and the willingness to be part of the solution from an economic perspective, from a humanitarian perspective and from a new-

immigrants-finding-their-potential perspective. We would generally say that we share the concerns of OCASI that the not-for-profit sector has been left out of this—their very important capacity to be part of the solution.

Where are we and why are we here? The general background—actually, more importantly, why is this legislation important in this province today? It is estimated that Ontario will face a shortage of 364,000 skilled workers by 2025. I think that this should cause a lot of alarm for a lot of us. I think it points to the fact that we have not had a discernible, successful job strategy in this province, one that has weathered the recession and bounced back with some resiliency. These skilled workers—obviously, the 364,000 shortage is an ongoing issue that all of us should share, quite honestly. Immigration would need to be more than 2.5 times greater than it is today to offset the decline in Ontario's labour force being caused by the aging population.

From 2001 to 2011, Ontario's share of immigrants to Canada dropped by almost a third. We used to be a country which embraced new immigrants because this is a new country and because all of us are either one, two or potentially three generations away from being immigrants ourselves. We should want every new immigrant who comes into this country to be able to reach their potential, to have the educational opportunities, to have the resources and to be welcomed.

Clearly, when new immigrants come into this province—I'll just quote from Nicholas Keung's Toronto Star article from March 3. He says, "Canada's new class of immigrants is younger and more promising than ever: in their mid-20s and 30s, with Canadian education credentials and work experience—and jobs already lined up.

"To achieve the immigrant dream, they're prepared to pay their dues, working hard on temporary study and work permits to prove their value to Canada before earning what used to come much more easily: permanent resident status."

It is quite incredible how we treat temporary foreign workers in this country as second-class citizens. We should look at ourselves through the lens of our forefathers of the former generations, who came to this country, who were accepted and who had a platform and an opportunity to be successful. One of those key pieces was economic opportunity. The research and the evidence is profound. New immigrants want to work. They understand what it means to be in this country. If you're a refugee and you come to Canada—I served on the refugee reception board for four years. The first time I saw a refugee see water come out of a tap—you will never forget that in your life, because they can't believe that clean water is a right in this country. They want to fight for those rights. As soon as you give them the tools and the empowerment opportunities, they want to be part of the solution and they want to be part of the community because they understand what a privilege it is to be in this country and to be in this province.

I actually had the opportunity this weekend to attend the first annual Diversity Awards in Kitchener–Waterloo.

It was hosted by the Tamil association of Kitchener–Waterloo. It's their 25th anniversary. To hear the stories of how important culture, acceptance and inclusion mean to them and to their children was incredibly emotional. I think that within the political context of Bill 161, it should challenge us to build legislation which can be effective and which can be supportive of our communities.

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As I've said, there are some gaps within this legislation as it is crafted right now. But Bill 161 works specifically to increase the class of economic immigrants, and this is a key difference with this piece of legislation and some of the stories that I've been talking about.

As a backgrounder, though, the 2012 expert round table released a report called *Expanding Our Routes to Success*. It included 32 recommendations. So this is back in 2012. Following this, the minister at the time announced the launch of *A New Direction: Ontario's Immigration Strategy*. This report sets the following targets. The big question, though, for all of us is whether Bill 161 has the ability to make significant progress on all of these targets. I mean, you have to remember that this is a long time coming.

But some of those targets—"request a doubling of our provincial nominee program limit to 2,000 in 2013, increasing to 5,000 in 2014." I think the province of Quebec puts us to shame on these stats. I remember the member from Beaches–East York giving us some context on this. There are some provinces that recognize that reaching out strategically to skilled new immigrants around the world is a way to strengthen their economy and strengthen the fabric of their society.

Some of these other recommendations, though, are: "maximize the potential and use of temporary foreign workers and international students." So, having learned from the complete failure of the federal government with regard to the temporary foreign worker programs, where the rights of those workers are being violated because they are vulnerable and because they are marginalized, we need to make sure, if this is one of the goals of Bill 161, as stated in *Expanding Our Routes to Success* and then *A New Direction: Ontario's Immigration Strategy*, that those rights of those new immigrants are protected. We need to make sure that their rights as citizens—they have the potential to be citizens in the province of Ontario. That's the promise of progressive immigration policy. That's the ultimate goal: to be a citizen in this great province.

We also have to ensure that, as those skilled workers come into this province, their children and their families have the potential to reach their potential, and that means a comprehensive educational strategy. That means having affordable housing. That means transit that works for people. That means making sure that Bill 161 is comprehensive, that it can be successful and that it puts new immigrants at the centre, not the politics at the centre.

I look forward to hearing some of the comments from some of the other speakers here this afternoon. I don't

know if you've noticed, but I'm definitely passionate about immigration policy. I see it as a solution, and I see the abuses that have happened, especially with the temporary foreign workers, and it enrages me. I'm ashamed that our country treats temporary foreign workers this way, especially because they are primarily women. I think it is incumbent on all of us to build a piece of legislation which we can all be proud of in this Legislature.

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

Hon. John Gerretsen: I listened with great interest to the member from Kitchener talk about the immigration experience. I'm an immigrant to this country. I came here exactly 60 years ago, on June 17, 1954, so I'll be celebrating my 60th anniversary in Canada. I came with my family from the Netherlands. My parents didn't speak any English at all. I can tell you, in those days, certainly, there weren't as many services available for immigrants as there are today.

As I always say, everybody—other than the aboriginal peoples that have inhabited this country for many, many generations—all of us came from another country at some point in time. It may have been the Loyalists 200 years ago, or it may have been people who have come just within the last 10 years, 20 years, 50 years, 100 years. They all came for one reason and one reason only, and that was to find a better way of life for themselves and their families and their children etc.

Having said that, I find it rather strange that we would even have a bill like this before the Legislature today, because I'd always assumed that immigration was purely a federal responsibility. Certainly, the federal government traditionally has been mainly involved in the whole immigration movement here in the province of Ontario and, indeed, through Canada.

But I think this bill speaks to precisely the issue that the member just talked about: the fact that we do not have enough skilled workers in this province right now. I guess by another 10 years or so, that will increase to well into the 300,000 to 400,000 skilled worker shortages in this province.

So whatever we can do collectively, not only in this province but together with the federal government, to make the immigrant experience a better experience, so much the better. That's why I hope we will all support this bill.

