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Tuesday 21 October 2014

Mardi 21 octobre 2014

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 21 October 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 21 octobre 2014

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FIGHTING FRAUD
AND REDUCING AUTOMOBILE
INSURANCE RATES ACT, 2014
LOI DE 2014 DE LUTTE CONTRE
LA FRAUDE ET DE RÉDUCTION
DES TAUX D'ASSURANCE-AUTOMOBILE

Mr. Bradley, on behalf of Mr. Sousa, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 15, An Act to amend various statutes in the interest of reducing insurance fraud, enhancing tow and storage service and providing for other matters regarding vehicles and highways / Projet de loi 15, Loi visant à modifier diverses lois dans le but de réduire la fraude à l'assurance, d'améliorer les services de remorquage et d'entreposage et de traiter d'autres questions touchant aux véhicules et aux voies publiques.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Deputy government House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, the member from York South–Weston, and the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, the member for Newmarket–Aurora, and I will be leaving the lion's share of the time for that. I'll offer a few remarks at the beginning but, obviously, the parliamentary assistants, on both of these occasions and both these instances, are individuals who have developed an expertise in this field and will be speaking on behalf of the government.

We agreed, you will remember, to reduce auto insurance rates by 15% on average by August 2015, and we're still on target to meet that particular goal. Since setting that goal last summer, we have seen rates stabilize and come down, on average, by about 6%. But of course, we believe that's not enough. There's more to be done, and we introduced legislation last spring that would work to achieve this plan. Unfortunately, the opposition forced an unnecessary election that froze our work, and that's why today we're here, working to pass this legislation again to

further fight fraud, reduce costs and lower rates for Ontario drivers.

I must say, in my time in this House, the issue of auto insurance in general has come to the attention of the Legislature on many occasions. It's usually when the premiums rise in a significant way that it gains the attention of the Legislature and ultimately, of course, the public, who will witness this happening to themselves and to others. That is why the government seized upon this as being a very significant issue early on, under the auspices, particularly, of the Minister of Finance, but we have two parliamentary assistants today who will look at it from different angles.

One of the things you recognize, Mr. Speaker—we have a different Speaker in the chair now, the member for Chatham and other areas in that area, Chatham–Kent and—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Essex.

Hon. James J. Bradley: —Essex, those three, is sitting in the chair in a very distinguished manner. I just wanted to let his constituents know that he was here and presiding at this particular point in time.

There is a saga to auto insurance in this province. I can recall, as I say, on many occasions—when new governments come in, they try to tackle these particular challenges, and have been somewhat successful over the years. There is a recognition that there's a relationship between the costs incurred and the premiums paid. The question always is, how much of that is significant in terms of the premiums rising?

I remember in 1990 being in this chamber and, with much fanfare, the NDP government of the day was sworn in for government. I knew number one in their platform, or at least very high in their platform, was public auto insurance. So I waited for those five years to see whether, in fact, there would be public auto insurance introduced in the province, because it had been promised for years. They said, "Well, the New Democratic Party, what are they about?" They're about public auto insurance.

But lo and behold, I think a very detailed analysis was done for the province of Ontario—because, remember, public auto insurance had been in place in other provinces. An analysis was done by the government of the day, who didn't want to break a promise. They weren't about breaking promises; they did not want to do it. But they took a very careful look at the circumstances that existed at that time and chose not to proceed with public auto insurance. That's a decision any government can make at any particular point in time. I noticed in the last

provincial election that the New Democratic Party did not promise public auto insurance.

I think we recognize that there's a challenge for people out there, and the purpose of this legislation is to deal with that particular challenge, a lot of it related to fraud. There are some towing circumstances that people have encountered over the years. They say there could be—and I think they are right—a reduction in costs if there were changes made in that regard and others, but I don't want to intrude too far into the speaking time of the two parliamentary assistants who are going to follow me at this time.

Suffice it to say, with some historical perspective, every government has tried to deal with this, and the circumstances change over the years; it's not one circumstance facing everyone. I'm going to recall a bit a circumstance when I was Minister of the Environment in 1985. There was an insurance crisis at that time. There had been some significant court cases—some of them had not actually completed, but they were court cases that came forward that scared everybody, to be quite honest about that, including municipalities. Even getting insurance was becoming a problem because the reinsurance business, the insurance companies that insure insurance companies, were at that time quite worried about the circumstances that existed. And here I was, as Minister of the Environment, trying to proclaim what was called the spills bill.

Now, the spills bill was a bill which dealt with environmental spills. It really put the onus on the spiller, if you will, to clean up and look after the problem immediately. Some said that it was reverse onus, and I guess it was to a certain extent, so it was controversial. It had passed under a minority Parliament, the minority Parliament between 1977 and 1981—I must say, by the way, Mr. Speaker, a minority Parliament that in my view worked very well. Unlike the last minority Parliament that we had, I thought the one between 1977 and 1981 worked well. Let me tell you why that was. Remember there was a minority Parliament between 1975 and 1977—very raucous, very disruptive; it worked enough, but there were a lot of challenges. People hadn't had experience with a minority Parliament for a long time. Mr. Davis called an election to gain a majority. He fell short of gaining that majority, so we were in a minority Parliament again.

0910

What happened on that occasion was that the government became much more responsive to the opposition, and the opposition became more responsible in terms of what it was doing. So I thought in that period of time—and I want to give Mr. Davis, who I know will be watching from his home in Brampton at this time or his office in Brampton, some considerable credit for the way—and Bob Welch, by the way, who was a House leader. I want to give them credit for the manner in which they operated the minority Parliament at that time. I want to give credit as well to all the House leaders who worked together to make Parliament work. There were actually a lot of bills

that were passed on that particular occasion. So that's the context.

Now we are into a majority Parliament again. The people of Ontario have made a decision. We have a majority Parliament, and we're now able to deal with a piece of legislation we just couldn't get moving in a minority Parliament. In fact, in the last minority Parliament, it was hard to move any legislation through, which was unfortunate. Then we ended up with an election that I'm sure the member for Renfrew did not want, but there we were, in an election. His leader and others—the hawks, as we call them—had been calling for an election. The New Democratic Party pulled the plug, and we were thrust into an election that I don't think many people in the province wanted, but they did make a decision.

Now we're before this House with a piece of legislation which I think will have—

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Yes—a piece of legislation which I think will go a long way to meeting the challenges that we face in auto insurance.

Having said this, I now turn it over to the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance or the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services, whichever one gets up and you recognize.

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: York South–Weston.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. I would thank the minister for his history lesson.

I would now recognize the member from York South–Weston.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will be sharing my time with the member from Newmarket–Aurora and also the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, who I believe would like to add something to the second reading of Bill 15.

I am very honoured to rise today for second reading of Bill 15, the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act, 2014. This legislation proposes a number of much-needed measures to help protect Ontario drivers, tackle fraud and abuse, and reduce costs and uncertainty in Ontario's auto insurance system. If passed, Bill 15 will build on the work done to date to stabilize and bring down auto insurance rates, including the substantial 2010 reforms that streamlined the system, gave consumers more choice in their auto insurance policies and cracked down on fraud and abuse.

There are more than nine million drivers in Ontario. Some of these drivers are still paying too much for auto insurance. I'm sure that, as members of this Legislature, we all hear that in our constituencies from time to time. Our government made a commitment to making auto insurance more affordable while keeping the system fair and reliable. Bill 15 would make good on that commitment and help bring down average rates for Ontario drivers.

In August 2013, we announced our Auto Insurance Cost and Rate Reduction Strategy. We're targeting an average 15% reduction in auto insurance rates over two

years. How are we working to achieve that target? A key element of our strategy is to bring down costs in the system and reduce uncertainty. Auto insurance rates are directly linked to claim costs. Every dollar paid out in auto insurance claims is funded by policyholders, so if we reduce the costs, we can help reduce the rates.

One significant cost driver in the auto insurance system is fraud. Recognizing this, in July 2011 the government formed the Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force based on a commitment made in the 2011 Ontario budget. The task force was created to bring together stakeholders and government to collaboratively review the issues and recommend some solutions.

In 2012, the task force issued its final report. It found that auto insurance fraud is indeed substantial and has a material impact on premiums. Research conducted on the task force's behalf estimated that in 2010, costs related to auto insurance fraud amounted to between \$770 million and \$1.6 billion. So tackling fraud and working to reduce it has been an ongoing priority for our government.

The task force made 38 recommendations to combat auto insurance fraud. So far we have taken action to address more than half of these, and we're committed to addressing the remaining recommendations over the coming months. Bill 15 contains important measures that would not only continue our crackdown on fraud, but would also address other critical issues in the auto insurance system to help reduce costs and uncertainty, and ultimately rates, for Ontario drivers.

Mr. Speaker, our cost and rate reduction strategy is working. From August 2013 to August 2014, auto insurance rates dropped by an average of over 6%. While we're pleased with this reduction, we recognize that we still have a ways to go to reach our 15% target.

If passed, Bill 15 would help us get there. The measures being proposed by this legislation include transforming the auto insurance dispute resolution system to make it more efficient and effective, and discourage fraud and abuse. The legislation would propose consumer protection to towing and vehicle storage industries through measures that tackle questionable business practices, and provide authority to address vehicle storage and related issues identified by the anti-fraud task force.

In addition, the amendments proposed provide new enforcement tools, such as allowing inspectors to issue orders where violations are found. I believe that's very important. Bill 15 would also modernize insurance agent and adjuster disciplinary hearings, which would protect consumers and build on past changes to enhance the regulator's investigation and enforcement authority. As you can see, this proposed legislation is comprehensive in its approach to fighting fraud and abuse, improving consumer protection and strengthening Ontario's auto insurance system.

The proposed Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act, 2014, is a combination of two pieces of legislation that died on the order paper when the 40th Parliament of Ontario was dissolved: the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance

Rates Act, 2014, originally introduced on March 4, 2014, and the Roadside Assistance Protection Act, 2014, originally introduced on April 15, 2014. The measures included in these two bills are so vital to helping to protect Ontario drivers and fighting fraud in the auto insurance system that we simply had to reintroduce them.

I'd now like to provide some details about these measures and outline why it is important that Bill 15 has all of our support. Since 1990, mediation has been a mandatory first step for disputes between claimants and auto insurers over the entitlement to, or amount of, statutory accident benefits. The dispute resolution system, or DRS, as it's also known, was intended to help drivers and insurers resolve disputes quickly so that injured drivers got the health treatments they needed to get better. This system was administered by the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, also known as FSCO.

However, in recent years, the system became overwhelmed and bogged down with applications. There are major backlogs that created uncertainty and elevated costs. On top of everything, injured drivers were waiting too long to get the benefits they needed.

We are proposing to change the DRS to help injured Ontario drivers settle disputes faster.

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Last year, we appointed the Honourable J. Douglas Cunningham, a former Associate Chief Justice of the Ontario Superior Court of Justice, to review the system and provide us with recommendations on how to make improvements. There was an extensive consultation process, which included input from 35 stakeholders, written submissions, in-person meetings, as well as an interim report.

The final report was delivered on February 18 and made 28 recommendations to transform the DRS so that it operates more efficiently and effectively, which would reduce consumer frustration, uncertainty and costs. Bill 15 is proposing to implement a number of these recommendations.

If passed, Bill 15 would create a new framework for the DRS by moving responsibility to an existing tribunal administered by the Ministry of the Attorney General, which would be the Licence Appeal Tribunal. The objective is to establish a more expedient, efficient and cost-effective system. The move would also remove adjudicative functions regarding statutory accident benefits from FSCO to prevent conflicts in its role as the regulator of insurance companies. This is an important step. The resulting reduction in costs and uncertainty would lead to more long-term stability in claim costs, which would ultimately lower rates. More importantly, it would provide claimants with faster access to the benefits they require.

Drivers involved in traffic collisions or in need of roadside assistance should have the confidence that the tow truck driver helping them will do the work safely. If passed, Bill 15 would help us achieve this important goal. We're proposing consumer protections to address the towing and vehicle storage industries, a key measure that was recommended by the Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud

Task Force. The changes that we're proposing would, if passed, help Ontario drivers make informed decisions when getting their vehicle towed or having it held in a storage facility.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed legislation and supporting regulations, in due course, would require tow and storage providers to get authorization from the consumer, or someone acting on behalf of the consumer, before charging for towing and storage services. Tow and storage providers would also be required to make their rates available publicly. They would also have to accept payments by credit card from consumers, and, before demanding or receiving payment, tow and storage providers would have to provide an invoice, including an itemized list of the services provided and the total cost. Finally, in most cases, consumers would have access to their towed vehicle to remove any property contained in the vehicle. These proposed changes were developed through extensive consultations with stakeholders held earlier this year.

In January and February, 2014, representatives from the municipal, policing, towing, insurance, vehicle financing and leasing, and other sectors met to consult on the oversight of the towing and storage industries. The group worked together to develop recommendations to government which we are now proposing in Bill 15.

But that's not all, Mr. Speaker. We are also proposing to amend the Highway Traffic Act to include tow trucks in the province's existing commercial vehicle operator's registration system. The new legislation would allow us to set qualifications and standards governing the operation and the use of tow trucks, including driver certification and training requirements, and prescribe penalties to violators. This would help improve road safety through monitoring and enforcement, another important consumer protection measure.

Another way that we are helping to protect drivers is by proposing to provide authority to reduce the number of days a vehicle can be stored after an accident without giving notice to the owner and other persons where required. Regulations could also provide for the determination of fair value of storage where an amount has not been agreed upon.

Currently, when a vehicle has been damaged in an accident, it may be brought to a storage facility after the collision by someone other than the owner, or without the owner's authority. Those who store vehicles after accidents can begin charging for storage services right away, even though the owner of the vehicle may be unaware of where their car is located and that it is accumulating charges every day. Storers can hold a vehicle and accumulate storage charges for up to 60 days without giving any notice and then still claim a lien for the storage costs. The Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force noted that storers can maximize their lien by delaying notice until the 60-day period has almost expired, and the vehicle's owner or insurer may be liable for these inflated costs. So reducing the 60-day time period would cut down on abusive practices by some storers and would re-

move the associated costs from the auto insurance system. If passed, the proposed amendments would help address another of the task force's recommendations. I believe this is a very important one that really needs to be passed as quickly as possible.

Another measure proposed by Bill 15 is to modernize the system for insurance agent and adjuster disciplinary hearings. Streamlining the disciplinary process would support quicker regulatory action against agents and adjusters who are engaging in cost-generating deceptive and often fraudulent actions. For example, one insurance agent who had their licence revoked was caught using insurance company funds to cover their own business expenses. This is unacceptable. If passed, FSCO would have the authority to revoke or immediately suspend the licences of agents and adjusters who act improperly and put the public at risk. Bill 15 would also align the process for these disciplinary hearings with modern principles of procedural fairness, including replacing the 90-year-old advisory board system with the existing Financial Services Tribunal. If passed, these amendments would help combat fraud and protect consumers by building on previous changes Ontario has made to expand and modernize FSCO's investigation and enforcement authority, particularly in the area of fraud prevention. These are much-needed measures that would help protect Ontario consumers.

Because auto insurance fraud is so prevalent and costly, we're tackling it from many sides. In addition to the measures being proposed in Bill 15, our government has committed to establishing a serious fraud unit whose mandate will include addressing auto insurance fraud. Automobile insurance fraud is part of a wider issue of white-collar crime that costs Ontario citizens, companies and financial institutions hundreds of millions of dollars each year. A special unit with a mandate to tackle serious fraud, including auto insurance fraud, will support the key principle established by the Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force that fraudsters should be vigorously pursued and prosecuted where warranted.