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

M. Jerry J. Ouellette: L'histoire de ma famille remonte aussi loin que le deuxième bateau venu de France en 1604. Essentially what that means, Madam Speaker, is that my family's history goes back to the second boat from France in 1604, on my father's side.

But if you look on my mother's side, her parents were Polish and Ukrainian. My grandmother showed up in 1927, around Christmastime, on the east coast with nothing but a bag of clothes that she had, and that's it. It was wrapped in a sheet—nothing more, to come here for the opportunity to make a difference.

Her father came from Poland, and so I've got Polish and Ukrainian on my mother's side. He came across and he was a factory worker, a man who never owned a car, nor did he ever miss owning a car. He had more part fingers than whole because he was given the opportunity to leave what took place in the home country, the old country back in Poland. I can always remember him sending funds back to ensure that his family was taken care of because they came here for the opportunity to make a difference.

Not only that, but on my father's side, his mother's parents were Scottish and Irish. With a name like Ouellette, I've got obviously French, but also ma mère was a First Nation individual, so the family has Métis status. We've got French, First Nation, Polish, Ukrainian, Scottish and Irish, but it makes me, like most others here, Canadian.

We need to focus and ensure that these individuals who are coming in—because quite frankly, when I go into the schools, I ask, "Who wants to be a taxicab driver here? Who wants to work in a variety store, in a corner store?" Every one of them says the same thing: "Not me."

We need these individuals to come in and make a difference, whether it's migrant workers working in the fields, picking apples and taking care of the fruit in the fall or the various aspects that take place. We need to work to ensure that these individuals are working in the best interests of Ontario, especially people like Charlie, from Coffee Culture, who came so many years ago from Afghanistan to make a difference. Now he owns his own business and is very proud to be Canadian.

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

Ms. Sarah Campbell: It's a pleasure to be able to comment on some of the remarks that were made by the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, who always speaks eloquently and passionately about any of the issues that she brings forward in the Legislature.

I just wanted to focus on one of the comments that she made, and that is the Liberal inaction that we've seen or haven't seen in terms of anything tangible coming forward in the last 10 years. She said that the Liberals really have no excuse for not acting sooner. She mentioned that they have all sorts of other priorities, whether it's appointing their friends and now family members at eHealth, wasting over a billion dollars in moving around gas plants to secure four Liberal seats in the last election or wasting hundreds of millions of dollars on Liberal insiders at Ornge—the list just goes on and on and on. But when it comes to paying for their expenditures by increasing our workforce and reinforcing and growing our economy, the Liberals have been essentially silent.

The other thing is that we need to be looking ahead. We need to prepare for the eventual decline of Ontario's labour force that is being caused by our aging population. This is something that was also mentioned by the member. As the member from Kitchener–Waterloo mentioned, we will have a significant labour shortage of about 364,000 skilled workers by 2025, and much needs to be

done now to prepare ourselves for this eventuality. Really, we're seeing that not a lot is being done. We were waiting 10 years for this to come forward. I think it was a little bit revealing for the minister without portfolio to say that he didn't even know that the province has a role to play in immigration, and I think that speaks a lot to the Liberals' immigration policy.

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

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I'm pleased to rise to speak again with respect to Bill 161. As we know, Bill 161 is a first step in implementing our immigration strategy, a strategy that was informed by consultations and by an expert round table, consultations that I undertook when I was the parliamentary assistant at the Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration.

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Through those consultations, we spoke to agencies, we spoke to employers and we spoke with newcomers as well. What did we hear? We heard how proud newcomers are to be here in Ontario, how Ontario continues to be a destination of choice and how so many are still settling in Ontario. Why? Because of the opportunities, because of the better life that they can provide for their family and for their children.

As you know, I'm from Windsor, which has the fourth-largest immigration population in Canada. I'm proud of the work of our many agencies that have been brought up that work with our newcomers on a daily basis, organizations like the Multicultural Council, W5, WEST and the New Canadians' Centre of Excellence.

On Thursday of last week, when I was in Windsor, I had the privilege to attend the Multicultural Council's Herb Gray Harmony Awards gala. It was named, of course, after our local MP who served his community, our country, for almost 40 years, and in those 40 years always supported acceptance and diversity and really defended the rights of everyone in our community. There were two awards that were awarded that night. One was a Harmony Award, which is for individuals who actively participate in building an inclusive community. That was awarded to our mayor, Eddie Francis. The other award was a Champion Award, which celebrates the contributions that immigrants make to our community, who built our communities. That was given to Floyd Cacciavillani. When Floyd was speaking about his start in Ontario, how he landed at Pier 21 and took the train to Ontario, it brought tears to my eyes, because it was the story of—

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

The member for Kitchener–Waterloo has two minutes to respond.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you for the comments from the minister without portfolio, the member from Oshawa, the member from Kenora–Rainy River, and the minister of youth services and responsible for women's issues.

I think everyone commented a little bit on where they've come from and how they view immigration. That

should be a challenge to all of us to make Bill 161 even stronger, even better.

When I was speaking about the diversity awards that I attended last week, a new immigrant, a young girl, told me that she views culture as a way for her survival. But they need jobs in order to be here. Going forward, there are some outstanding questions with regard to this legislation. This would be my direct question to the minister: Can the minister tell us whether programs are being designed that would reach out to newcomers before they arrive to provide a realistic sense of what is required in order to work in their field in Ontario? I think that this question is pivotal, because there are so many new immigrants that come here and are disappointed because those doors do not open. Those retraining opportunities are not there. The educational system is not equipped to deal with ESL and ELL, and then of course the mental health issues that accompany some of the refugees, which I referenced earlier.

We know that much more work needs to be done, Madam Speaker, when it comes to bridging programs and support for employers. We know this. The fact is that we cannot count on the federal level of government to do the right thing. They are needlessly extending the immigration process. They are making it harder for us to be accepting of new immigrants in the country, and therefore that has an effect on Ontario. We need to get it right as much as we can, and then we all need to work together to fight a federal government which doesn't understand the value of immigration in our country.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and a half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned, unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Government House leader.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. We will have no further debate at this time.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Orders of the day.