Bill 15 also proposes a long-overdue measure that will help modernize the auto insurance system. If passed, this legislation would amend the Insurance Act to align the prejudgment interest rate for non-pecuniary loss, also called pain and suffering damages, for individuals injured in a motor vehicle collision to reflect market conditions. The current prejudgment interest rate on damages for non-pecuniary loss in a personal injury action is set at 5% per year. Meanwhile, the prejudgment interest rate for most other damages is based on Bank of Canada interest rates and calculated quarterly. Currently this rate is 1.3% per year. The 5%-per-year prejudgment interest rate for damages for non-pecuniary loss in a personal injury action increases the cost of bodily injury claims in the auto insurance system, which drives up costs for all consumers. This rate has not been adjusted since 1990. Linking this rate to current market conditions would help reduce the cost of bodily injury claims in the auto insurance system while still ensuring fairness to consumers.

In conclusion, as I have outlined, Bill 15 would bring much-needed changes to Ontario's auto insurance system. It is the next step in our commitment to keeping the system fair and affordable for Ontario drivers. That is why I ask for the support of the House in passing this act.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank the member for York South–Weston for her contribution to debate.

I now recognize the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

0930

Mr. Chris Ballard: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The deputy government House leader reminded me of the early days when the NDP were elected. I was the executive director of the Consumers' Association of Canada here in Ontario, with 60,000 members. Auto insurance was always top of mind for us because we heard consistently from our members and from others just how important it was to them. So he takes me back a few years.

It's a great privilege then for me to rise in the House today to tell you about the steps our government is proposing to address concerns in the towing and vehicle storage industry for the over nine million drivers in this province.

The Ministry of Government and Consumer Services has been working closely with our colleagues in two other ministries—the Ministry of Finance, under the leadership of Minister Sousa, and the Ministry of Transportation, under the leadership of Minister Del Duca—to develop proposed changes to the laws currently governing these industries, which are before you today.

Proposing strong consumer protection and public safety measures specific to the towing and vehicle storage industries is an important initiative that will help the people of Ontario in three critical ways. If these legislative changes are passed, they will help strengthen consumer protection, improve road user safety and reduce automobile insurance fraud.

Most of the tow truck and vehicle storage operators in Ontario provide top-notch service to their customers and contribute to keeping our roads free and clear by removing vehicles, including those involved in collisions, quickly, efficiently and safely. However, some towing and storage operators simply do not meet the standards expected of them. Serious concerns have been raised about some operators in the industry by consumers and by the Insurance Bureau of Canada, among others. We know, for example, that some tow truck drivers charge exorbitant rates, leaving vulnerable accident victims shocked and distressed. We know, for example, and many of us have heard stories of people going to pick up vehicles from storage lots, only to find they've been asked to pay unexpectedly large amounts of money before their vehicles are released.

It's worth noting that from a road safety perspective, tow truck drivers also have very high collision rates, caused in part by aggressive driving when they try to get

to a collision scene first. According to the Ontario road safety report, tow trucks in Ontario had a 19.7% collision rate in 2010. That's compared to 1.1% for other commercial vehicles and 3.3% for private passenger vehicles. Drivers involved in traffic collisions or in need of roadside assistance should have the confidence that the tow truck driver helping them will do their work safely and fairly. If passed, Bill 15 would help us achieve this important goal.

We're proposing consumer protection to address the towing and vehicle storage industries, which is in keeping with recommendations of the Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force and this ministry's towing and storage advisory group. The changes we're proposing would, if passed, help Ontario drivers make informed decisions when getting their vehicle towed or having it held in a storage facility. The proposed legislation and supporting regulations would require tow and storage providers to get authorization from the consumer or someone acting on behalf of the consumer before charging for towing and storage services. Tow and storage providers would also be required to make their rates available publicly. They would also have to accept alternative forms of payment to cash, such as by credit card or debit card, from consumers, and before demanding or receiving payment, tow and storage providers would have to provide an invoice, including an itemized list of the services provided and the total cost. Finally, consumers would generally have access to their towed vehicle to remove any personal property contained in the vehicle.

These proposed changes were developed through extensive consultation with stakeholders held earlier this year. In January and February, 2014, representatives from the municipal, policing, towing, vehicle finance and leasing, insurance, and other sectors met to consult on the oversight of the towing and storage industries. The group worked collaboratively to develop recommendations to government, which we're now proposing in Bill 15, but that's not all. We're also proposing to amend the Highway Traffic Act to include tow trucks in the province's existing commercial vehicle operator's registration system. The new legislation would allow us to set qualifications and standards governing the operation and use of tow trucks, such as driver certification and training recommendations. This would help improve road safety through monitoring and enforcement, another important consumer protection measure.

Another way we're helping to protect drivers is by proposing to provide authority to reduce the number of days a vehicle can be stored after an accident without giving notice to the owner and other persons where required. Regulations can also provide for the determination of fair value of storage where an amount has not been agreed to.

Currently, when a vehicle has been damaged in an accident, for example, it may be brought to a storage facility after the collision by someone other than the owner or without the owner's authority. Those who store vehicles can begin charging for storage service right away, even

though the owner of the vehicle may be unaware of where their car is located and that it's accumulating charges every day.

Storers can hold a vehicle and accumulate storage charges for up to 60 days without giving any notice, and then still claim a lien for the storage costs. The Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force noted that storers can maximize their lien by delaying notice until the 60-day period has almost expired and the vehicle's owner or insurer may be liable for inflated costs. Reducing the 60-day time period would cut down on abusive practices by some storers and would remove some of the associated costs from the auto insurance system. If passed, Bill 15 would extend invaluable protection to those whose automobiles are towed and stored.

Because auto insurance fraud is so prevalent and costly, we're tackling it from many sides, as the member who spoke before me outlined. In Ontario, we want drivers involved in traffic collisions or in need of roadside assistance to have the confidence that the tow truck driver helping them is qualified and will do the work safely and fairly, and we're committed to working with the towing and vehicle storage industries in Ontario to help make that happen.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. The rest of my time, I will allow my colleague to carry on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank the member from Newmarket–Aurora. We'll continue debate with the member from Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and welcome back. I'm sure it was a wonderful summer in Chatham, with all the festivals you were going to, and I'm sure there are fall festivals going on now in Chatham-Kent.

I just want to follow up with my colleagues, the minister—Mr. Bradley from St. Catharines—the member from York South–Weston and the member from Barrie, on their comments on this very important issue of auto insurance. Mr. Speaker, as you know, auto insurance is really a necessity of life for all Ontarians. We all have to have an automobile, a safe automobile, and we all have to have some insurance because of the possibility of something occurring when you're driving your car, so we don't have much choice. It's not a matter of choice, it's a matter of prerogative; we have to have our vehicles and we have to have auto insurance.

I have been involved over the years with this interesting topic. I go back quite a number of years with auto insurance. Over the years, I've learned a lot by talking to a lot of the people on the ground, whether they be insurance brokers, whether they be auto body repair shop operators, tow truck drivers, insurance agents, people who are in the medical side of insurance or people in our government here, experts like Phil Howell, who is the director of the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, FSCO. There's a lot that you learn.

The thing I learned most is that this is a most complex series of issues. Sometimes we do more harm than good when we think there's a quick fix or a silver bullet:

“Reduce my rates and I don't care about anything else.” But as you know, the consequence sometimes is that you may not get the coverage you need if you happen to be in an accident. You may not get the repair to your vehicle or the compensation you may require if, God forbid, something happens to you or one of your loved ones in an accident.

0940

That's why it's not just a matter of, “Just lower my rates and I don't care what the consequences are.” There are consequences with everything you do in this industry. It is extremely complex because it's not just about the insurance companies. It's not just about the insurance brokers or the government at FSCO. The insurance industries, as I call them, are made up of many component parts.

Insurance in Ontario involves the tow truck industry. Those are the vehicles that tow people on a regular basis who have been in an accident. It involves the legal community—the paralegals who are expert in certain areas of law and who are very involved in auto insurance. Then, the lawyers. There are all kinds of lawyers involved in the insurance industry. If you look at the ads on TV—the slip-and-fall lawyers. They're advertising like crazy: “If you get in an accident, call us.” If you go to some parts of Ontario, you see big billboards: “If you get in an accident, call us.” In many cases, they do some good work, but in many cases, there are people, sometimes, in the past, who have taken advantage of people in car accidents.

I spent some time at the TTC, and on a regular basis the TTC deals with fraudulent insurance claims—almost on a daily basis. I know that my fellow members from Scarborough remember this. There was a bus full of people—I think it was on Lawrence Avenue in Scarborough, on a Sunday night, which is quite unusual. You don't usually see a bus full of people in Scarborough on Lawrence Avenue. Somehow this bus full of people rear-ended a truck in front of them—Sunday night at about 8 o'clock.

Everybody on the bus sued the TTC. I remember the TTC lawyer at the time—an excellent lawyer. He decided to challenge this, because he said, “It's quite unusual to have a bus full of people all suing us for whiplash on a Sunday night in Scarborough.” In their investigation, they found that this was a staged accident. The guy driving the truck in front of the bus stopped abruptly so that the bus ran into the rear of the truck. The driver of the truck was being paid off by some fraud artists. Everybody on the bus who sued the TTC for whiplash got 500 bucks from the person who set up the staged accident. But this took the TTC about five years of legal manoeuvring and legal costs to deal with this one staged accident.

I use this as an example of the type of thing you're dealing with with insurance and vehicle accidents as to what could happen. And the repercussions? People say, “It's just the TTC; they can pay. It's just the insurance company; they can pay.” But as you know, we all pay.

This type of organized fraud forces all of our premiums to go up. Sure, the insurance company will pass it on to us in higher premiums and they'll pass it onto our companies and insurers etc. So everybody pays for these fraud artists. There isn't some nameless insurance company that pays for all this; we pay through our premiums.

There are the people in the auto body repair industry—it's a huge industry in Ontario: people who repair cars and trucks. They're involved in insurance. It's a multi-million dollar industry that employs thousands of people. They're in the insurance business.

Then there's the whole massage industry. I don't know if you're aware of this, but there are all kinds of people employed in massaging people who get into accidents. There are some very professional massage therapists; there are some that are not professional. At one time, there were people from organized crime who were buying these massage spas treating people in automobile accidents. They would drive you to the massage spa in their limos. They had some interesting people doing massages on you. This was all paid by the insurance company and run by organized crime, with a small O.

Then you have the physiotherapists. Thousands of physiotherapists are involved in treating people who are victims of automobile accidents. The majority of them are very legitimate, excellent, well-trained, serious people, but then there are other people who are dubious physiotherapists who don't really have their licences, and they operate these so-called physiotherapy offices.

The medical community: There are many physicians who are involved in the insurance industry. They do medical assessments of people who are victims of accidents. What happens is, doctors do assessments. Then other doctors for the insurance companies do assessments. Then doctors for the accident victims do assessments. So they might do 10 assessments for one minor car accident. There are many medical doctors involved in the insurance industry.

Lawyers, as I said: There are thousands of lawyers involved in the insurance industry. There are also the insurance brokers, who are people that represent individuals who take out insurance from an insurance company. They are your representatives. When you want to buy insurance or you have an accident, they act as your advocate.

There's another part of insurance where you don't need a broker. They're called direct insurers. You just deal with the company directly. You don't have an agent or a broker; you deal directly. That's another complex part of insurance: the direct insurers, as opposed to the ones who work with brokers.

These are multiple layers of industries that employ tens of thousands of people in this thing called auto insurance. When you talk about auto insurance, it is not just about dealing with an insurance company and how they operate, or just dealing with the legal system, or not just dealing with the Financial Services Commission of Ontario. There are a dozen industries within the insur-

ance industry. So when this government has tried to basically manage and improve this industry and make it fairer, more transparent, it is not an easy task.

As the member from Barrie said, just dealing with the tow truck industry itself is very, very complex. The majority of tow truck operators are very legitimate people, experienced truckers. They have good track records. But then there are the other so-called tow truck operators. They will show up at an accident. As soon as the accident occurs—bang—they're there on the spot. They say, "Don't say anything. Don't do anything. We'll take your car to fix it. We've got a lawyer for you. We've got a doctor for you. We've got an insurance company for you."

The tow truck operator is the first entry point for insurance. They show up on the scene. A poor person is traumatized by the accident, so this tow truck driver becomes their advocate on the scene. Away goes their vehicle. In some cases, that vehicle may never be seen again, because once you give away that vehicle, they can keep it for 60 days.

In fact, here's an example. I know that in my own community, there is an auto body repair shop owned by this guy named Rocky. Across the street is a Mazda dealer, right on Dufferin. There's a Mazda dealer and Rocky's auto body repair shop.

A customer comes in to Rocky and says, "I just got in an accident, and my new car is across the street at the Mazda dealer." Rocky phones up the Mazda dealer and says, "Listen, I've got the customer here. He's the owner of that car. He wants me to repair the car."

The dealer said to him, or somebody in the dealership said, "Well, if you want the car, it will cost you 2,000 bucks." Rocky said, "Two thousand bucks?" "Yeah, there's an administration fee. Two thousand bucks."

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The car was driveable, Rocky said. You could just bring the car across the street from the dealership to Rocky's and have it repaired. "No, we won't release the car." But the owner called the dealer and said, "Release my car." He said, "No, 2,000 bucks, because we brought the car here to our shop. We had to do all this work to drive it here and drop it off. We had to do all this paperwork. Two thousand bucks or you don't get the car." Then the guy said, "Well, it doesn't matter. The insurance company will pay for this."

So in order to get the car over to the auto body repair shop of choice, which was the owner of the vehicle's choice, they had to pay \$2,000 to the guy across the street to release the car, to take the ransom. That's what it is, it's pure ransom.

Now, that's one example, Mr. Speaker. This has been going on by the tens of millions of dollars across Ontario for years, where these vehicles have been taken from accident scenes, held to ransom and the owner can't get it, your auto body repair shop can't get it. So that's why we are now trying to get rid of this hostage-taking of vehicles in accidents with this bill. That's one aspect of trying to provide for rules for tow truck operators. It's the

Wild West out there. There are many good ones, but as I said, there are some that are just exploitive. That's why we need this kind of legislation to help ensure that these added layers of costs are removed from the system, because if we continue to have this kind of hostage-taking of vehicles, if we continue to have this attitude of "Well, the insurance company is paying for it"—it doesn't matter whether somebody's committing fraud, it doesn't matter whether somebody is taking you to a physiotherapist in a limo, we have to get rid of this approach.

Now, it doesn't mean that getting rid of all this fraud is the only answer and is going to be the magic solution to making auto insurance fair in Ontario. My main point is that there are many other aspects to it, because I guess four and a half million drivers—maybe I've lost track of that, but there are just so many people driving, so many insurance companies, agents and all these other industries related. This bill attempts to come to grips with the reality of the auto insurance industry and to make it more transparent, more reasonable, an attempt to bring down rates, but it is not going to be the magic elixir. There is a lot of work to be done, and it's going to be a continuing amount of work with everybody in partnership.

As drivers, we have to understand that we have a responsibility and we can't continue to have that attitude of "Well, the insurance is paying." You know, whether you're in the auto body repair business or a tow truck business or the legal profession or all these others—the paralegals, the massage industry—we have to say that we all have to do our part and government has to do their part to undertake this serious, comprehensive partnership in making auto insurance fair and available to everybody, because you cannot drive in Ontario without it.