ELECTRONIC PERSONAL HEALTH INFORMATION PROTECTION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA PROTECTION DES RENSEIGNEMENTS PERSONNELS SUR LA SANTÉ FIGURANT DANS UN DOSSIER DE SANTÉ ÉLECTRONIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 20, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 78, An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to electronic health records / Projet de loi 78, Loi modifiant certaines lois en ce qui concerne les dossiers de santé électroniques.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): When this was last debated, we had completed questions and comments on the remarks made by the member for Nickel Belt.

Further debate? The member from Thornhill.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Wow, this is your day.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Actually, it's your day.

Hon. John Gerretsen: No, it's your day.

Mrs. Gila Martow: If you get to listen to me speak, it's definitely your day.

Madam Speaker, I'm happy to speak on the bill, eHealth, which is Bill 78. I just want to disclose that I have quite a bit of experience. It was an experience, and I developed experience, implementing electronic health records in my office, which is attached to Markham Stouffville Hospital in the Markham area. It's an office with two ophthalmologists, one optometrist and a lot of equipment. I don't know when was the last time people have been to get their eyes checked, but hopefully it will be in the not-too-distant future, because our sight is obviously valuable to all of us. There is a system that we implemented in our office—hopefully, it's not a conflict for me to mention the name of the actual software program. Is that a problem if I mention?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: No, you can go ahead and mention it.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Okay, it's called OSCAR—I'm not sure why—but it was developed at McMaster University, and I was told that it was developed with doctors. It wasn't just computer programmers, it wasn't Liberal government consultants; it was actual physicians who had experience with what doctors needed. They focused, really, on creating an electronic health record which, if you can picture a chart that your doctors keeps—most doctors don't use a blank piece of paper; it's a piece of paper with a lot of little boxes to put what medication the patient is on, whether or not they have allergies, whether or not they've ever had health problems, family history, why they're there for the visit, and then all the test results and, finally, diagnosis and treatment; then, of course, all the patient's information, their OHIP number, address and so forth.

Basically, it's to take that type of a chart and put it on the computer in a way that a doctor who isn't so computer-savvy—because physicians spend a lot of time on their education, and the newer generation is very computer-savvy, but some of the physicians who are maybe more of the age of us in the Legislature did not grow up with computers. They had used charts for many years. You can imagine, say, a 58-year-old physician who has never worked on a computer all of a sudden trying to get electronic health records and still practise in a safe manner.

It's obvious what the advantages of electronic health records are. I mean, there's the business standpoint, which is, a doctor's office is a business; it's part of it. They pay rent, and the paper charts take up a lot of space. Well, that's a room in itself that the doctors have to pay rent on. Then there's the fact that the staff and the doc-

tors are always looking for charts that we don't say are lost; we just say they're misplaced. But the reality is that oftentimes patients are there to have multiple tests on different days, possibly to see different people on the same day, and everybody needs the chart. It's hard to share a paper chart, but an electronic health record obviously simplifies that.

Then there is the incredible amount of data that's stored and easily accessed, because if you have in a box that a patient is allergic to penicillin, you can do a search so easily and search "penicillin," and it will bring up all the patients who are allergic to penicillin—and perhaps there's a drug recall. So we can see the incredible benefits in terms of safety, in terms of saving space and in terms of saving time.

There was a lot of research that we put into what type of system we should get. We were well aware that the system that was developed at McMaster—through taxpayers' dollars, I might add—was really geared to family physicians. But it's such a simple system to use; it had what we call a very low learning curve, so that you didn't have to be so computer-savvy to use it. It was very basic. Even now, I realize that staff comes and goes and moves around, and you don't have to go through this incredible learning process to have new staff. New staff always tell me how much easier the system is. It's just evident how things are going to be working.

1700

What's difficult is that in an ophthalmology and, obviously, partly, in an optometry office—in my case, I was in an ophthalmology office. An ophthalmology office has a lot of tests that are actually computers in themselves, with software. You need to have those tests interact with your electronic health records; otherwise, the system can't function, because once you have to have a paper chart to put in test results, well, you might as well have a paper chart for the doctor's visits as well.

Now we have to come up with software that can speak between two different software packages, and things start to get very complicated. We actually had to delay a few months because we had to wait for the software to be complete to talk between the machines and the patient's record. I'm happy to say that for the last three years, things have been running quite smoothly. There are constant updates. We are dealing with the Ministry of Health, because there is a program in place to compensate doctors for part of the costs—which far surpasses the purchase of, what I would consider good, fairly luxury cars—to implement the hardware and the software for electronic health records, even with a program that's inexpensive, such as the one we used out of McMaster.

It really makes me wonder—and that's why I'm so happy to speak on this bill—why our own government didn't try to team up with software that was already being used by, what I'm told, is a third of the family doctors in the province; why they didn't consider—or if they did, why aren't they speaking about it? If they did speak to the developers at McMaster University about the eHealth program that they developed right here in the

province of Ontario through taxpayers' dollars, why was a billion dollars wasted reinventing the wheel, trying to develop software that would work for the doctors and the hospitals in this province?

When we found out that the money was spent and there was no electronic health records system in place for our physicians and for our hospitals, we were told for a couple of years that at least we developed, through the Ministry of Health, a registry for diabetic patients. That's what we kept reading in the newspaper. Well, this year it came out that we didn't even develop a registry for diabetic patients, so I'm not sure why that was put out when it wasn't the case.

It's unfortunate, because the money that was spent on electronic health records so needlessly and so carelessly by this Liberal government—that could have just done the simple research that we did with a group of ophthalmologists. We all met and we discussed which software we should buy as a group—and have some control and work together and network. There are physicians—actually, quite a few surgeons—who were engineers first. It's very interesting to realize that there are a lot of people who ultimately aim for medical school and decide—instead of doing their undergrad in health sciences, they actually study engineering. There's a huge networking between engineers, especially with surgeons, because surgery involves so much equipment, and the engineers are the ones who go into medicine—those engineers who do study medicine, who seem to be able to create those new technologies that are driving all of the incredible improvements we see, but also the incredible rise in costs of health care in North America and the rest of the world. It's with these rising costs in health care, including the electronic health records—which obviously make it so much safer for patients, because the doctors are able to do those searches that they weren't able to do before, and access things. If a patient even has had maybe an artificial hip or something like that and there's some kind of recall and there are different manufacturers, they're able to so quickly access their patients.

Another huge advantage is that the doctors can be at home, they can be at multiple hospitals, and they don't have to carry around the charts because they can just access it through computers. So you don't have to worry about your doctor's car being broken into and your chart being stolen because you're having surgery. They used to have to actually physically take the chart home and then take it to surgery if they went to surgery at the hospital the next day, if their office wasn't on site. You can imagine all the room for error or lost charts. Doctors have lives, they go out, and maybe a chart could be lost here or there.

A doctor could be at a conference in New York City, and a patient is having a problem—maybe it's a drug reaction; maybe it's symptoms of a new problem—and the doctor is able to just go on any computer that is set up to access their server. Usually, they travel with their laptops or iPads, and they have access to their patient records. Isn't that fantastic technology and incredible service?

The doctors can't do it alone. It was very unfortunate last week that we read of somebody suggesting that it's the doctors that are driving up health costs when that absolutely isn't the case, and listing gross salaries of doctors. You could go to a restaurant that sells \$2 million worth of meals in a year and might not even take home more than \$50 a day in profit, or maybe is even losing money. We all know that that gross does not translate into income. Certainly, when we look at specialists' offices, the equipment that they have to buy out of their income, they have to pay their staff and they have to pay their rent—I always feel that the physicians in Canada are treated as small business people when it suits the government and they're treated as government employees when it suits the government. So they have the worst situation, because they don't get a pension, they don't get sick days and they don't get their rent covered, their staff covered or the equipment covered, but then they have the government mandating things and controlling the profession, as it were, and also controlling their ability to run their practice in the best way possible.

We all know that Alberta has taken over from Ontario as the driving economy in Canada. My older son studied medicine in Montreal at McGill and went to do his residency in Alberta. He tells me often about the incredible health records in the hospital he's at—he's in Edmonton—and the efficiencies in the system there. I think that if only Ontario would have looked to Alberta—they had implemented an electronic health system that was functioning extremely well before we even embarked on the failed adventure of eHealth in Ontario. All we had to do was go to our colleagues in Alberta and say, "How much to implement your system with you advising us?" I'm fairly certain that it would have been a tiny, minute fraction of what we ended up wasting, chasing electronic health records and not achieving it.

I would appeal to everybody who sees their doctors to ask the doctor just to show them what the electronic health record looks like on the screen, because it is an unfortunate part, actually, of health records that the doctors are often facing the computer instead of facing the patient. There are always negatives to any new system, but oftentimes the patients have no idea what it is the doctor is looking at on the screen. Maybe they feel ignored; I hope not. But let the patients ask their doctor just for a quick look at even a blank chart to have some understanding of what the technology is and what the technology does and what it is that we need to get moving in Ontario, and to see that we have the type of health care system that the residents are paying for through their taxes and that they deserve.

1710

They're paying for a system with expert health care in terms of physicians, which I think they're getting; with fantastic nursing; with safe hospitals, which means that the infection rate is low and that the equipment is kept up to date.

They're also paying for a system where electronic health records are implemented—not just implemented

but maintained, because I think that that's a big cost of it that oftentimes people don't understand. It's a machine, just like a car, and you cannot buy a car and not expect some maintenance. Software needs to be constantly updated, which is expensive, and it needs to be repaired when it breaks down or there are bugs.

We need to have policies in place to ensure, when patients' information is implemented into health care systems, that their privacy is respected; that people can't come into an office and easily hack into the servers and access health care information; that it's very secure but that it's also secure from physical damage, which is, obviously, not to be stolen and that we have a locked server room without windows—I've heard of offices where the health care records are stored on a desktop at the receptionist's feet and the cleaners come in at night and mop around it, and that's not considered secure at all; that it's also secure in terms of a malfunction of the actual server, and that if the server has some kind of meltdown or there is possibly even a flood or a fire in the building, there is some kind of backup system in place for all that information.

We're seeing more and more of what I call "in the clouds" but I guess it's just "cloud" backup systems in place, so that people can feel secure. I don't know if there are any policies in place that patients can even ask, but I think that it behooves patients to take responsibility for their health care as well as their health care records; to pay attention to what kind of system is in place; to not be shy and to ask if their records are being backed up off-site and if there are even dual servers on the site, to feel secure that their important information is being maintained.

It really shouldn't be resting on the doctors, who have enough on their plate in terms of their education, in terms of constantly learning about new procedures and new medications and new side effects. It really shouldn't have been left up to the doctors in Ontario to navigate the field of computers as well. I think that a lot of them have done it and have done it well. Others have paid for systems and trashed them and then bought other systems.

It's really unfortunate that, right now, we don't have a system in place where a patient can go to one hospital and say, "Oh, I had an X-ray at another hospital last week" and that emergency room physician is, right now, able to recall that record. I believe it's only pediatric hospitals that are able to access each other's records, because they were able to develop a system within pediatric hospitals, because I guess there were so many incredibly unfortunate incidents that happened where they weren't able to access information quickly.

We have stories of people getting in their car in downtown Toronto, in the horrendous traffic, as we saw this morning on the Gardiner, and having to physically drive, with CDs of X-rays and other tests, to their specialist's office because there was no way for the doctors to be able to access that information electronically, even though they have all the computers and the Internet and

everything they need in their office. There isn't a coordinated system in place.

This government promised to deliver and failed miserably. Really, I don't want to suggest that patients are sick because of it, but I believe that the entire province's health care system is a sick patient because of the failed eHealth.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I want to thank the member from Thornhill. She gave some very tangible, real experiences of electronic health records.

I think when this story first came out in 2009, when the Auditor General looked at eHealth Ontario following the exposure of inappropriate expenses and billings by consultants, it was in the media. People heard it, but over the years—because this is a long time ago; it's 2014 and this happened in 2009—people lost what it actually meant. This was a very, very serious breach of trust on the eHealth file. I think that when people think about eHealth, it has just become lumped in there with Ornge and chemo drugs. There are any number of issues that you can lump in there. But it's actually a very serious issue. Just to refrain, what happened was a culture that lacked transparency and accountability to Ontarians and a government that was all too happy to ignore the problems.

That Bill 78 has been called today I find amazing, because this was originally called in 2013. There were three speakers to it at the time. We have not seen it for almost a year and a half now, so it's amazing that, in a budget week, we are going to be debating this very important issue.