I suspect, Mr. Speaker, because of higher rates, there are probably a lot of people driving without insurance. You talk to your police friends and they'll tell you how many people they stop on a regular basis who don't have insurance. You're probably young enough to remember, Mr. Speaker, when we used to have that \$25 thing we used to pay for liability back in the old days, so everybody got at least some kind of protection from being hit by someone without insurance. But nowadays, again, there are a lot of people driving without insurance that we have to do something about, too. That's why we need to make insurance affordable, fair and available in all parts of the province, because this problem of fraud, it's sad to say—it isn't everywhere in the province. It's maybe not a serious issue in Chatham-Kent and the good people there and Merlin and those places; there are a lot of good people there. But it is a serious problem in the GTA. It seems to be, sad to say, where a lot of this untoward activity is taking place. Maybe it's the critical mass of people that are here.

Then, Mr. Speaker, the other question I'm sure you've asked yourself is, with all these safety devices in cars—you know, we've got cars that can see from the inside lane the outside lane. They've got sensors on them. They've got the anti-lock brakes; they've got the anti-

skid mechanisms; they've got cameras out the back, the side, the incredibly good tires and the bumpers. Yet despite all these safety devices, the cost of accidents is going up and up and up. People are claiming more injuries from accidents than ever before, despite all these safety devices. And remember, one of the most important things, Mr. Speaker, as you well know, being an avid driver yourself, is the airbags. How many airbags? They've got 10, 20, 30 airbags in cars now. How can anybody get hurt with 10, 20, 30 airbags? But they are getting hurt and they are claiming injuries to their insurance company. So we've got all these safety features and yet the costs and the number of injuries are going up.

In Ontario, the cost of a claim compared to Alberta, for instance, is almost twice as much—just taking an approximation on that. So if you get in an accident, the same accident in Ontario costs twice as much to pay for that claim as it does in Alberta. Same cars, same good Canadians, yet our claims in Ontario are so expensive. Why? Why?

The other thing I wanted to mention, too, is that in insurance, at one time there used to be—well, there still is—a place for people who have many accidents. If you've got multiple accidents, you have to go into, like, insurance purgatory. I can't remember the name of the place now, but—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Facility.

Mr. Mike Colle: Facility, yes. I remember that at one time we had thousands of people in Facility, because what the insurance companies would do—if you were in a couple of accidents, they didn't want to insure you, because the insurance companies want to pick the people that are lowest risk. So they would say to you, "We don't want you. Go over to Facility." But in Facility, instead of paying \$5,000 a year or \$2,000 a year—you might pay \$10,000 a year for your insurance in Facility. Facility was filled with people, because the insurance companies didn't want to cover all these people who were in accidents.

One good thing is that the number of people in Facility has been reduced dramatically. Where before there were thousands in Facility, now there's hardly any. That's one good thing, because all the insurance companies are supposed to take reasonable people as customers.

As they say, not all insurance companies are the same. Like I said at the beginning, you can go through a direct insurer where you just get on the phone with someone and they insure you directly with an insurance company, or you can go to your friendly local broker, so that person is your advocate. That's why I always tell people—insurance is a very complicated thing but a very important thing. So if you're going to get insurance for your kids, if you're going to get insurance for your partner, it's important to go and talk to someone who knows something about insurance and do some research. Don't just get the lowest price. You pay for what you get. Now, you may get the lowest price and a great deal—that's very possible—but you can't do it by just reading an ad on the back of a bus or something. You have to do your research

as a consumer, and we as a government have to be doing more to protect consumers so they don't get taken advantage of and we educate them.

The other thing I would mention that is coming and that I think is a very positive thing in insurance is telematics. This is going to be really helpful to young drivers and new drivers because, as you know, when you're a new driver, it doesn't matter whether you're the 17-year-old just getting their licence or whether you're a new-comer to Canada from Scotland or something: You pay a very high rate as a new driver because you have no Ontario experience.

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What is happening technologically is, there are these telematics systems coming into place where there's a little device in your vehicle that can record how fast you drive, what kind of stops—are you doing those drag-racing takeoffs and so forth? What time of day do you drive? I know that some parents of young teenagers really love this system of telematics because they want to know how their son or daughter is driving. You can say to them, “Well, son, I trust you with the car. Here's the car. Go out there and don't speed. Be very careful. I don't want you driving around midnight; just drive when you have to go to work.” You can have that recorded through this telematics system that's available from companies now here in Ontario, all over North America and in England, where it started. That's going to be a way of saying to young drivers, “Listen, the recording of your driving habits and patterns will be given to the insurance company on a regular basis. They can see if you are driving at a safe rate of speed, what time you're driving etc., and because of that, we can give you a lower rate.”

If they notice in the digital reporting that you are speeding constantly, they give you a warning; in fact, they text you because it's usually for young people. They text and say, “Johnny, in the last week, you've been going over the speed limit constantly. Johnny, if you don't stop that, your rate is going to go up.” So they give them a warning. Then if Johnny keeps speeding, they will then see that rate go up, and dad will say, “Johnny, look, I've got to pay another 200 bucks a month for your insurance.” For young people, it can be very, very difficult and expensive to drive a vehicle and get insured.

So this telematics system that's becoming more and more in vogue in Ontario, as it has been all over North America and England, will be a feature that will encourage young people and new drivers to drive safer and, at the same time, be able to be used as a tool to reduce rates. So that's a good thing that's coming through technology.

Again, Mr. Speaker, I just want to say that all these aspects of insurance that I've talked about, I hope, reinforce the point that I made at the beginning: It is a very complex system. We need everybody working together to bring down rates, to make insurance more transparent, to make it more beneficial for the insured and to make it, again, more understandable.

This Bill 15 takes on a lot of hard, challenging issues. As I said, it is a bill that tries to solve some of these

problems. We can't expect everything that this bill purports to do will come out in perfection, but it is an extremely thoughtful, well-researched attempt at solving some of these problems. There have been a lot of stakeholder meetings. There's been a lot of input. They had the task force that met. All partners in insurance have tried to participate in bringing about some needed remedies to make auto insurance better, more available and more transparent for all Ontarians who need to drive, need to have insurance.

Again, I encourage everyone to take a good look at this bill. I think it's a bill that's worth supporting, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Comments and questions?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: This bill is a continuation of a century-long drama when it comes to auto insurance in Ontario. It seems that, from time to time, auto insurance becomes a trendy concern, and we come out with some legislation. This has resulted in lots of bureaucracy and lots of legislation piled on top of one another. It's making the system too complicated and, in the end, very costly. In fact, we now have the highest auto insurance rates in our country.

It's important to note that we've heard from stakeholders, including advocates for accident victims, who have concerns about this bill, and there are concerns around the aspects of the legislation related to the changes affecting the towing industry. I think it's important to listen to those concerns to see if there are improvements we can make to this bill in committee and to address those.

This bill essentially merges Bills 171 and 189 from the previous Parliament. It addresses five priority areas relating to auto insurance in Ontario. The Liberals are touting this bill as part of their cost reduction strategy intended to help deliver 15% in savings to drivers, which we all know they have been failing at. Overall, the bill is a big step forward, but there are very few significant cost savings that will be achieved by this bill.

On the whole, it is supported by the insurance industry because they consider it a step in the right direction. So tomorrow, when we do our party's leadoff hour-long discussion, we'll get into the amendments that we specifically feel we should be making which will help make this bill a truer, better bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank the member from Nipissing. I now recognize the member from Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Speaker. Our party is certainly committed to a 15% decrease in auto insurance, but the cheapest way to decrease it is to not have an accident in the first place.

I want to tell the story of Tom Price from my riding, who wrote to me last night. He says:

“I was involved with a very dangerous situation on Friday, October 17 ... that you should be aware of. The situation happened on city road 4 that leads into the Fairbanks area and the Fairbanks park. The road out of

the area is the only operational access to the area. Chicago Mine Road has been closed to ... traffic most of the summer and remains closed due to a washed out bridge that has not been repaired. Any assistance or advice ... would be ... appreciated....”

Here’s his story. He says:

“Michael Vagnini and I spent some time this morning in an area of flooding on Fairbanks Lake Road”—that’s regional road 4—“just north of Worthington where the road was flooded. The situation was life threatening for anyone in a vehicle smaller than a pickup truck and there were numerous tandem trucks with trailers passing through the area making it even more dangerous. Potholes in the road below the surface of the water were deep enough to cause my 4 wheel drive to hit the frame on two occasions and one trucker indicated that the front wheel of his tandem had dropped in a hole that reached the front axle. A lady with a toddler passed through the area at high risk as did an elderly lady who came close to nose diving into the ditch while we were there. Fortunately neither vehicle hit the potholes that I had or ... the trucker was talking about. Had either vehicle gone into the ditch the current was so rapid and the ditch so deep as to preclude any attempts at rescue and they would have perished.”

I don’t wish any harm about anybody, but when the status of our roads is so despicable, accidents are just a matter of time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Scarborough–Rouge River.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. Member?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to just add a few comments, probably in the same line as those from my colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence. In the accident claim area, especially the medical benefits claim area, it has been a big problem. In the tow truck industry, it has been a big problem.

I just want to share with you that I was a municipal councillor elected to the amalgamated city in 1997. In 1998 we decided to tackle the tow truck industry in the city of Toronto. I will tell you that I got corralled by tow trucks on the highway. I got threatened. It is a goon industry, if I can call it that way. The reason I think it is that way is because a lot of these tow trucks are licensed by municipalities. No two municipalities have the same set of rules.

I think the government is going in the right direction to try and bring it all under one roof. It’s the same with the medical claims business—to try to centralize it and screen it so that the fraud will stop, because I know tow trucks operate with body shops; body shops operate with the physiotherapy place; they operate with the chiropractor. In my own riding, and my colleague from Scarborough–Agincourt’s, we probably pay 20% more in insurance because our area has been hit with a lot of these claims.

I support this bill; I think we should move it forward, but I want to say one warning to all of us: This industry is

so big and there are so many small issues all over the place that this bill is not going to be the be-all and end-all. We’re going to have to keep looking at this industry. Some of us may have to get foot soldiers out on the front lines to actually understand the fraudsters. Until you understand the fraudsters, you cannot close the loopholes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I’d like to thank the member from Scarborough–Rouge River. Further comments and questions?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I just want to get a couple of quick points in regarding Bill 15, the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act. As we know—and the member from Nipissing explained this already—this is a bill from a past Legislature and a past Parliament, brought together to be reintroduced. I just wanted to get on the record that when this bill gets to committee, I urge the government to listen to the stakeholders, to strengthen this bill. We’ve heard several concerns from stakeholders, including advocates for accident victims, and of course to concerns relating to the changes affecting the tow truck industry. I would urge the government to listen at committee to the public and stakeholder input on Bill 15 so we can strengthen this bill and make it more effective for the province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Response from the minister of—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Chair of Cabinet.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. The Chair of Cabinet, Minister without Portfolio and member from St. Catharines.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much. The initial discussion has been very good. The government has laid out why it has come forward with some of these responses to a problem that has been out there for years. I think the member for Nipissing mentioned, for instance, that this is something that comes up time and again with each government. We try to find new solutions to it. This bill provides some of those solutions, we believe, that go a long way to, first of all, eliminating fraud and other activities that drive up the rates, but second, it will have the effect of bringing premium increases—the rates that people have to pay for insurance—down.

We should recognize that we always have to keep looking at how things evolve. I would suspect that after the speech by the member for Scarborough–Rouge River he would be getting a mirror out and looking under his car before he starts it up because of his comments about one of the industries out there. But it is time that this was tackled. If you had asked the successive OPP commissioners, for instance—they have been urging governments to tackle the whole area of towing and what is happening out there. There are some good companies doing a good job out there, working hard and trying to serve people appropriately. There are others in the business who would not fit that particular category.

I appreciated the comments that came from the opposition and from the government related to this particular piece of legislation. We are looking forward to the evolution of it, as we debate it in the House—each of the

opposition parties and more government speakers. As always, going to committee is very valuable, hearing from those who will be impacted by it, and ultimately coming forward with a piece of legislation that all of us in this House believe would meet many of the challenges we face now in the auto insurance industry.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank the minister and I'd like to thank all those participating in the debate this morning.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): It is now time for us to recess. The House will recess until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

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

Hon. Michael Chan: I would like to introduce Robert Davidson, president and founder of the Canadian Pulmonary Fibrosis Foundation. He is joined by his colleagues Barbara Barr, Michael Jarvis, Henri Lowi and Jacqui Bowick. It's also my pleasure to sponsor their reception this afternoon in the legislative dining room from 5:30 to 7:30 and to invite all members to attend.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I apologize to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. I changed your portfolio for you.

The member from Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: We have with us in the Speaker's gallery a group of teachers, here for the second annual Teacher's Forum. With them is a great teacher from Oxford county, Timothy Davis, and I'd like to welcome him to Queen's Park.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: On behalf of the member from Algoma-Manitoulin and on behalf of page Faith Emiry, I'd like to bring notice to the House that Faith's cousin, former page Owen Ricker, from last year's fall session of 2013—he served in the second group—is in the public gallery this morning. Welcome back to Queen's Park.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm delighted to introduce two friends in the Legislature: Sharleen Stewart, the president of SEIU, and Manny Carvalho, the secretary-treasurer of SEIU. Welcome.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to welcome the pharmacists from Pharmasave who are here today and having a reception tonight. In particular, I'd like to especially welcome a classmate of mine, Chris Davies, from Meaford, who is here visiting. Welcome, Chris.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Mr. Speaker, please join me in welcoming several esteemed guests from Portugal to Queen's Park today: Mr. Nelson Brito, mayor of the municipality of Aljustrel; Councillor Conceição Parreira; and the senior choir from the University of Aljustrel.

With them is Antonio Rocha from Casa do Alentejo, a dedicated community group from my riding of Davenport who are celebrating their 31st cultural week and anniversary.

Thank you all for being here today.

Ms. Christine Elliott: Although they have already been introduced, I would also like to welcome Mr. Robert Davidson and Mr. Michael Jarvis, with the idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis foundation, to Queen's Park today.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Certainly, another representative is here for the Teacher's Forum, a fine high school teacher from Marathon High School in the fine riding of Thunder Bay—Superior North, Mr. Cameron Craig. Welcome, Cameron.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Northumberland—Quinte West?

Interjection: No, it's Beaches—East York.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Beaches—East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure also to introduce two exceptional teachers from Neil McNeil. I have with us today Chrissy Orr and Marco Tantardini, who are both constituents from a high school in my riding. Thank you. Welcome.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I want to recognize, from Widdifield high school in the city of North Bay, Mr. Mark Hopper, who teaches through the social studies program and who is also one heck of a volleyball coach.

Mr. Bill Walker: Although my honourable colleague Mr. Yurek introduced Chris Davies, he did not mention that he's from the great riding of Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound. So I too would like to welcome Chris Davies, a great community member, to the Legislature.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'd like to recognize the mother of the page who's here from my riding. The page's name is Marie-Thérèse Campione. Her mother, Rosa Campione, is here today with us, with their friend Silvana Acardi. Welcome to the Legislature.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, in keeping with my colleague from Davenport:

Remarks in Portuguese.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I think we're all dying for the translation.

We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery 21 teachers from across the province participating in the second annual Legislative Assembly of Ontario Teachers' Forum. Please let me ask you to warmly welcome former colleagues of mine: the teachers. Thank you for being here.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I would ask the pages to assemble to be introduced.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Four of them want my job.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Don't give me set-up lines like that.