I just want to remind people, though, that the auditor found that about \$1 billion was wasted, in that we continue to not have an electronic health system. You know what's also really amazing is that \$1 billion seems to be the magic number for this week. It's the \$1-billion week, because \$1 billion was announced last week, almost. Almost a full \$1 billion was announced in Waterloo region last week. My colleague from Kenora—Rainy River has \$1 billion for the Ring of Fire. It is the \$1-billion week here at Queen's Park. So everybody get ready for budget day.

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to stand in my place today to talk about Bill 78, the Electronic Personal Health Information Protection Act. This has been, across our country, a huge undertaking to get eHealth for all patients. I'm glad to say that it's going well in Ontario. By 2015, which was the targeted date, all Ontarians will have electronic medical records.

We've heard from the member from Thornhill about how good the doctors are and the hospitals are. I have to say, I agree that our health system delivers for the patients and for the people of Ontario. It delivers an excellent service.

In 2003, when I was elected, half of the calls to my office—and maybe that's an exaggeration, but it's not too much of one. The major calls were, "How do I get a doctor?" That has all changed over the years.

eHealth is something that we've had reports on to public accounts over the years, and we've had good reports on the progress of eHealth. It's not easy. It's a very complex thing to undertake. You're dealing with so many individual businesses, if you call doctors' offices businesses, etc.

It could have been done better. It could have been done better in all provinces of Canada. I know we got expertise from Alberta when we were doing ours.

We've made a lot of headway. It's just about completed, and 2015 is the right time. One billion lab test results for 9.5 million Ontarians are on the system. It's a huge, huge system. It's coming along fine. We need this legislation in order to protect those records and do other things with those records.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: It was impressive to have the minister—the minister potentially in the future, I suppose—the member from Thornhill, who is a regulated health professional, speak to Bill 78 on this issue in such an informed manner. I mean that respectfully to all members of the House, because she spoke with knowledge and insight into an issue that is complicated in terms of the privacy issues as well as the efficiency issues. That's the conflicting aspect of Bill 78.

1720

The evidence is in, clearly, that this government has squandered millions and billions of dollars on eHealth. To this point in time, we're still a long way from any consensus of having a system that's modern, compatible with Canada Health Infoway, the federal system, or any other system. She spoke to it, I think, in a very practical manner as well, with her own clinical practice, of the load that's already on our physicians and the conflict—even this morning, in the clippings, with the OMA's position on the need to modernize the health delivery system.

She knows of what she speaks. She spoke about it with knowledge and compassion—not so much of the politics, and I give her credit. As a professional, you want the system to be better. I know our leader, Tim Hudak, wants it to be better. Today, the evidence is that after 10 years it's worse. We're spending more and getting less. We're not even adequately funding the drug system for people who have idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis, as just one example.

I don't want to appeal for this on that emotional level so much as the factual level. I hope to have a few minutes speaking on this sometime this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I would like to preface my remarks by congratulating the member from Thornhill, because this has been a very difficult time, especially for

a relatively new member, to have a bill which we thought was buried in the archives somewhere, because it was introduced two years ago, it had its first couple of speakers last October and then suddenly, today, is the third bill introduced in an afternoon. Who could possibly have foreseen that this was now on the government agenda? For her to be able to stand up and speak off the cuff as the first speaker is really quite phenomenal.

And I thank her: You can see her health background coming to the fore. She is able to understand the purport of the bill, what is contained within the bill, and speak quite knowledgeably, given the very limited time frame, obviously, to do any research on it at all. As all of us were scrambling, she was actually up there speaking, and I commend her for that.

This is a bill which one would have thought would have had much more prominence and would have come to the fore much earlier than this, given that the government announced some time ago that 2015 is the year that they intend to fully implement eHealth. Here we are in 2014, and nothing has been done with this bill for quite some number—it's been at least seven months since the first couple of speakers stood up and spoke about it, to be again resurrected today.

We have some difficulty understanding why the government is going down this particular road at this particular time, but the member from Thornhill was able to utilize the 20 minutes given to her quite well. She talked about eHealth records, talked about Alberta and her son, talked about those things which she feels are important. To that, I can only say—because I was critical the last time you spoke—that today, on this one, you did a good job.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The time has expired for questions and comments.

We return to the member from Thornhill.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I just want to say that when I had decided to go with the company and IT team to implement electronic health records in our office, they asked to interview me for sort of a promotional video that they were doing. They asked me what my greatest concern was in terms of going ahead with ordering the eHealth for our office, and I said, "Well, my greatest concern is that my marriage should survive this project." So whenever I communicate with them, they say they're still laughing about that among themselves.

My marriage did survive, I'm happy to report, but it was just barely there for those first six months.

It seems like sometimes people in government unfortunately think that if you throw money at a problem, you're going to have a solution. I can tell you that's not the case. It's disappointing. A lot of money was spent with no results. Initially, somebody must have known that things weren't going very well, because all they had to do was bring in some physicians and say, "Okay. This is the road we're taking. What do you think?" For absolutely no cost at all, the physicians are happy to share their impression of what kind of electronic health care

system is needed for the physicians, hospitals and government to communicate.

I'm reminded that last week it was in the news that the former health minister, who I believe is responsible for the wasted money at eHealth—a billion dollars was spent and I believe that close to that was completely wasted—has applied to grow what I'm assuming is medical marijuana, but to have some kind of marijuana farm. I think it's a little bit humorous to consider that.

But I just want to remind everybody that this is such an important issue.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure and perhaps an onerous challenge to follow the member from Thornhill with respect to details involved in discussing Bill 78.

It has been said by many—and let's put in this context for the viewer at home—that this is important. It's important to our side and I believe to all sides to modernize the health system. I say that because this bill has not been debated or called. The actual last person to speak on this was the NDP on November 20, 2013. There have been discussions on this in 2013, on the 10th of October, by the member from Oak Ridges–Markham as well, representing partially the government's position on this.

Now I will say, with the sequence of events today, that there are a number of bills that have been called. I look back at the history of our input from our critic, the member for Whitby–Oshawa, who I have the greatest respect for. I believe the House itself recognizes that today she would have loved to have been here, had she known. As a courtesy, normally, the critics are advised or informed through the House procedures that they would be calling a bill that is so important to Ontario.

Now, the member from Thornhill laid out pretty much a lot of the mechanics behind this and how important it is for two reasons: the health privacy issue as well as the health efficiency issue. There are a couple of articles that I'd like to make sure that I hear third party comments on. I have a couple here.