Members, we have with us for the first session of the 41st Parliament:

Danielle Beaudoin from Timiskaming–Cochrane; Noah Bolton from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex; Katie Brown from Brampton–Springdale; Marie-Thérèse Campione from Vaughan; Faith Ebanks from York West; Faith Emiry from Algoma–Manitoulin; Darren Fernandes from Mississauga East–Cooksville; Renée Grenaway from Davenport; Colston Howell from Beaches–East York; Rachel Huang from Thornhill; Meher Kapoor from Newmarket–Aurora; Jagmeet Mangat from Bramalea–Gore–Malton; Adam McMahan from Parkdale–High Park; Félix Nunes from Essex; Callum Robertson from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry; Raveen Singh from Markham–Unionville; Joséé Stephens from Northumberland–Quinte West; Gregory Van Boekel from Oxford; Lily-Anne Villemaire from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell; Ben Wahl from Kitchener–Waterloo; Morgan Walker from Brant; Erik Webb from Ottawa Centre; Jamie White from York–Simcoe; and Alex Wolf from Don Valley West.

Welcome to our pages. Thank you for being here.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT FISCAL POLICIES

Ms. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Premier. Premier, we're once again hearing of a slowdown in Europe and the broader global economy. This global instability threatens the economy of Ontario, making it even more important that we have a fiscal plan. Well, Ontarians heard about the Premier's plan this past weekend in Windsor. There were plans for an Ontario pension plan, for infrastructure, for taxing and for spending. But, Mr. Speaker, do you know what was not in the Premier's plan? A plan for balancing the budget.

So my question is, when will the Premier finally decide to make balancing the budget a priority for this government?

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Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the party opposite continues on a path of talking down Ontario, of not believing in Ontario's future, of not understanding that we have to do all of the above.

We have to make the investments that are going to allow our economy to thrive. That means investment in people's talent and skills. It means investments in infrastructure. It means partnering with business and, yes, it means making sure that people have retirement security.

At the same time, we have a plan to balance the books, to make sure that we eliminate the deficit by 2017-18. That's why we have a President of the Treasury Board. That's why we are making sure that we follow our plan, including optimizing our assets. The member opposite should pay close attention to the plan that we took to the people of Ontario.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to immediately remind members that when somebody's answering, there is no heckling on this side; I'll shorten the answer. And on this side I'll shorten the question. I'm also going to start immediately talking to individual members. If they decide that they want to jump right in, I will, too.

Supplementary?

Ms. Christine Elliott: Whatever investments are being made, they are clearly not producing results. This government continues to set targets which are never being met. Look at the facts. With a debt of nearly \$300 billion—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Economic Development, come to order.

Ms. Christine Elliott: —the deficit approaching \$12.5 billion, and a budget that actually increases spending—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Agriculture, come to order.

Ms. Christine Elliott: —it's hard to understand how this government intends to balance the budget by 2017-18. With the federal government about to balance their budget, Ontario's deficit accounts for more than two thirds of all of the deficits of all of the provinces in Canada.

My question is simple: When will the budget deficit finally become a priority for this government?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The elimination of the deficit is absolutely a priority for us, but the member opposite neglects to mention that one of the ways that the federal government is balancing its books is on the backs of the people of Ontario. I don't think that that is a rational or reasonable way to proceed.

Mr. Speaker, let's look at the facts. Since 2009, Ontario has created over 514,000 new jobs, 24,700 net new jobs in September, and that's an increase of 19,100 full-time jobs.

Interjection.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Youth employment has increased by 12,600 jobs. Our recovery is on track and we are not going to eliminate the deficit on the backs of another level of government.

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

Ms. Christine Elliott: No one actually believes that old rhetoric about the federal government. The fact is they're doing quite well and Ontario's lagging behind most of the other provinces in Canada. The truth is this government does not have a realistic plan for balancing the budget.

Let's take a look at what the Conference Board of Canada says: "Even if the government manages to achieve their ambitious spending control plan announced in the budget, the conference board projects that the

province will fall about \$2.4 billion short of reaching its balanced budget goal in 2017-18." The facts are clear.

Mr. Speaker, how can Ontarians give any credibility to this government when it comes to balancing the budget and managing debt?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In some ways it's not surprising that the member opposite would be in favour of what the federal government is doing, including hitting Ontario to the tune of \$641 million this year. When other provinces were confronting the same issues, they didn't make that choice. So that's what the federal government is doing.

The other thing is, Mr. Speaker, when that party was in office, they made it a habit of downloading services, downloading costs, onto the backs of the municipal level of government. We're in the process of uploading those costs.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Are you finished?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The election that we all just went through was actually about whether investing in the economy, investing in the future of the province, was the way we wanted to go in this province, or whether cutting and slashing, which is what they brought to the people of Ontario—

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, on June 12 the choice was made and we're in—

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

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Ms. Christine Elliott: My second question is also to the Premier. Over the past two years, Premier, the Standing Committee on Public Accounts conducted its investigation into the Ornge air ambulance scandal. Prior to the election, the public accounts committee signed off on a report that summarized the work and findings of the committee over that two-year period. Unfortunately, the Legislature was dissolved before the report could be tabled.

Premier, tomorrow the Standing Committee on Public Accounts will meet for the first time since the election. Will you direct your members to allow that report to be tabled?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know that the government House leader will want to speak to the supplementary.

Mr. Speaker, I think it is very important that the committees get up and running. I think it's very important that the committees be allowed to do their work. The reports that were not able to be released because the opposition decided that it was time for an election—we need to get on with that work, and the committees will do just that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Christine Elliott: I failed to hear a clear answer there.

On May 30, Ontarians learned that that Ornge air ambulance service had been charged with 17 offences under the Canada Labour Code. The offences cited in the 17 charges were committed under your Deputy Premier's watch and under the watch of senior executives on the board at Ornge.

Premier, whether your minister accepts responsibility for failing in her oversight is one thing, but completely sidelining a report that could prevent future tragedies and mismanagement is unacceptable. Will you commit today, very clearly, to allow that report to be tabled, or will you keep this information secret from the people of Ontario in order to protect your own political interests?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member opposite for the question. When it comes to the secrecy of that report, I think a former member of their party unfortunately leaked that report anyway, at some point.

Speaker, as you know, the committees have been formed by this House. The committees are starting this week, are starting to commence their work, elect their Chairs and Vice-Chairs, and it will be up to the members of the committee to determine their work plan and to determine what—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. The member from Haldimand-Norfolk will withdraw.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Withdrawn.

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

Carry on, please.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you, Speaker. As I was saying, it's up to the committee members to determine their work plan and determine the kind of steps they will be taking. If they choose to work on the report that the former Standing Committee on Public Accounts was doing and release that information, I leave it up to the committee members.

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

Ms. Christine Elliott: Mr. Speaker, I think it's really important that Ontarians know that they cannot hide behind the structure of these committees, that the members of the committee—the Liberal members of the committee—can be directed to release that report. Clearly, we're hearing that's not going to happen, and it's outrageous. We owe it to the front-line responders here, to the pilots, the paramedics and the dispatchers at Ornge who came forward. Most of all, we owe it to the people of Ontario who depend on our air ambulance service to be there when they need it. We need this report to be tabled and these recommendations to be adopted.

Finally, again, Premier, will you please direct the members of this committee to release this report, which is vital to the safety and the interests of the people of Ontario?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: When it comes to taking action on the issues around Ornge, I want to commend the former Minister of Health and Long-Term Care for her incred-

ible work on that matter in the previous Parliament, when the issues came to light. She was forthright, she was forthcoming, she brought information forward, she took immediate action when it came to changing the governance structure at Ornge, and brought forward, in fact, a piece of legislation that would ensure that those types of issues do not take place.

In addition, Speaker, the government fully co-operated with the former Standing Committee on Public Accounts in making information available so the committee members could do their work. It will be up to the new committee members, as they assemble, to determine what next steps to take, and it will be up to them to determine the time frame around when and how they want to make that report available.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. What private companies have approached the government to buy up our shared public assets like our local hydro utilities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just say that I am very appreciative, we are very appreciative, of the work that Ed Clark and his council have done. We said in our budget, and then in our platform when we ran in the election, that we were going to make sure that the assets that are owned by the people of Ontario were working at their full value so we could optimize the benefit to the people of Ontario and reinvest the money that would come from that optimization into the infrastructure and into the assets that we need in 2014 and going forward. So that is the advice that is coming forward from Mr. Clark.

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I think it is only responsible and sensible to review the assets that are owned by the people of the province on a regular basis. That's what we're doing, Mr. Speaker. I think it's actually irresponsible that the leader of the third party would not agree that that was a good thing to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, I'm going to try again. Can the Premier tell Ontarians exactly what Ontario, Canadian and foreign investors have approached her Liberal government about buying our shared public assets, like our hydro utilities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Well, since the interim report has not even been completed yet and since we haven't even responded fully to what Mr. Clark and his council are suggesting, no, I cannot do that. We have to make sure that we take responsible and practical steps forward. To pre-empt the process before the report is even finalized would, again, be an irresponsible action that the leader of the third party is proposing.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Since we know what Liberals are like, perhaps I should ask how much in profits the Premier is dangling in front of energy speculators like

banks and investment firms when she's trying to entice them to buy our shared public assets, like hydro utilities.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, what we are trying to do is we are trying to make sure that we make the investments today that are necessary for economic growth, that will benefit future generations. It seems to me that the leader of the third party ought to be—although she never has been—supportive of investments in transit, in roads and bridges across the province. I would have thought that those kinds of investments were the kinds of things the third party would be interested in. I would have thought that the third party would have understood that, to make sure we have those investments available to us, that we invest in the future of the province is in the best interests of the economy not just of today, not just job creation today, which it absolutely does, but for the future so that Ontario can thrive.

Apparently, that kind of responsible, sensible path is not what the leader of the third party supports.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Premier. Can the Premier tell Ontarians whether she has engaged private legal and investment firms to help her with privatizing and selling off our hydro utilities, and if so, who they may be?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Underpinning the questions that the leader of the third party is asking is an assumption that anyone in government who works with the private sector in any way is somehow tainted—that somehow, government and the private sector should never work together, even though the NDP signed contracts with private companies to generate power in the province, even though her own members are interested in extending those contracts, Mr. Speaker, and I have a quote that I will read shortly.

I don't buy into the notion that, somehow, government cannot work with the private sector; I just don't buy that. I believe that the practical way of governing is to work with all stakeholders to make sure that private, government, labour—we all work together in the best interests of the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, clearly it's the Liberals who are tainted. You only need to look at Ornge and the gas plants scandal. That's the problem the opposition has with the way this government deals with the private sector.

As the Premier knows, Ed Clark is still the CEO of TD Bank. So I want to ask: Will TD Bank be involved in the privatization or the purchase of our public assets, like our hydro utilities?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Speaker, let me just go back again to the point that I was making. Our commitment is to unlock the value of the assets that are owned by the people of Ontario. That's what we said we were going to do in our budget, that's what we said we were going to do in our plan and that's what we're doing.

The NDP is basically saying that we should not work in any way with the private sector, and yet when they were in government, they signed nine private power-generating contracts over a five-year span, totalling over 400 megawatts of power. They made that commitment.

Now, even her own MPPs don't agree with her, as I said. The NDP MPP for Timiskaming–Cochrane has written to the Minister of Energy to encourage the OPA to renew the contract for a private power generator in his riding. So there are members in the NDP who are practical, there are members in the NDP who understand that working with—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: For months, Speaker, this Premier has been insisting that she isn't privatizing anything. She is insisting that there isn't a sell-off. But last Friday, Ed Clark made it clear that the plan is to privatize and sell off local hydro utilities. Instead of being run for the public good, for those utilities to be run in a way that makes life more affordable for everyday families and helps create jobs, they will instead be run to make maximum profits for speculators.

Why does the Premier think that privatized hydro is good for Ontario families and businesses?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane is sitting right beside the leader of the third party, Mr. Speaker. Maybe she should just turn to her left and ask him why he is encouraging the Minister of Energy to extend the private power contract that is in his riding.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You should turn to your left. You should stop turning right. You sound like the Conservatives.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay will come to order. I think you knew that was coming.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It must actually be very hard for the leader of the third party to ask these questions. She knows that we're not selling off the assets. She knows perfectly well that that was one of the parameters as Ed Clark went into this review. She knows that we are keeping these assets in public hands, and yet she continues to ask questions to undermine any relationship that the government might have with the private sector as though somehow that's not a good thing. She knows that her own government, when they were in office, had to take those practical—

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

POWER PLANTS

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Premier. Premier, last summer, I rose in this House and demanded that the justice committee be allowed to continue its work investigating the serious wrongdoing in your gas plant scandal. Summer has turned to fall and the fact remains

that this scandal is ongoing and requires further investigation.

This is not about documents having been released to the committee. This is not about previous witnesses who have testified. This is about how the committee needs to hear from Laura Miller and Peter Faist, two people who have agreed to testify and are at the very centre of this criminal investigation.

Premier, it's time to stop talking about openness and transparency. It is time to demonstrate it by allowing us to interview and depose Laura Miller and Peter Faist. Will you commit to that to this House today?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, I thank the member opposite for the question, and I think I'll remind the member opposite that the Premier has been very transparent and accountable when it comes to issues around the work that the justice committee was doing. The Premier, since she became the leader, made sure that hundreds of thousands of documents were provided to the justice committee so the justice committee could do its work.

The justice committee has been meeting for about two and a half years. They have listened to about 90 witnesses. And during the last campaign, the Premier made it very clear that she wants the justice committee to complete its work by engaging in report writing so they can provide recommendations to the government around records management, around siting of large energy infrastructure. We look forward to the justice committee completing its work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Back to the Premier. Premier, I'm disappointed that you would pass that off to the House leader. This is a serious matter. You realize that by refusing to do the right thing, it proves that your statements about transparency and openness are nothing but lip service. This is the same old Liberal Party that it has always been.

We need to ask Laura Miller and Peter Faist some serious questions about a serious criminal matter. What about the deleted emails, the destroyed documents and the unauthorized access to the Premier's office? Premier, the people have the right to see this matter investigated fully. Laura Miller and Peter Faist have said they will testify before the committee. There is only one person standing in the way of the truth in this investigation, and, Premier, that is you.

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I'm asking you once again: Live up to your rhetoric—one last chance—and let us finally get the answers about who is responsible for the gas plant scandal.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. I'm going to take a moment to remind members that we address each other either by our riding or title. I'll be strict on that.

Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, the Premier has been absolutely clear. She wants the justice committee to

complete its work. During the campaign, the Premier frequently restated her position that it is time, after years of questioning, about 90 witnesses and looking at hundreds of thousands of documents, that the justice committee engage in report writing.

The justice committee will be resuming its work so that they can complete their report writing. Even the third party, Speaker, brought a motion in the committee asking that it's time to engage in report writing. We're very much looking forward to their work so the government can have the information in terms of recommendations around the siting of large infrastructure projects and document retention, and we're looking forward to their work.

PAN AM GAMES

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question today is to the minister responsible for the Pan Am/Parapan Am Games.

Speaker, there have been so many unanswered questions around the cost of security for these games, and just this morning we've learned about a new RFP process that's raising even more questions. Sponsorships for the games are now being directly tied to the RFP for security. What does a company's sponsorship of the games have to do with them being awarded such significant contracts as providing games security?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member opposite for the question. I know that the government House leader would like to answer the second part.

Before I answer the question, I just want to say that Lonely Planet today announced Toronto and Ontario are in the top 10 destinations for 2015 because of the Pan Am Games. I think we should all be proud of that.

Mr. Speaker, we take our security very, very seriously here in the province of Ontario. We need to make sure, as we plan for these games, that our security ensures the security of all Ontarians and all visitors.

There are two different components of the security. There's one held by the ISU, and there's one also being held to support the safety and the protection of property during the games. There has been an RFP process put out by TO2015, and in that process, there are specifics that are being asked around the RFP process. I know the minister responsible for public safety will be able to answer that piece of the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Speaker, this new revelation actually leaves us very concerned about what the real criteria are for awarding contracts for these games. Security costs keep going up. This is a fact. It's undeniable. Some people may be asking, "What are these sponsorship perks?" The method of sponsorship can be cash, an in-kind contribution or a marketing activation value. So people are asking—and these are good questions—whether a company's sponsorship of the games bumps them up the list of bidders, even though it may have added to the cost in the long run.

Speaker, in the interest of being open and transparent, will the minister just release the full criteria of how these contracts are being awarded?

Hon. Michael Coteau: In fact, I'll take the question. In the RFP process, as outlined by TO2015 in coordination with the ISU, which is made up of the provincial, federal and municipal partners, sponsorship is one of the criteria within the RFP. But this is quite common in all games—the Vancouver Olympics and the last Pan Am Games. I have to say that sponsorship is so important to these games. In fact, our sponsorships here in Ontario for the Pan Am Games are the largest sponsorships ever in the history of the games. It's five times larger than what happened in Mexico at the last Pan Am Games.

These games are successful. They're on time. We will make sure that people in Ontario are safe during these games.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. As a public health nurse during the SARS outbreak in 2003, I know first-hand the importance of proper infection controls. I was the manager responsible for the day-to-day operation of the York region SARS clinic.

The Scarborough Hospital Birchmount campus is located in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt. It was the first hospital in Ontario to encounter SARS. This hospital was considered the epicentre for SARS, and during the outbreak, more than 100 staff became ill with SARS. Hence, the residents in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt are particularly interested in knowing our government's plan to ensure the province's readiness in dealing with Ebola.

Ontario needs to take action to ensure the province's readiness to contain and treat any potential case of Ebola in the province. Measures need to be in place to protect the safety of all Ontarians, including the health care workers.

Speaker, through you to the minister: What is the government doing to ensure all Ontarians are protected and our health care system is prepared for Ebola?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, first of all, from one health care professional to another, for the question.

I want to start, in fact, by giving my sincere thanks to the thousands of front-line health care workers right across this province who not only do fantastic work every day but particularly when it comes to our protection against Ebola and the epidemic that's occurring in another part of the world. I want to thank them for the work they do in making sure that Ontarians are safe and protected.

I'm happy to say as well that as a result of our front-line health care workers, particularly our nurses, coming forward last week, we introduced measures to further strengthen the protections that are in place in this province. I announced that we had designated 10 hospitals, two pediatric and eight for adults, across the province. As

well, as of yesterday, we have the capacity in-province to test for Ebola. We'll be doing that on a case-by-case basis.

We've introduced other measures which will guarantee what is in fact my top priority, and that is the safety and security of Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm very pleased to hear of the necessary actions taken by the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I know the residents of my riding are assured that our province has a minister who listens and takes timely action for the safety of all Ontarians.

But day to day, we continue to hear of the tragedies in West Africa with the Ebola outbreak. The current Ebola outbreak, which began in West Africa in March 2014, is unprecedented. The World Health Organization declared Ebola a public health emergency of international concern on August 8, 2014.

I know many Ontarians, including those in my riding, are concerned about the rapid spread of the Ebola virus in West Africa. Speaker, through you to the minister: How can Ontario support the emergency response in West Africa?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you again for the question. I want to say, on behalf of all Ontarians, just how grateful we are for the hard work, the dedication and the courage of our relief workers, our health care workers and our aid workers who are working in West Africa to put an end to this epidemic. Many of these health care workers, in fact, are coming from Ontario. The Premier and I had the privilege yesterday to meet, and discuss the epidemic in West Africa, with representatives from Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières as well as the Red Cross here in Canada, who have deployed a significant number of health care specialists to the region.

It's a devastating situation, as we all know, but we were happy, on behalf of Ontarians, to announce yesterday—the Premier announced—a \$3-million contribution from Ontario to not only focus on prevention here in the province and making sure that we're prepared, but to be part of the solution there as well, to end this epidemic and this scourge.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Premier. Will the Premier guarantee that the \$224-million loan her government gave to the MaRS phase 2 office tower will be repaid in full?

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

Hon. Brad Duguid: We've been very clear: The loan is fully secured on the value of the asset, and the asset is more than the amount we've invested. It's a fairly simple answer.

I think it's important at this time to start talking a little bit about the lack of support that we've seen from the PC Party for the MaRS vision. I think what they've done is

indicated that when MaRS was having challenges, their position was to let that building rot in the ground.

I ask the member, in his supplementary will he commit to supporting the efforts we've made to help support MaRS, to ensure that phase 2 succeeds? Or is his party's position, and was his party's position, to let that project rot in the ground, allow those jobs and all that economic development potential in our bioscience sector to go out the window? Is that the position of your party?

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: It's instructive that the Premier did not guarantee that the MaRS loan would be repaid. The Premier was elected on her promise to govern differently, to turn the page on Liberal scandals, to be open and transparent with this House and with the people of Ontario. However, when it comes to the MaRS money pit, they've been anything but open and transparent.

At the estimates committee last week, the minister responsible for MaRS was evasive and dodgy. He refused to release the business case for the MaRS loan and other relevant information related to the MaRS bailout, even though taxpayers are now paying almost half a million dollars a month—a tab that now stands at \$3.6 million.

When will they keep their promise to be open and transparent and release the agreement with Alexandria Real Estate and the business case for the MaRS bailout?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I don't know how much more clear we can be. We've said it a thousand times. The loan is repayable. It will be repaid. It's fully secured, Mr. Speaker. Taxpayer dollars are well protected in this arrangement.

I think what's causing concern in the bioscience sector is the lack of support of the party opposite, which has taken every opportunity to besmirch the reputation of MaRS, after MaRS has created tens of thousands of jobs in this province and attracted \$3 billion of private sector investment to Ontario. The vision of Ernie Eves and Jim Flaherty has become a very important part of our economy. It's really a shame that the party opposite shows so little respect for that vision.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. On March 27, this Premier indicated to Ontarians that she would "open up the government completely." Yesterday she repeated this promise saying, "We are committed to being open and transparent." But the Premier failed to say whether she will allow the gas plant committee to get back to work to hear from additional witnesses before writing a final report.

Today the Premier can keep her promise to be open and transparent, or she can break her promise. Will the Premier do the right thing and allow the gas plant committee to resume its work and call any new witnesses who need to be heard?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Premier. The Premier cannot be clearer. She has been clear all throughout. She wanted to make sure that the committee had all the information available when she became the leader and the Premier. She provided hundreds of thousands of documents. She appeared before the committee—in fact, twice—to answer any questions that the committee may have had; not to mention that during the campaign, when asked repeatedly, the Premier was very clear that it's time for the committee to write its report. She was actually merely echoing what members of the third party themselves had been asking for. The member for Toronto–Danforth, on December 12, said in the committee, “I believe it's time for us to get down to report writing. We've amassed a large amount of evidence, both oral and in electronic copy.”

We agree, Speaker: It is time for the committee to resume its work and write a report and give recommendations to the government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Some Liberals, including the member for Trinity–Spadina, think there is a right time and a wrong time for openness and transparency. Clearly the Premier is one of them. But New Democrats disagree. We believe the right time for openness and transparency is all the time, every day, day in, day out, without fail and without excuse.

The government isn't just preventing a committee from completing its work. The Liberals are also sitting on the Ornge report, which is printed and ready to be tabled.

I'm going to give the Premier another chance to keep her promise. Will the Premier commit to tabling the Ornge report, and if not, why not?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I ask the member opposite the following question: Does he stand by his motion of April 29, where he moved that the Standing Committee on Justice Policy begin report writing in open session? Does he stand by their own motion that he put forward in the justice committee?

We have been extremely transparent. We want the committee to resume its work as soon as it can and start the work of report writing, as has been asked for by the third party. It's the same with the Ornge committee report: It's up to the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. That's why in July, right after the election, we worked so hard to make sure that we've got committees established: so that as soon as we come back in the fall, as we did starting yesterday, the committees can start their work and do the work of the people.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mr. Joe Dickson: As a strong supporter of public libraries, I want to let the members of the House know that this week is Ontario Public Library Week. Ontario's public libraries are among the best in the world, and they are popular hubs for community life. There are more than 1,100 libraries throughout Ontario, and they attract over 72 million people every year. Over five million Ontarians—that's 40% of the population—have a library card.

Libraries open up the world to knowledge. They connect us to the information and resources we need to succeed in life, in school and in our jobs. In many communities, libraries ensure that recent immigrants to Canada are welcomed and have access to information and resources to help them adjust to life in a new country.

Libraries offer newcomer information services, provide free help for people looking for a job, housing, learning English, finding schools, getting a driver's licence and other services—

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

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the distinguished member from Ajax–Pickering for the question.

Mr. Speaker, libraries hold a very special place in my heart, and I'm very proud to take on libraries as part of my portfolio. We know that libraries help children learn. They provide resources for students, small businesses and entrepreneurs, and they make an important contribution to education, literacy and lifelong learning for all people across this great province. That's why we're so proud as a government to invest \$33 million in 2013-14 into our public and First Nation libraries here in the province of Ontario. In fact, since 2003, this government has invested almost half a billion dollars into our public libraries.

We also know that the Trillium Foundation has invested over half a million dollars into our public libraries this year. We're very proud of the work our libraries do here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you, Minister, for letting us know about all the government support for libraries here in Ontario.

As we all know, we live in a digital world. Everything is moving online and into digital formats. Our libraries are doing a fantastic job at evolving with technology and bringing that technology to communities, including Ajax and Pickering.

In the 2014 budget, I was happy to hear that your ministry is supporting libraries in these efforts through the Ontario capacity fund to help boost digital services. I'm happy that our government is committed to making services in public libraries across the province even better.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Mr. Joe Dickson: Could the minister please tell the members of this House about the Ontario library fund that he announced yesterday? Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You're welcome. Minister.

Hon. Michael Coteau: Yesterday, I was happy to announce the Ontario Libraries Capacity Fund at Parkdale public library. Through this new fund, our government is going to invest an additional \$10 million into our public libraries here in Ontario over the next three years to support the following: improvements in high-speed Internet access throughout Ontario—we're going to increase wireless access. We're going to upgrade hard-

ware and software in our libraries. It will go to staff development and collection development, will enhance integrated library services and also enhance our public library websites in Ontario.

This fund is a three-year fund. In the first year, we'll focus on IT improvements. In the second and third years, libraries will be eligible for research and innovation funding.

Our government believes that access to online services is essential in today's knowledge-based economy. I'm happy that we're supporting these goals through this new fund.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Attorney General. Minister, you ordered budget cuts to victim services across Ontario and by as much as 20% in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. As a result, this regional group of 50 volunteers and only seven staff who cover 11,000 square kilometres day and night and who helped over 2,500 victims of crime last year will be left with a pittance of a budget, a budget so small it falls \$60,000 short of the one they started with 16 years ago in 1998. This is a direct attack on public services.

Minister, will you reconsider your cuts to this critical service?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you for the question. Yes, indeed we are modernizing our victim services program to provide enhanced support to victims of crime. Beginning in April 2015, this program will be delivered under a new program called victim crisis assistance. In addition to existing services, vulnerable victims will receive enhanced support, including comprehensive needs assessment. Service plans tailored to individual victim needs will help them navigate and access short- and longer-term support services. So in order to make the program consistent across the province, comprehensive program standards, accountability measures and standardized training requirements for staff and volunteers will be developed. These changes build on our commitment to providing timely and effective services for victims of crime.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Bill Walker: Again to the Attorney General: Is "modernizing" a code word for downsizing, Minister? Your government is leaving behind victims of sexual assault and people living in violent conditions. I have serious concerns with the priorities of this minister and this government, and the House should too. You're wasting millions of dollars to bail out empty offices in downtown Toronto known as MaRS while gutting millions in community-based services for victims of crime.

Minister, again, will you make this right and reinstate compensation and services for victims of crime?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: We are not reducing funding to any of these programs. Instead, current funding for the three programs is being redirected to a single program.

Yes, we have review now—we're paying for the service that is being offered for the clients that this organization will serve. So there is a reorganization. There is a repurposing of the dollars, and the dollars are being redirected to a single program, as I said.

At the same time, we are implementing a more equitable and transparent funding model by aligning funding with service demands. That means each agency delivering the program will receive a base funding amount and a variable amount based on the number and type of victims served.

So to answer the member, we are providing more money to the northern communities and to the rural communities, so we are—

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

New question.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Earlier this year, Metrolinx proposed a plan to allow eight giant digital LED billboards on Metrolinx property along Highway 401. Last week, the Toronto Paramedic Association warned that this scheme would "place us all at greater risk of death and injury."

Mr. Speaker, when a driver's attention is focused on a billboard, it is not focused on the highway. Metrolinx should be in the business of safe travel, not making money from driver distraction. On a day when the Minister of Transportation is announcing legislation to stop distracted driving, will he listen to the paramedics and instruct Metrolinx to drop this dangerous and distracting billboard scheme?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the member for Parkdale-High Park for this particular question. I've had the opportunity to review the letter that she referenced in the question from the Toronto Paramedic Association. Of course, Speaker, I take my responsibility to ensure that Ontario's roads remain amongst the safest in North America—and they have consistently been ranked first or second in terms of road safety over the last 13 years—very, very seriously. It's one of the foundational aspects of the mandate letter that I received from the Premier.

I do look forward to having to say a lot more a little bit later today about making sure that our roads and our highways remain safe. I am listening to all of the interested stakeholders, to the municipality, and of course I'm talking to Metrolinx regularly about this and a variety of issues.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Earlier this year, Metrolinx also spent buckets of money on several TV ads for transit projects that won't even be operational for several months or even several years. These ads didn't provide any useful information, and one TV spot for the Union-Pearson Express was so ridiculously self-congratulatory that Metrolinx had to pull it off YouTube out of embarrassment. Who knows how much money was wasted? Mr. Speaker, sometimes I can't tell if Metrolinx is a transit

planner or an advertising agency. If Metrolinx needs money, it doesn't need billboards.

Will the Minister of Transportation tell the Mad Men of Metrolinx to get out of the billboard business and get back to the business of transit?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I appreciate the supplementary question from the member from Parkdale–High Park. I think it's important for me to say as clearly as I possibly can that I have a great deal of faith in the tremendous work that has taken place and will continue to take place at Metrolinx. We have a very ambitious, exciting plan about moving Ontario forward. Of course, members like the member opposite would have heard us speak repeatedly about the importance of our Moving Ontario Forward plan. Over the next 10 years we will be investing up to \$15 billion in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, specifically benefiting residents living in Parkdale–High Park, living in communities like mine in Vaughan, people living right across the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. Metrolinx is playing a very crucial role with respect to the planning and implementation of that plan.

I look forward, over the coming months, to be here in this place and elsewhere continuing on with the great work that we have at hand. I know that the people of the GTHA and people of all of Ontario expect us to deliver the positive results that they've given us the mandate to deliver.

POVERTY

Mr. Han Dong: My question is to the Deputy Premier and minister responsible for the poverty reduction strategy. As of 2011, there were more than 1.5 million people living in poverty in Ontario. That's not okay in a province as strong as ours. Poverty should be no one's destiny. We must come together as a province to ensure that everyone has the opportunity for a better future. In order for all people in Ontario to reach their full potential, we need to make sure everyone has the supports that they need to succeed.

Last Friday, communities around the world observed the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. The occasion gave us a chance to reflect on how far we've come as a province to improve the opportunity for vulnerable citizens.