Here's one today—this is not any party's position; this is the headline today from the Toronto Sun, April 28, page 20. It says, "Health System Can Be 'Better.'"

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, this isn't some political person, as the minister without portfolio is saying. This is from the new president of the OMA, who said on Sunday "to begin dismantling the walls that block our health system from being the best it can be." That's an important statement, to modernize the system. We agree with that. That has been our position for some time. The government has had several attempts at talking to this issue and had many attempts of doing nothing about the issue.

I have to put this in context here because I had the privilege many years ago, when I believe Elizabeth Witmer was the Minister of Health, then Tony Clement—in fact, I believe it was Elizabeth Witmer, when she was the Minister of Health. We had a bill on health privacy at

that time and it was the OMA that sort of backed away from it at the last minute, and the bill was pulled.

I would say this: They've had about 10 years and I think perhaps as much as \$2 billion in spending to build the electronic health system. How have they done?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Very well.

Mr. John O'Toole: By any reports, very poorly.

Hon. John Gerretsen: No, no, no. Talk to your doctors. Talk to your hospitals.

Mr. John O'Toole: No. You'll have your turn. I'd encourage the ministers over there to use their time effectively to speak to this.

Here's the real issue: On this issue, the government has been unable to—well, look, the last time they talked about Bill 78 was in 2013, long before Christmas, and now they're bringing it up at the 23rd hour of the day's activity here today.

Our member from Whitby–Oshawa, in her remarks, said a few things. "The acts that are affected by Bill 78 are the Drug Interchangeability and Dispensing Fee Act, the Regulated Health Professions Act and the Personal Health Information Protection Act." Those most affected by Bill 78 were part of the bill that we just—we're waiting for the report on the dispensing of chemotherapy drugs.

1730

That's just one example of a government with a major program; they finally had to admit that there was a fault in the system of health care on the dispensing of diluted chemo drugs, found by a person in the system, I think at the Peterborough Regional Health Centre, who found that there was a diluted drug.

The oversight from the minister—I shouldn't say this, but she left, I think because she's afraid to hear the truth.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask you to withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: I made a reference that she isn't here.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask you to withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: Withdraw.

I want to read the next comment here. These are not things that I'm making up; these are relevant comments made by—in this case, it turns out it's the Globe and Mail, which is a reasonably neutral paper. The headline, for the readers at home who want to look into the article: "Don't Cross Canada's Health-Care Ayatollahs"—the Ayatollah Khomeini, remember him? Don't cross the system.

They go on to say that there are ways to improve the health care system. "This time, they want Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne to shut down a pilot project at Toronto's Sunnybrook Hospital that aims to treat fewer than 10 foreign patients a year...."

There is no attempt to modernize the system. This actually goes on to say, why not use some of the vacant OR time? I kind of agree with making use of the full capital investment; not playing games about what specialists get how much OR time is the case in this particu-

lar article. Why not use some of the OR time to shorten the wait-lists, which we know are growing?

If I go back to the comments made—I'm quickly trying to prepare myself here—on the whole issue of health privacy, the privacy commissioner, Ann Cavoukian, has spoken on this a few times. Now, privacy is a very complex part of this thing. Consent is the first definition you need to deal with to establish the rules around health privacy, the electronic health record, which is very important.

Now, the federal government, I believe, should have the primacy in this case. The reason is because it's a pan-Canadian problem. If I'm in an automobile accident or some other event when I'm in Nova Scotia or I'm in the Northwest Territories or I'm in BC, I want the attending physician in the emergency room to know that I'm allergic to penicillin or whatever the condition is that they need to know about. There needs to be a pan-Canadian solution.

The federal system already has an integrated health system. It's called the Canada Health Infoway system. We also have in Toronto the children's health information system. There are already systems out there. Why did Ontario—I think they used it primarily to delay, deny and dither; lack of leadership, a lack of ability to make decisions, to make change.

It's difficult when you start tinkering with the health care system, but it takes courage and a vision, and that's what is sorely missing. Every time I hear of a young person dying unnecessarily or, in my case, constituents dying without access to the appropriate medication—this is what the system has amounted to today.

Now, I see some members on the other side. This is a report prior to the last election. The people of Ontario should get a hold of this. This is the Auditor General's Review of the 2011 Pre-Election Report on Ontario's Finances. There are a couple of important things here. The viewers of Ontario should know this. This is the secret plan published by the Auditor General. Here's what's happening in Ontario: The actual average growth in health care from 2003-04 to 2011 has been 7.1% per year. To match the Kathleen Wynne-Dalton McGuinty government's commitment to balance the budget by 2017-18, they have to change the growth in health care to 3.6% a year. That's a 50% cut in health care.

We're seeing it in our hospitals—

Hon. John Gerretsen: That's a 50% cut in the increase of health care.

Mr. John O'Toole: Look, they're all applauding. They know the plan. They're cutting health care in your home, in your community, at your hospital by 50%. They call it living at home—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Just a moment. Point of order. Yes.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, I believe in facts. If the increase was 7% and now it's 3.5%, it's not a 50% decrease. It's a 50% decrease in the increase, not 50% of

the whole program. The member should get his facts correct.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member, take under advisement the information. Carry on.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, I'm just saying that they're reducing the funding to health care on an annualized basis by 50%.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, you should actually pay attention.

Now we've got the new Minister of Municipal Affairs, who's really still wet behind the ears, so he's fine.

But here's the key. I would only say that the government itself—when they are looking at the state of health care today, the citizens of Ontario should recognize that Bill 78 is the result of a failed system on dispensing of medications in Ontario. As our critic, Christine Elliott, said, "A functioning electronic health record could go a long way toward eliminating patient death through toxic drug interactions...." That's just one example that she has cited that would improve the outcomes for Ontarians in the health care system.

Even if we're prepared to ignore the human costs of not having an electronic health record, it is hard to ignore the economic costs. Diagnostic testing and double procedures need to be repeated as a result of the lack of sharing of data and information between attending physicians. There are estimates that it's in excess of \$1 billion, approaching \$2 billion, on an annualized basis.

Bill 78 deals with the protection of personal health information. Now, it's important to know what that health information is or should be. The real issue is the transition between the current handwritten physicians' records and an electronic and digitalized version.