Minister, what is Ontario doing to fight poverty and better support people who need our help?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Trinity–Spadina for the question and for recognizing International Day for the Eradication of Poverty.

Speaker, we've made steady progress since we introduced Ontario's first poverty reduction strategy in 2008. According to the most recent data, 47,000 children and their families have been lifted out of poverty, and we've prevented tens of thousands of others from falling into poverty.

In 2003, a single mom with two kids, working full time at a minimum wage job, had an income of less than \$20,000 a year. Today, as a result of our efforts that mom

has an annual income of almost \$35,000, a huge difference for that family.

But there's more to do and that's why we've introduced our second poverty reduction strategy, Realizing Our Potential.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Han Dong: Thank you to the Deputy Premier for that response.

Homelessness is often the most visible face of poverty in our community, particularly in the large cities like Toronto. Our people are our greatest resource as we compete in this increasingly tough global marketplace. That is why investments in housing and the supports that go with them are smart investments.

A Place to Call Home provides a stable foundation that helps people lift themselves out of poverty. When people have a home, they are better able to manage the challenges in their lives and to seek the education and training that they need to move forward for better opportunities and stable and rewarding employment.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask the Deputy Premier: How will the new poverty reduction strategy deal with the challenges of homelessness?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As part of our new strategy we have set a long-term goal to end chronic homelessness in Ontario. Ending homelessness is not only the right thing to do, it's the smart thing to do, because we know that investments in housing actually mean savings in our health care system and other parts of our social services because people are healthier and they're more ready for employment and taking part in their community.

Our strategy includes several commitments that will help us work toward that goal. We're increasing the funding of the CHPI program, Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative, for a total of nearly \$294 million a year. We're adding an additional 1,000 supportive housing spaces for people with mental health and addiction challenges. We're investing \$50 million in a Local Poverty Reduction Fund to support local solutions to poverty. We've set ambitious goals, but we're on our way to achieving them.

CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, a few weeks ago you made a major announcement in my riding concerning the overcrowding at Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre—overcrowding that this Liberal government has ignored for the past three years that has led to numerous deaths and daily violence at the facility.

1130

Minster, your ministry's track record is terrible when it comes to fixing the problems at EMDC. Your ministry closed rural jails which amplified the overcrowding conditions, failed on the implementation of the 12-point plan to fix the jail, and failed in providing correctional officers with the proper equipment to do their jobs. So,

Minister, forgive me if I'm sounding a little skeptical on this announcement, but this is a very short time period for a new build. I am unable to find the numbers in this year's budget for this build.

Minister, would you be able to share the budget for the project, where this money will come from and when the RFP will be released?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I thank the member opposite for the question and his work and advocacy on issues around the Elgin-Middlesex Detention Centre. As the member opposite mentioned, I had a great visit on October 8 to EMDC. I was joined by management—the hard-working correctional staff, both correctional officers and managers—along with labour leaders both locally and provincially. I was really struck by the professionalism of our correctional staff, both management and correctional officers, how hard they work and how dedicated they are to the well-being and safety of the community. I spent about three and a half hours touring the facility and talking to many correctional officers and thanking them for the work they do every single day in keeping our community safe.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm sure the minister will answer the question after the supplementary.

Minister, I've drawn attention to these issues at the EMDC in this chamber for three years, yet your government has taken little action to correct these areas of concern. The violence and deaths continue.

Most recently I have written you requesting that the government utilize their assets to find a solution for EMDC. For example, the government could utilize the regional mental health buildings in St. Thomas and create a partnership with the Southwest Centre for Forensic Mental Health Care for shared services. Or the government could simply reopen the Bluewater Youth Centre in Goderich that your government recently closed.

Minister, have you completed a cost analysis on a new build compared to using the existing government assets?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I would thank the member for the supplementary. We're very much focused on dealing with issues around overcrowding, and ensuring the health and safety of our correctional staff and the safety of the inmates. That's why I want to give credit to my predecessor, the Attorney General. When she was the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services she put in place a 12-point action plan; 11 out of 12 of those action plan items have been fully implemented, but we're not stopping there. We are taking steps in making sure that we have issued a request for proposal for a regional intermittent centre which will allow for separating the intermittent inmates from those inmates who are spending their sentence in its entirety at the detention centre. It's going to not only resolve the issue around overcapacity but it's also going to help us in dealing with contraband issues.

Further, we are also rolling out the personal protective safety equipment for our correctional officers. Their health and safety is a number one priority for our government and remains paramount.

PROVINCIAL PARKS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources. Minister, a few years ago, your government decided to shut down access to a number of provincial parks. As a result, Fushimi Lake Provincial Park, René Brunelle Provincial Park and Ivanhoe were going to be closed to both day and seasonal campers. Northerners decided to come up with their own solution. We put together a solution: Local residents, along with the mayors of the area, myself and Mr. Vanthof and others, put together a proposal that allowed those parks to stay open. The parks for the last two years have made money, the pilot project has been successful, but you have yet to make a decision if you're going to renew that agreement or not.

You know as well as I do, if you don't renew the agreement soon, people are going to move and they're going to go elsewhere, making those parks less profitable. Minister, when can we expect a response from you in regard to the renewal of this agreement?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to take the question, and I can't help but comment, Speaker, on your new look. You're reminding me of the 1970s Oakland Athletics, and Rollie Fingers, the old pitcher with the moustache.

But to the member's question, I want to thank him for this. It is topical and timely. As he's mentioned, in 2012 a decision was made to take 10 that were operating parks—most, if not all of them, save and except for one, that were in northern Ontario—and make them non-operating parks.

Like the member did in his question, I do want to thank the communities of Moonbeam, Hearst, Timmins, the surrounding communities, the municipal councils and the surrounding broader community who did step up to the plate and worked very closely with our government and former ministers in coming forward with a plan. I think it's fair to say that it was through their efforts that the two-year pilot was established.

The information and the data are now coming back to us. We've had an opportunity to review that data, and we will be in a position to make a decision very, very soon. I'll be happy to publicly communicate that position to the member very, very soon. We're close. The data is in; we're reviewing it. We will make a decision and an announcement in the very near future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Minister, what part of success don't you like? The northerners rose to the occasion. They said, "We'll find a solution." We found a solution that allowed the parks to stay open and to create a profit.

The issue here—the Premier's making fun of it, because she doesn't understand northern Ontario, and we know that, but here it is: People who have seasonal campers need to know that they've got a place to go this spring. If you delay the decision as to the reopening of the parks until sometime later in January or February, they will lose their spots, but they're going to be avail-

able in other parks. So we need to have an answer soon, not later.

I'm going to ask the minister again: Will you please stand up for northern Ontario and say, "Yes, we will reopen those parks next spring"?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Speaker, most of the question was pretty good, but for the member opposite to say that this Premier does not understand northern Ontario is a pretty remarkable statement. There's no Premier that we've ever had, I don't think, that gets northern Ontario better. So much of the good work that we've been able to do as northern members is due directly to the consideration that she gives to northern members.

As I said, there are processes under way now. I don't want to presuppose the results of that work that is ongoing. We will be in a position very, very soon to make an announcement. It's my hope that the announcement will be something that's acceptable to the communities.

I'll close by again thanking the members for the work: the communities, the mayors and the surrounding areas. We'll be announcing something very, very soon.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, this question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Minister, what pollution was in the 1960s and 1970s, and what civil and women's rights were in the 1970s and 1980s, climate change is today. It is the defining issue of our time. It's the 21st century's challenge to governments, industry, communities and individuals.

In its fifth assessment report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change concluded there is an overwhelming scientific consensus that earth's climate system is warming and that human activities are mainly responsible for this change.

Ontario has delivered cleaner air and significantly lowered carbon dioxide emissions through no longer burning coal to generate electricity.

Minister, what else is Ontario doing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to fight climate change?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Ontario is one of a handful of jurisdictions in the world that actually has got its greenhouse gas emissions under 1990 levels. As a matter of fact, we joined, in New York, to release our report—we bettered our 6% goal. We will exceed it. We'll be the only jurisdiction that will likely exceed its targets, I think, probably in the world—maybe Germany.

We are heading not for the two-degrees dangerous, but we're now heading for four-degrees dangerous. Four degrees would mean that my four-year-old grandson probably will grow up in a world where life will be difficult and food will be hard to get. That's not a legacy I am prepared to leave him, Mr. Speaker.

Climate change is the single biggest threat to humanity. Our failure to achieve a successful global action plan in the next year will leave our children an unthinkable legacy.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Minister, failing to act on climate change will bring harm, in the form of preventable extreme weather, to our communities and to our economy. And there's the challenge: Climate change doesn't recognize borders or jurisdictions, nor can it be overcome by a single ministry or a single government.

From saving species like Canada's polar bears from extinction to saving coastal populated areas by preventing coastal flooding, how is Ontario continuing to lead and to be successful in the world's continuing fight against climate change?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Just before I get into the details of that, I want to make it very clear: Climate change is not something that is going to come tomorrow or the next day. We are now experiencing the impacts of CO₂ emissions from when I was in high school in the 1970s, and we are now locked into 100 years of change.

You are going to start seeing the impacts of climate change in the next winter. California is in the most severe drought situation it has ever been in. That's about one third of North America's food supply. They are now draining aquifers, which is non-renewable water; when I met with Governor Brown in New York, they were very, very concerned.

We saw it here in Ontario, in Lake Erie, when Toledo—400,000 people—couldn't use their water because a warming lake and new patterns of rain pushed more nutrients into that lake, and 400,000 people could not drink water because of the toxins. You could not boil it.

I was going to suggest that if that happened in Fort Erie, this would be a front-page news story. This is the sleeping issue of our time. There is no more important issue. As Secretary Kerry said in New York—

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, we can't.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs on a point of order.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to correct my record from yesterday. Hansard said that the GDP contribution for the agri-food sector in Ontario was reported as \$30 billion. It's actually \$34 billion in GDP. Hansard said that the number of people employed in the agri-food sector is 74,000; the actual number is 760,000 Ontarians in that sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members have the right to correct their record, as long as they're not changing what was said.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Not at all.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm just pointing that out. Just relax.

VISITOR

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

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I just want to welcome one of my constituents, who's here for IPF awareness. Jacqui Bowick-Sandor is here in the gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It gives me great pleasure to introduce a guest, a friend of mine, former senator Len Harris from Queensland, Australia, who has joined us here in Ontario to talk about property rights.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FAMILY DOCTORS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Perth–Wellington needs more family doctors. The government should know that by now. For the last three years, my constituents and I have told them so. We're seeing physicians retire, end their practice and move away, with not enough new ones to take their place.

In the last two weeks alone, five people have contacted me to say they need a doctor. That is five people and five families too many. There are no walk-in clinics in Perth–Wellington for people not already registered with a doctor. People are waiting for hours in our emergency rooms to be seen by a physician for routine issues.

Our communities are facing many additional repercussions. Recently, a health care professional emailed me. She was concerned that those without a doctor do not have easy access to the flu shot because it is not yet available in pharmacies.

I also receive many calls from people who are forced to pay hundreds of dollars to access their medical records after they lose their doctor. Repeatedly I've brought their concerns to the attention of the Minister of Health. I have relentlessly spoken up for them.

I hope the new minister will listen. I hope he will ensure that we in Perth–Wellington and all of rural and small-town Ontario will have access to timely medical care.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Joe Cimino: I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate all those who have put their names forward in the upcoming municipal election, which is coming up very quickly, next week. There are, amaz-

ingly, 10 people running for the position of mayor in Greater Sudbury and 60 who are seeking one of the 12 council seats that make up Greater Sudbury.

The new council will face the daunting task, as past leaders in Greater Sudbury have, of trying to take tangible bites out of the approximately \$700-million capital deficit.

I remind the MPPs in the House that Greater Sudbury faces many infrastructure demands, as other municipalities do, yet there is one large difference: The city of Greater Sudbury is about 3,200 square kilometres. We are responsible for 3,600 lane kilometres of roads, 500 kilometres of sidewalks, 873 kilometres of water mains, 793 kilometres of sanitary sewer, two water treatment plants, 10 wastewater plants, 21 deep wells, 69 lift stations etc.

This is coupled with the projected reduction in the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund to Greater Sudbury of \$3.1 million in 2015, \$2.8 million in 2016 and \$2.5 million in 2017. Adding to this dilemma is that the projected tax base growth is pegged at only 0.6% in each of the upcoming three years.

I look forward to working with the new mayor and council of Greater Sudbury to have upper levels of government understand that the approximately 60,000 property taxpayers and 40,000 water/wastewater rate-payers can no longer be hit with high rate increases each year. It is unsustainable.

I urge everyone to go out and vote on Monday.

MIRACLE LEAGUE OF OTTAWA

LIGUE MIRACLE D'OTTAWA

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I rise today to thank my colleagues on all sides of this House for their support of the Miracle League of Ottawa, the only Ontario finalist in a national community development competition held this past summer.

Bryce Desrochers, an 11-year-old boy with cerebral palsy who loves baseball, is the inspiration behind a campaign to build the accessible baseball diamond. While the Miracle League of Ottawa did not win the grand prize, it did win one of the secondary prizes of \$25,000. This brought them one step closer to the \$1 million needed to make the project a reality. This was still a great success.

I would like, however, to take the opportunity to warmly thank the Toronto Blue Jays for what they did shortly afterwards. They contacted the Miracle League and the Desrochers family and generously donated \$210,000 to the baseball diamond project.

Grâce à leur générosité, la Ligue Miracle d'Ottawa est maintenant plus proche que jamais de faire en sorte que ce projet devienne une réalité.

This is one of those moments where we can all be proud of what a community and those who rally behind it can achieve for the good of our families and all our children.

TROY ADAMS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's an honour to rise and congratulate a constituent from my riding who is doing great work and having a positive impact across Ontario. Troy Adams of Watford was recently recognized by the Brain Injury Association of Canada, which presented him with the prestigious Prevention and Awareness Award.

Troy suffered a serious brain injury in a car accident 11 years ago, but he met this challenge with passion and purpose. He created the Troy's Run Foundation, which tackles acquired brain injuries by focusing on hope, prevention and education.

I had the opportunity to meet with Troy here at Queen's Park in 2012 as he ran across Canada to support his foundation. Since then, he has been busy hosting community events, fundraising and training for more long-distance runs, including one he plans to make across the Canadian Arctic next year. Along the way, he has been an exceptional role model and a force for good in his community.

Thank you, Troy, for working so hard to create positive change, and congratulations on this well-deserved recognition from the Brain Injury Association of Canada.

NORTHERN ONTARIO

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Since the election this past June, I've spent my time travelling around the vast and beautiful riding of Kenora–Rainy River, listening to many of my constituents regarding their needs and their highest priorities.

I have heard from people about their concerns about the unaffordability of everyday life, whether it is the high cost of groceries and gasoline, their property tax bills, or home heating such as hydro or oil. When I was face to face with these hard-working people and hearing their stories, their struggles were palpable.

I heard more concerns about not being able to access health care close to home. Instead of having access to medical services in Winnipeg, about 200 kilometres away, an increasing number of people are being told that they must travel 2,000 kilometres away to the nearest specialty clinic in Ontario.

Northerners continue to strive for fairness when it comes to our economy and things like ensuring the continued operation of the Emo Agricultural Research Station, forestry licences being assigned to and benefiting local communities, resource revenue-sharing with First Nations, provincial consistency and appropriateness of trucking regulations, and more.

As well, we're faced with some challenges accessing justice: the absence of a resident judge in Rainy River, First Nation jury representation issues, as well as the increasingly pressurized issue around missing and murdered aboriginal women.