From the patient's perspective, it's whether it's informed consent—in other words, they have given consent to their physician, who has told them that this could be used for baseline health studies; it could be used for all sorts of outcomes at the end, in the future. This data on how many people are taking Crestor or Lipitor, and all these heart medications etc., as people age—pharmaceutical companies will buy this data to give them a baseline study of the outcomes of certain types of medications and dosages. I think that informed consent to be on the health record is important.

The other one is implied consent. Implied consent would be in the case when you're on a stretcher in the ER and you need to have some sort of infusion of medication or whatever. It's implied that you want to survive the car accident or whatever you've been in, and so there's a provision of implied consent.

Then there is denied consent. In other words, you don't want to be part of any of the above. You take it as it goes. That needs to be part of an education plan. Have we heard anything about it over the last 10 years? Not much.

I think the government, when I look at the bill—last time debated: November 2013. I look at today, and it's the third hour of the third day of the last month kind of

thing before the budget. I think it's just another stall mechanism that says that we're talking about it. They're talking about it; they're doing nothing about it. They've squandered money. Even the auditor's reports themselves have indicated there have been billions of dollars wasted.

I'm so disappointed. If you look back further to the real history of this, it was back in 2008 that the Legislature of Ontario—there was a report, an article on the history of the health information and privacy legislation, written by Andrea Anna Guerin and Christian David Fortin in 2008, that said this about the work of the Krever commission—we remember the tainted blood scandal: “The Krever report identified for the first time the discrepancies in the practices of healthcare institutions, health care professionals and the ambiguity in the legislation governing privacy and health information. It also recognized that the implementation of legislation to provide a universal provincial framework for privacy and health information should not be so cumbersome to impede the effective and timely delivery of health care.”

They have taken 10 years. The judgment in the people of Ontario is to ask yourself, how are they doing? We had the health tax in 2003. They're spending more money, and getting very little outcome. In my own riding, two hospitals have told me that they have nurses who have been laid off recently. There are scandalous other wastes that we could go into, but it may not be directing our comments directly to Bill 78.

1740

One more example of the inefficiency and the inability to manage—the work done by the member from Newmarket–Aurora on the Ornge air ambulance fiasco. There's another scandal that's still before the courts. I think there's an OPP investigation: millions and millions and millions of health care dollars spent both legally and other ways by individuals who did not provide service to the constituents in Durham or across Ontario.

The eHealth system, to date, by any measure, after 10 years, is nothing short of a complete failure. They've made some accusations that about nine million people are connected to some of the records. The records themselves are incomplete. I would say to anyone who's questioning this: When you get into the translation of records from the handwritten reports by doctors—I would not want to be treated by some data entry person or scanned record that was being interpreted about what the dosage of my heart medication was. I have no confidence in the system they're using of the transmission of these records.

On some of the easy stuff—there are several today. The pharmacies of Ontario are generally linked. The labs—it's called OLIS, the Ontario Laboratories Information System—have been connected with hospitals; not all, but some. There are nine modules in the health information system: long-term care, the lab system, the pharmacies, doctors' offices, hospitals—I can't remember them all right now. They're not all connected; a couple of them are.

So you could say you've got nine million people connected to the system or some part of the system. But I

don't believe there's a comprehensive solution even in sight.

We've had two select committees dealing with Ornge, and we've had another one dealing with the chemotherapy mess-up. All we need is one more about some of the other mess-ups that have happened under this government's control.

The lack of access to drugs in Ontario is shameful and quite disappointing, to be honest. I understand that these things cost.

They say they're doing everything—in fact, by any measure, they're paying more and you're getting less. Even the auditor gets it.

I believe that the Minister of Health has tried. I don't deny that she has tried. I believe that by not being able to answer the member from Newmarket–Aurora on several occasions, where she said she was doing this and further investigation has proven she is not—I don't think we've gotten to the bottom of that. We don't have either report from those two select committees: the one dealing with the chemotherapy issue, or the Ornge medical evacuation helicopter system. Neither report is public. I'm thinking, by some measure of procedure or delay, these are being set aside because of the impending election in the province of Ontario.

If the people of Ontario only knew—they do know. You're paying more and you're getting less.

By any measure, the lineups, almost all the chronic diseases—we have a plan. There are no more long-term-care homes—finished. They're not building any more. But they have a new plan called Aging at Home. It really means aging alone. In my riding, you cannot get enough home care to support someone who needs care in the morning, to get up and be prepared for the day, and to be put to bed at night. You're allowed two hours a day, seven days a week—that's 14 hours. I think you're allowed about 12 hours of care per day—completely inadequate. We know, ourselves, that there are waiting lists—I think it's two and three years for people to get into long-term-care facilities in Ontario.

I don't like looking backward so much but, at the same time, in our term in government, we created 20,000 new long-term-care beds. We saw the tsunami coming. They have seen the tsunami coming. What have they done on it? Nothing.

If you listen to them from now on, you will get what you deserve: You'll get a government that will say anything to maintain power. That's what I hear every day in question period: saying whatever they need to say to actually move the polls and move people to the polling stations in their favour.

But I say that this Bill 78, An Act to amend certain Acts with respect to electronic health records, is important, first. I think the debate by the NDP as well as the opposition side needs to be more fulsome. I would encourage the government to bring the bill forward to have further comments by other members and their experience, as we did today, more recently, from the member from Thornhill. I believe that she adds a lot to the

debate—and mine is a serious case of ranting on it, but I look at the LHINs and the other expenditures in health care as creating more bureaucracy and less care. It's as simple as that. I have no confidence that they even mean to do what's in the bill.

Thank you for the time.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: What amazes me when we're debating this bill is that it has been, what, 10 years since eHealth was proposed, and this electronic eHealth care system was supposed to make everything smoother, more efficient, and have information so that patients could get better care. This Liberal government has let the people of Ontario down again. In letting them down, they've spent a billion dollars, wasting taxpayers' precious tax dollars on systems that haven't done the job as of yet. Truly, they must really have to say to themselves when enough is enough, when they're going to start something and not carry it through successfully to the end, having to spend constantly and waste money on debacle bills—or even gas plants, for that matter; \$1.1 billion on gas plants. A billion dollars on eHealth, and we're still waiting for a system that's actually going to serve the patients of Ontario.

The other piece of this is I'm surprised that we're still, 10 years later, debating this bill, and the government hasn't put up any speakers. Let's hear why this bill is so important to you. Is it because of your failure that you don't want to speak to it? Do you want to sit back and let us do all the work for you? But you know what? It's high time that this government took responsibility for the failures in the gas plants and especially in eHealth, and not hide behind—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Time to move the bill.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Well, we have been in this House today and we've had a lot of juggling of bills today. I don't know what's behind it, but I think that if they want to debate the bill, they should get up and speak to the bill.

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

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It's very unfortunate that we hear all of these comments from the opposition party when—let's talk about when they were in power and there was no eHealth. Let's talk about what would happen. If you received a patient and you wanted to see if she was allergic to something or whatever, you had to call the supervisor. The supervisor would go down to try to get the files and then could not get the files; or the way that the doctor had written a prescription, you didn't understand it and all of this. Now, thank God, we have an electronic health record. Listening to them, there is no electronic health record.

Hello? There are nine million Ontarians—I'm one of them—who have electronic health records. These electronic health records—69% of primary care physicians and almost 52% of specialists in communities now use electronic medical records. Over 190,000 people benefit

from the electronic medical records in community health centres. All Ontarians will have these electronic medical records by 2015.

Right now, the medication history of all Ontario seniors is accessible in all hospitals and emergency rooms, and I can tell you as a health professional, this is welcome. Nurses and doctors—it's strange, because it seems like nobody wants it, but I have doctors calling my office on a regular basis, saying, "We wanted to have electronic medical records. We wanted to ensure that"—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments? The member from Grey-Owen Sound.

1750

Mr. Bill Walker: Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's always a pleasure to follow the member from Durham. He always comes prepared. He knows what he talks about. He's been here a long time to see these boondoggles unfortunately happen under the Liberal watch.

The minister just spoke about nine million people having coverage, and our esteemed colleague from Thornhill is in the health care profession. She can speak with credibility and with truth. She's telling me that the docs paid for most of the program, and the funding that the government has put into this so far doesn't even cover their software updates, let alone all of the infrastructure and the actual cost of the software and the hardware.

Madam Speaker, this is one of those things again. This was the first, I believe, billion-dollar boondoggle under this Liberal government reign of terror, of failure, and we continue to see it. We see Ornge, eHealth—we see Ornge being a boondoggle. We see the gas plants being a boondoggle. We see all of this waste. I would ask the party on the opposite side of the House, what is their record here today in 2014? Where is this electronic record?

They made a decision a long time ago about LHINs, and they followed the west. Alberta was already getting out of it, because they realized that they had made a mistake and they were changing track. They actually implemented an electronic health record which is working very, very well, but this government chose not to follow them on that.

It's an aspirational goal. It's an aspirational bill, again, to try to sound good in a 30-second sound bite, that we're going to fix the world with an electronic health care record. It's just not true.

I think my colleague from Durham hit it truly on the head when he started talking about the cuts that we're going to see: 50% of a cut to health care to the people watching at home, to the people out in your community and my community who aren't going to have the health care services.

It reminds me: Markdale, in the great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, was promised by this Liberal government 10 years ago to fund a hospital. The community rallied and raised \$12 million that sits in the bank today doing nothing for the people of our great riding.

Again, this waste from them with eHealth, with the boondoggles from the LHINs, with the boondoggles from the gas plants—they're running us into the ground, Madam Speaker. The people at the end of day who need these services are the ones paying the price.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm going to actually talk to the bill, because it's important. First of all, I do want to say that, while it's surprising that Bill 78 is before us as the third piece of legislation today and this afternoon, I think the member from Durham made a very good point around the privacy piece.

This is an important piece of legislation, because a lot went wrong with the eHealth file; a lot went wrong in the Ministry of Health. But we are going to be supporting the legislation in second reading. However, we want to see extensive committee hearings and an explanation from this government on the many questions that we have already raised. There are serious gaps with the way that Bill 78 is constructed, which—at least I can say the Liberals are consistent.

We would also like to hear a willingness from the government to address the inadequacies that are currently present in the legislation, as has already been pointed out by some of the members. It is important to ensure a strong system of privacy when it comes to personal health information, and this should be a priority for all Ontarians. This remains a serious issue.

I have a family member currently in hospital in Peterborough. His electronic files are actually something that protect him going forward, because he cannot advocate for himself. So it is so important to not have an opt-out on it. This is a serious piece—a doctor can't choose to eliminate a piece of information that should be in that electronic file. It is a matter of patient safety.

Quite honestly, when the Auditor General came out and looked at eHealth Ontario back in 2009, following the exposure of inappropriate expenses and billings by consultants, we lost faith in this process, as we should have. There are still many outstanding questions with the eHealth file. It's just amazing to me that it has come forward in this budget week. It is a huge black mark on the history of the Liberal government.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I do appreciate the member from London–Fanshawe, the Attorney General, our own PC critic as well and the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. I actually do recognize the importance of this. I would say, on our behalf, that we support a modern health care system. I'd say even the articles I cited earlier indicate the government is paralyzed with this file. In fact, they're saying no more frequently than yes.

If I can just pick up on the more recent comments, I'd say that the member from Kitchener–Waterloo has it pretty correct. She was looking at it from the perspective of the consumer. When she said that she has a family member in a situation in Peterborough, at the Peterborough Regional Health Centre, I gather—and the provisions of opting out. They haven't even solved the philosophical differences of this bill. I think arguments can be made about the opting-out provision in health privacy. A person may have certain types of issues in their life, their past life that they don't want divulged, and I think the actual client, the patient, the citizen's rights always exceed the institutional needs. That's important. "Do not resuscitate," or some medication you might be on—I think that's paramount.

I agree with your conclusion that there should be extensive hearings. The real truth of this, Madam Speaker, is this: At the 23rd hour of a day, in a legislative sense, this bill is as dead as a duck. Do you understand? Here's the reason why. That's part of the plan. They haven't discussed it for about a year and now they're discussing it in second reading. We're all implying it should go to committee. The only committee this is going to be—it's going to be called an election. This all comes down—to the people of Ontario, I'm addressing you—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Only if you want an election.

Mr. John O'Toole: No. This election is about trust. It's a matter of trust.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, no. There's a matter of trust here—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'm sorry. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1757.

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Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
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Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Brampton–Springdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

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

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Rick Bartolucci
Laura Albanese, Rick Bartolucci
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

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

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

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

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

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

Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial des services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

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