Finally, no matter which area of my riding you're in or the time of year, there are always concerns about transportation safety, like winter highway maintenance and the twinning of Highway 17.

These are some of the issues important to the north-west, and I will continue to raise them in the upcoming months.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Ms. Soo Wong: Engaging parents in the education of their children is a critical part of student success. Since 2006, our government has invested \$24 million into Parents Reaching Out grants across Ontario.

Building on this model, the Toronto Catholic District School Board and Catholic schools in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt have created a PRO Partnership to pool their grant funds and make programs accessible to students and families from both large and small schools.

Last year, the PRO Partnership had seven member schools. This year, the partnership made history by more than doubling its size to 15 member schools, representing 5,175 families from North York and Scarborough.

On October 4, the PRO Partnership held a community fair at St. Sylvester Catholic School in my riding. The proceeds from the fair will support new programs like the interactive family math and literacy workshops that engage parents in their children's studies.

I want to thank parent organizers Sarah Deir, Liz Garcia, Jackie Sajanlal and Evette Harding, and principals Roy Fernandes and John Masciarelli for all their hard work.

I also want to pay tribute to and thank Theresa Pastore for her work in bringing the teachers, principals, students and families together for this annual community event, and I look forward to attending the 2015 PRO Partnership community fair.

1510

IMPACT CENTRE

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Last week, I had the pleasure of visiting the Impact Centre at the University of Toronto, where I met with Director Cynthia Goh, Technology Director Rich McAloney and Assistant Vice-President of Government Relations Marny Scully.

The Impact Centre focuses on cross-disciplinary research and development dedicated to creating value to society. The centre links chemistry, physics, materials science, biology, nanotechnology, photonics and engineering, all for the betterment of the world.

I had the opportunity to visit the labs the students work in and where they build amazing prototypes like the new plug-free electric hybrid prototype, which was featured in the Toronto Star on October 14. You charge the vehicle's battery by pedalling. The intensity of pedalling controls its 500-watt engine's throttle. The engine itself is fully programmable, which means that you could easily adjust the pedal-to-engine power ratio. You can let the engine do most of the work, so you don't show up to work sweaty, and if you are in need of a little exercise, you can pedal the roughly 45-kilogram vehicle. The three-wheeled vehicle is tall enough to be seen by

other traffic yet narrow enough to manoeuvre through congested streets. It even has a windshield to protect you from the elements, and a small trunk.

On November 5, the Impact Centre will be showcasing their latest achievements in a “techno showcase” at the MaRS building. I encourage everyone to attend the event and witness the future of technology here in Ontario, and I thank the organizers for allowing me to visit the Impact Centre.

EVENTS IN KITCHENER CENTRE

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I’m very delighted to rise in the House today to share with you and my honourable colleagues some news of exciting events that have been occurring in the community of Kitchener Centre.

On October 10, I was delighted to welcome Premier Kathleen Wynne to Kitchener to join us for the official opening of the 46th annual Kitchener-Waterloo Oktoberfest, complete with keg-tapping ceremonies. This event marked the official kickoff of the nine-day German festival, which has long been celebrated in my community.

Over the course of 46 years, Oktoberfest has had an estimated \$1-billion impact—yes, I said \$1 billion—on the Kitchener-Waterloo economy. This year, \$22 million was filtered through our community as a result of the festival. Kitchener can also be proud of the estimated \$1.5 million in donations for local charities as well as the 11,000 pounds of food that was collected for the Food Bank of Waterloo Region.

Every year, we also celebrate German Pioneers Day. This year, the Swiss Mennonite family of Peter and Anna Martin was recognized for its contributions to the community through business, the arts and education.

We also celebrated the Concordia Club. Founded in 1873, it has been a strong influence on culture in our community.

I welcome all of you to visit Kitchener-Waterloo in the future to celebrate Oktoberfest—even you, Mr. Speaker. I know you like to do a little dance. We can do some chicken dancing, perhaps.

Remarks in German.

STREETSVILLE VILLAGE SQUARE

Mr. Bob Delaney: This year of 2014 has been a very exciting one for all of us in western Mississauga, particularly our neighbours in the village of Streetsville. After some \$3 million of investment and months of construction work, Streetsville Village Square has been reopened to the public as of the middle of September. It’s a new and refreshed square and it features a modern covered stage, a sound system and a brand spanking new state-of-the-art lighting system. The focal point of the new Streetsville square is the fully restored cenotaph, which will ensure that Ontario will continue to honour those who served in uniform for Canada.

Ward 11 councillor George Carlson was the primary driving force behind the project. In fact, my federal

colleague, MP Brad Butt, also helped to secure the funding.

The idea to revamp Streetsville Village Square has been in the making for nearly eight years. It’s a new and revamped square that honours tradition while embracing modern urban design.

Streetsville Village Square is an even better destination for residents of western Mississauga, a wonderful welcome to our visitors and a great boon for local businesses.

The official opening of Streetsville Village Square is slated for next spring.

I want to congratulate the Streetsville BIA and everyone involved in making the project happen, and I hope to welcome many visitors to historic Streetsville.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HIGHWAY INCIDENT MANAGEMENT ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA GESTION DES INCIDENTS DE LA ROUTE

Mrs. Martow moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to require the establishment of an advisory committee to make recommendations to the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for the improvement of highway incident management / Projet de loi 30, Loi exigeant la constitution d’un comité consultatif pour formuler des recommandations au ministre des Transports et au ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels en ce qui concerne l’amélioration de la gestion des incidents de la route.

The 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.

Mrs. Gila Martow: The bill requires the Minister of Transportation, the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services and the Commissioner of the Ontario Provincial Police to establish an advisory committee to analyze highway incident management and to develop a comprehensive program to improve it. The committee is to be established within 60 days after the bill receives royal assent and must report to the two ministers within eight months after its establishment. The committee’s report must make recommendations respecting the following:

(1) providing public education programs to improve driver behaviour in circumstances involving highway incidents;

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

(3) providing timely and accurate information about highway incidents to drivers;

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

Within 60 days after receiving the advisory committee's report, each minister must inform the assembly of the recommendations that he or she will implement.

TRANSPORTATION STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT (MAKING
ONTARIO'S ROADS SAFER), 2014
LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LE TRANSPORT (ACCROÎTRE LA
SÉCURITÉ ROUTIÈRE EN ONTARIO)

Mr. Del Duca moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to amend the Highway 407 East Act, 2012 and the Highway Traffic Act in respect of various matters and to make a consequential amendment to the Provincial Offences Act / *Projet de loi 31, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2012 sur l'autoroute 407 Est et le Code de la route en ce qui concerne diverses questions et apportant une modification corrélative à la Loi sur les infractions provinciales.*

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 minister for a short statement.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm very, very proud to stand to stand in my place today to introduce this particular bill, my first bill being brought forward to the floor of the Legislature as Ontario's Minister of Transportation.

I want to pay very quick tribute to two of my predecessors, the current Minister of the Environment and Climate Change and the current Minister of Energy, for the extraordinary work that they brought to bear when they were both serving as Ministers of Transportation here in Ontario. Their work has helped to largely underpin and be at the very foundation of this legislation that I'm introducing today, and I want to thank them for their work.

Also, I'm very happy to have been joined by a number of my colleagues, including both of my parliamentary assistants, the new member from Burlington and our new member from Trinity-Spadina, earlier today when I spoke to the media about our plan to introduce this new legislation.

Of course, we were joined by a very large number of our road safety partners. In particular, I want to acknowledge Brian Patterson, who is here with us in the gallery today from the Ontario Safety League. Mr. Patterson, along with a number of other road safety partners, was

there. They were very happy to hear about this legislation.

From what I recall during our last session, Speaker, this was legislation that enjoyed broad support in terms of making our roads safer—

1520

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I let this go a little bit, but the normal procedure is either a ministerial statement or you read from the explanatory notes of what the bill is. I would remind all members that that's the process that we have and I would appreciate very much that it take place in that manner.

Introduction of bills? The member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills.

BOB MACKIE ACT, 2014
LOI BOB MACKIE DE 2014

Mr. MacLaren moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 32, An Act to repeal the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act and to make a related amendment to the Ministry of Natural Resources Act / *Projet de loi 32, Loi visant à abroger la Loi sur la planification et l'aménagement de l'escarpement du Niagara et à apporter une modification connexe à la Loi sur le ministère des Richesses naturelles.*

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. Jack MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, the bill, the Bob Mackie Act, 2014, repeals the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act and adds a section to the Ministry of Natural Resources Act to permit regulations to be made addressing transitional matters arising from the repeal of the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act.

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES**

ONTARIO AGRICULTURE WEEK

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, I'm honoured to rise today, at my first opportunity since the Legislature resumed sitting, in celebration of Ontario's agricultural industry and the people whose care and pride make it so great.

Each year, in the days leading up to Thanksgiving, we celebrate Agriculture Week in Ontario. Agriculture Week provides an excellent opportunity to connect rural and urban communities and to help us develop a deeper appreciation for the good things that are grown, harvested and made right here in Ontario. The agri-food industry is

a driving force for Ontario's economy. It contributes \$34 billion in GDP each year and supports over 740,000 jobs.

Our government believes in the incredible value and potential of the agri-food industry. That is why Premier Wynne issued the agri-food growth challenge last year. Her challenge encourages the sector to double its growth rate and create 120,000 new jobs by 2020.

But, Mr. Speaker, agriculture is about much more than just the numbers. This year, to kick off Agriculture Week, I had the opportunity to participate in a Breakfast on the Farm, hosted by Farm and Food Care Ontario, at Wilmot Orchards in beautiful Newcastle, Ontario. Let me tell you, there is no better place to enjoy the most important meal of the day than on the farm.

Along with more than 1,700 other visitors, we feasted on pancakes with blueberries and warm maple syrup, eggs with pork sausages, fresh greenhouse tomatoes, and plenty of crisp, sweet apples. All of it was locally sourced and all of it was free to everyone who wanted to take part.

The dedication of our farmers and food producers was evident at this wonderful event. At 6 a.m., a crew of Ontario egg farmers cracked 3,000 eggs to ensure the breakfast provided was as fresh as possible.

So many Ontarians were there enjoying the day and learning about where their food comes from, the hard work that goes into growing it and the people who care so deeply to provide our province with delicious, healthy food.

This year, to close Agriculture Week, I visited the 146th edition of the Norwood fair in my riding of Peterborough, a great tradition celebrating agriculture and farming in eastern Ontario.

Mr. Speaker, we're also starting to see farmers and consumers connected through social media. Farmers are sharing information about their harvest using #harvest14, just as they used #plant14 in the spring. These online interactions help more Ontarians learn where their food comes from, and build bonds between rural and urban communities in this great province.

At Wilmot Orchards I had the opportunity to share the good news that our government is investing \$221,500 in Ontario's apple growers to help increase sales and demand for fresh Ontario apples—the best in the world. This funding will support apple sampling programs at grocery stores, an event to celebrate Ontario apples and culinary demonstrations to show consumers new ways of using Ontario apples.

Mr. Speaker, from field to fork, we are seeing farmers and producers embracing the spirit of the Premier's Agri-Food Challenge. This investment is one way in which we are supporting their efforts.

Just before Agriculture Week, I had the privilege of announcing our Food Donation Tax Credit for Farmers at Hamilton Food Share.

I also want to recognize the great work that's done by the member from Sarnia-Lambton.

This initiative, brought about through the hard work of all parties in this Legislature, rewards farmers for their

generosity by giving them a 25% tax credit for the agricultural products that they donate to community food banks. This is the only credit of its kind in Canada and is already helping to increase the amount of healthy, local food available at food banks and student nutrition programs right across this great province.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario's agricultural sector helps us build economically stable, environmentally safe and socially thriving communities. It is an important link to our past, an essential part of the fabric of rural communities today, and is vital—vital—to our economic future.

Fall is a perfect time to connect with our agricultural roots and choose to make locally sourced Ontario food a regular feature of our meals each and every day.

I want to thank all who made Agriculture Week 2014 a success, and I encourage all Ontarians to get out and visit a farm or a farmers' market this week.

ONTARIO PUBLIC LIBRARY WEEK

Hon. Michael Coteau: This week is Ontario Public Library Week. Held every fall since 1985, Ontario Public Library Week raises awareness of just how central libraries are to our communities, our families and our businesses. It reminds us of the important role libraries play in building strong and vibrant communities across this great province.

Nearly five million Ontarians—that's 40%—have library cards. In addition to that, there are over 72 million in-person visits to our libraries every year. Mr. Speaker, there is a reason for that. Our public libraries are among the best in the world and offer people a place where they can learn about anything and everything.

The world has gone through a significant change in the way we share information, and Ontario libraries have evolved with it: from manual card catalogues to high-speed Internet access; from hard-copy books to e-books; from photocopiers to 3-D printers. In fact, I was at the Toronto Reference Library a couple of weeks ago and I saw one of the 3-D printers in action. It was just really incredible.

Our libraries continue to innovate in order to better serve and reach a broader audience and improve their user experience. That's why our government is pleased to invest in public libraries through the new Ontario Libraries Capacity Fund. Announced in the 2014 budget, this \$10-million investment will build on the great work being done by our public libraries by improving and expanding IT and digital services, including the Internet and wireless access; developing user-friendly websites; enhancing collection development, such as e-books; supporting staff development; and encouraging innovation and research.

The Ontario Libraries Capacity Fund is a three-year program.

I'd like to take a moment just to thank the former minister of this file, Minister Chan, the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade, for his work over the last few years advocating for this type of fund.

1530

The first year will focus on IT improvements and service delivery in our libraries. In years two and three, projects that support research and innovation will also be eligible for funding.

Mr. Speaker, our government believes in access to digital resources and services, and we believe they're essential in today's knowledge-based economy. As community hubs, public libraries play an important role in bringing that technology into their communities. Libraries open up a world of knowledge. They connect us to the information and resources we need to succeed in life, at school, and within our jobs. Libraries give us access to great literature, to music, and to film; resources that help people develop all aspects of their lives and innovative new technologies that provide creative opportunities.

Through strategic investments like the Ontario Libraries Capacity Fund, we're ensuring that Ontarians have access to high-quality services and information, and we are committed to making services in public libraries and across the province even better.

Mr. Speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to recognize the great work that the staff do in all of our Ontario public libraries across this province to promote education and literacy, and contribute to the health and well-being of our communities.

I encourage all Ontarians to visit your local library this week and get involved in the exciting lineup of events planned in communities across the province that celebrate and honour our public libraries.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I am pleased to rise today to talk about climate change, the defining issue of our time. I would also like to thank my friend the Honourable Jim Bradley, my predecessor, for his work on this very important issue.

Our government sees climate change as an existential threat, which is why I joined nearly 400,000 other people marching through the streets of New York City to call for action during Climate Week last month.

If the nations of our planet cannot achieve a peak in emissions within the next few years on the path to net zero greenhouse gas emissions, by mid-century, then we are inviting the unthinkable. Business as usual on a global scale means we will see a mean temperature rise of between three and five degrees Celsius in the second half of this century. That would itself cause global catastrophe and massive loss of life, as well as the extinction of most of the species on this planet.

US Secretary of State John Kerry put it succinctly, when speaking to the UN Climate Summit last month, when he said, "The science is unequivocal, and those who refuse to believe it are simply burying their heads in the sand. We don't have time for a meeting anywhere of the Flat Earth Society. And in a sense, climate change can now be considered another weapon of mass destruc-

tion, perhaps the world's most fearsome weapon of mass destruction."

In the words of former US Treasury Secretary and Republican Henry Paulson, "Viewing climate change in terms of risk assessment and risk management makes clear to me that taking a cautiously conservative stance—that is, waiting for more information before acting—is actually taking a very radical risk. We'll never know enough to resolve all of the uncertainties. But we know enough to recognize that we must act now."

Fighting climate change has the potential to create unprecedented economic growth around the world, but especially here in Ontario.

During Climate Week, Secretary Kerry also showed us that we are standing on the verge of a massive opportunity. Moving to a low-carbon economy will unleash a new era of prosperity in the western world six times greater than the \$1-trillion tech boom of the 1990s. That's a \$6-trillion opportunity in non-greenhouse gas-emitting vehicles, renewable energy, and durable rather than disposable products. But governments have to be prepared to take action and seize this opportunity.

One of the major reasons I joined this government in 2010 was because of Ontario's leadership on climate change. Mr. Speaker, Ontario has bettered its 2014 greenhouse gas emissions reduction target of 6% below 1990 levels, making it one of the only jurisdictions in the world to be below 1990 levels. Along with Quebec, we are two of a handful of jurisdictions that have achieved this.

We have to see enough other jurisdictions achieve reductions below 1990 levels to avoid this impending catastrophe. This is why Ontario is working with Quebec and California to build momentum for deep greenhouse gas emission reductions across North America, on the path to the 2015 UN climate conference in Paris.

Eliminating coal-fired generation in Ontario was critical to our fight against climate change and is the single largest greenhouse gas emission reduction initiative in North America. In 2015, we will introduce a climate change strategy to achieve essential greenhouse gas reduction targets for 2020 and for all the years up to 2050.

We are not just fighting climate change. Through our government's investment in people, building modern infrastructure, and a dynamic and innovative business climate, we are actually delivering a low-carbon economy. Ontario can be a major part of the solution to this global challenge and a leader in this new economy.

We have a lot of work to do, but we don't do it alone. In August, our Premier, Kathleen Wynne, and Premier Couillard of Quebec agreed to renew their strong partnership and focus on these key initiatives. Deputy ministers from both provinces will be meeting regularly to update and strengthen bilateral collaborative agreements, with a priority on climate change issues. We hope to build on this strong relationship and tackle our climate change goals together.

This government will continue to take strong action on the defining issue of our generation. Between our

ongoing investments in technology, our commitment to clean energy and our continued partnerships with our allies, Ontario will be a leader in the fight against climate change. In the coming months, we will unveil our climate change strategy to avoid the unthinkable, while seizing hope and the opportunity that only transformative leadership can deliver.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

ONTARIO AGRICULTURE WEEK

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, of course we're all very pleased to recognize Ontario Agriculture Week, which ran October 6 to 12, leading up to Thanksgiving. I know that locally it coincided with our Norfolk County Fair and Horse Show—we get well over 100,000 people who come out to that—and it coincides with so many other fairs, weekend festivals and celebrations across the province.

Depending on the weather, so many farmers spend Ontario ag week trying to get their soybeans off and trying to get some winter wheat in, and dealing with mud, frost and breakdowns—broken hydraulic fluid lines, running out of diesel: all the things that I used to get involved in at this time of year. The diversity of crops, whether it be squash, pumpkins, apples—we're blessed with so many different commodities in the province of Ontario.

I've got to point out that Ontario ag week was a private member's bill introduced way back when by MPP Bert Johnson, a former member for Perth. It's a very important way to celebrate the contributions of our farmers, whether they be large or small, and whether they produce food, fibre, pharmaceuticals, international exports or local food. It's a great idea and it's something we will continue to celebrate for many years on into the future.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Thank you, Minister, for your statement. While I genuinely appreciate your commitment and passion for taking action when it comes to climate change, I'm still left concerned about your government's ability to produce results on this matter.

Minister, you noted the urgency when it comes to climate change. However, your government has had over a decade to do something, and, other than the elimination of coal-fired power generation, your government has virtually done nothing with respect to climate change.

I would be remiss if I didn't officially recognize Huron county's own Elizabeth Witmer for her efforts on behalf of the PC Party of Ontario with regard to starting the reduction of coal use in Ontario.

Minister, if you're serious about protecting the environment, why did the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario warn that the Liberal government is dismantling environmental protections, which could have disastrous results?

More recently, in the Environmental Commissioner's annual report, he described Ontario's current pollution-fighting efforts as an embarrassment, elaborating that it

was only a mere two decades ago that our province had a world-class pollution control system.

1540

We're already hearing about serious lapses in competency within your ministry in terms of your pollution-fighting efforts, and then when you couple this with recent public accounts showing a further reduction of \$91 million in your ministry's budget, it concerns me where and how these cuts will affect Ontarians.

Minister, while I know you mean well, I hope this is not rhetoric and that your government actually supports you and ultimately delivers solutions that help our environment while being cautious of maintaining a healthy economy, meaning jobs throughout Ontario.

ONTARIO PUBLIC LIBRARY WEEK

Mr. Bill Walker: It brings me great pleasure to rise in the House today, on behalf of the PC caucus, in response to the government's announcement of the \$10-million library capacity fund and also in recognition of Public Library Week in Ontario.

This is a time when we give our thanks and congratulations to the librarians, staff and volunteers who have inspired and assisted people to make a positive difference to their lives.

Whenever I visit a library in my riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, I'm reminded of how our libraries continue to be at the heart of communities, even as they're becoming about so much more than books. The quickly evolving technologies are transforming the way people access information and communicate with each other.

I want to again recognize the great work done by our librarians, staff and volunteers, who are challenged every day to maintain traditional services and embrace new services and technologies with existing money. They've risen to this challenge well, despite funding gaps, as highlighted in the most recent report issued by People for Education, which found that teacher-librarians in Ontario schools continue to decline dramatically, especially in rural and northern Ontario, where students are least likely to have a teacher-librarian or library technician.

I wonder how the minister would explain his love of literacy, lifelong learning and cultural development across the province and building of strong, vibrant communities when his government continues to leave behind rural and northern Ontario libraries.

Unless the minister agrees to fix the disparity in the way our libraries are funded—which can range from 49 cents per resident to \$26 per resident, depending on where you live in Ontario—his love of literacy, lifelong learning and cultural development and building of strong, vibrant communities are just empty words.

ONTARIO AGRICULTURE WEEK

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to be able to speak on behalf of my NDP colleagues regarding the celebration of Agriculture Week.

We've heard that agriculture creates 740,000 jobs and adds \$34 billion to the Ontario economy. That's incredibly important. But to us, Agriculture Week is about the families who grow our food. It's about the families who know the joy of getting a heifer calf from your best cow. It's about the families who know the joy of pulling into a field and doing the first round and knowing it's going to be a bumper crop. It's about the families who know the heartbreak, like my friends in Timiskaming-Cochrane, of having a month of rain and watching some of their crops rot in the field. That's what Agriculture Week is about.

Those families not only need strong risk management programs, but they are families: They need rural schools, they need rural hospitals, they need rural home care. Our party understands that, and we will continue to advocate for that.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's my pleasure to rise to comment on the minister's statement on a new climate change strategy. I guess I shouldn't be surprised, because back on July 9, Gord Miller, Ontario's Environmental Commissioner, predicted that the province would likely meet its 2014 greenhouse target because all the coal plants were shut down. But at the same time, he predicted—in fact, he warned—that the province will not be able to meet the 2020 target because the province “has taken very little additional action to implement the climate change action plan it released seven years ago.”

Mr. Miller went on to say, “Ontario appears to have lost the ambition it once had and won't even look at directives to ensure more compact urban development or a serious commitment to using electricity for transportation.”

Today we're being asked to hold our breath and to bury our head in the sand until next year sometime, when a new strategy will be introduced. I'm looking forward to it, Speaker, very much so.

I'd just remind the minister, if he's not doing anything Thursday night at 8:30, that on the federal NDP Facebook page, the NDP environmental critic, Megan Leslie, is hosting a Q&A on climate change. You might find it interesting, sir.

ONTARIO PUBLIC LIBRARY WEEK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my honour to respond to the minister about this gift to libraries. It's a gift; I'll give him that. It's not a great gift. It's \$10 million over three years to hundreds of libraries. One hopes that the gift is given equally so that First Nations libraries and libraries in the north and libraries that we were speaking about earlier also get their fair share. We're hopeful about that.

I also want to thank the minister for visiting my riding. He came to the Parkdale library to make the announcement. Had he let me know—I live a few doors from that library—I would have invited him in for tea, and I would have told him a few things. I would have told him about

the community which he visited, a community that has high rates of poverty, a community that has high rates of homelessness, a community that has incredible need for that library, not just for the books but for a space for children to do their homework, to use a desktop computer, which many do not have at home—from the high school around the corner from that library that had, at one point, 64 mother tongues spoken.

Those children, newcomers, many of them refugees and immigrants who want for the very basic necessities, including OHIP, most of them, for the first three months—when we talk about risk management, we should talk about that, because that's a serious risk for everyone in Ontario. But for those children, that library is a haven. That library is also the host to many community activities. Our local city councillor uses that library for their office hours. All of this would have been his, had he only let me know that he was coming to Parkdale.

But suffice as it is, \$10 million is better than a slap in the head. We're glad about it. Three years—that's a long time. And hundreds of libraries—that's a lot of libraries. We're going to be tracing that, Mr. Minister. We're going to be making sure that First Nations and the people in Timiskaming-Cochrane and the people all over Ontario get their fair share, because they deserve it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would thank all those who responded to the ministers. Since the time for responses has expired, we'll now move into petitions.

PETITIONS

HYDRO RATES

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

“Whereas the Green Energy Act has driven up the cost of electricity in Ontario due to unrealistic subsidies for certain energy sources, including the world's highest subsidies for solar power; and

“Whereas this cost is passed on to ratepayers through the global adjustment, which can account for almost half of a ratepayer's hydro bill; and

“Whereas the high cost of energy is severely impacting the quality of life of Ontario's residents, especially fixed-income seniors; and

“Whereas it is imperative to remedy Liberal mismanagement in the energy sector by implementing immediate reforms detailed in the Ontario PC white paper Paths to Prosperity—Affordable Energy;

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

“To immediately repeal the Green Energy Act, 2009, and all other statutes that artificially inflate the cost of electricity with the aim of bringing down electricity rates and abolishing expensive surcharges such as the global adjustment and debt retirement charges.”

I support this petition and will affix my signature and send it with page Darren.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I have a petition signed by people right across this great province.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias are progressive, degenerative diseases of the brain that cause thinking, memory and physical functioning to become seriously impaired; and

“Whereas there is no known cause or cure for this devastating illness; and

“Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias also take their toll on hundreds of thousands of families and care partners; and

“Whereas Alzheimer's disease and other dementias affect more than 200,000 Ontarians today, with an annual total economic burden rising to \$15.7 billion by 2020; and

“Whereas the cost related to the health care system is in the billions and is only going to increase, at a time when our health care system is already facing enormous financial challenges; and

“Whereas there is work under way to address the need, but no coordinated or comprehensive approach to tackling the issues; and

“Whereas there is an urgent need to plan and raise awareness and understanding about Alzheimer's disease and other dementias for the sake of improving the quality of life of the people it touches;

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

“To approve the development of a comprehensive Ontario dementia plan that would include the development of strategies in primary health care, in health promotion and prevention of illness, in community development, in building community capacity and care partner engagement, in caregiver support and investments in research.”

I agree with this petition. I'll affix my name to it and give it to Josée to bring up to the desk.

1550

HEALTH CARE

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

“Whereas the Ontario government is committed to providing the right care, at the right place, at the right time, and by the right health care professional; and

“Whereas patients that are not satisfied with their care deserve the opportunity to voice their concerns and seek resolutions to their complaints; and

“Whereas the patients sometimes need a third party to turn to when they have exhausted all local complaint resolution processes; and

“Whereas a patient ombudsman would facilitate the resolution of complaints, investigate health sector organizations, and make recommendations to further strengthen Ontario's health care sector;

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

“That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 8, and create a patient ombudsman.”

I fully support the petition. I will give my petition to page Adam.

LYME DISEASE

Mr. Toby Barrett: “Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn's, Alzheimer's, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe; and

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario Health Insurance Plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives at 45% to 95% of the time;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health to direct that the Ontario public health system and OHIP include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme diagnosis, to do everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available” to all patients and physicians.

I affix my signature to the rest of these names.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition from across Ontario in support of youth correctional workers in the province. It says,

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario's youth justice facilities are run by two completely different sets of policy guidelines depending on whether they are part of the Ontario public service (OPS) and funded directly by the provincial government, or the broader public service (BPS) and funded indirectly; and

“Whereas OPS and BPS facilities serve the very same youth, and both receive their funding from the Ministry of Children and Youth Services; and

“Whereas unlike in similar OPS facilities, there is no provincial mandate for youth corrections community agencies to provide WSIB coverage...; and

“Whereas youth corrections community agencies are struggling with chronic underfunding;

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

“We strongly urge the provision of a provincial mandate for all youth corrections agencies to provide WSIB coverage to their staff. We further urge the assembly to improve systemic inequities by ensuring that all youth corrections facilities receive proper funding.”

I couldn't agree with this more. I'm going to affix my name to it and give it to page Rachel to bring to the Clerks' table.

CHILDHOOD APRAXIA OF SPEECH

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition for you, a petition to designate May 14 as Apraxia Awareness Day in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas childhood apraxia of speech is a rare neurological speech disorder that affects oral motor planning;

“Whereas an estimated 3% to 5% of the world's childhood population are diagnosed with childhood apraxia of speech;

“Whereas Ontario has excellent speech-language centres and programs that currently provide treatment for childhood apraxia of speech;

“Whereas children diagnosed in Canada with childhood apraxia of speech are eligible to receive the children's disability tax credit to assist with therapy costs;

“Whereas greater public awareness of speech disorders and the benefits of early intervention speech-language therapy are needed in the province of Ontario;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to join the United States of America in declaring May 14 as Apraxia Awareness Day.”

I support this petition, I sign it and I give it to new page Morgan. Welcome, Morgan, to Queen's Park.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the member from Perth-Wellington.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's good to see you in the chair.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the final report of the select committee, entitled Inclusion and Opportunity: A New Path for Developmental Services in Ontario, was tabled in the Legislature on July 22, 2014;

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

“That” the “government of Ontario immediately review the final report and commence the implementation of the recommendations of the select committee, as contained in the final report.”

I agree with this petition and I will give it to page Colston.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

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

“Whereas in 2013, 16 construction workers in Ontario were killed in tragic falls, almost 3,400 WSIB fall claims were accepted, and many other falls were never reported;

“Whereas in addition to the human tragedy of workplace falls, the financial cost of each year's WSIB fall claims is about \$100 million;

“Whereas the provincial government of Newfoundland and Labrador implemented new fall protection training regulations on January 1, 2012, after which fall claims declined by 25%;

“Whereas a similar training requirement and result in Ontario could prevent over 800 fall tragedies each year and avoid \$25 million in costs with the WSIB; and

“Whereas in 2010, the Ontario government promised to implement a similar training requirement by December 2011, but still has not done so; and has thereby left workers at risk;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Minister of Labour to make saving workers' lives a priority and stop delaying fall protection training regulations.”

I affix my signature to this petition and give it to page Jamie to deliver to the table.

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I have a petition that reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas it is absolutely crucial that more is done to provide Ontarians retirement financial security which they can rely on;

“Whereas the federal government has refused to partner with our government to ensure that Ontarians have a secure retirement plan;

“Whereas more than three million Ontarians rely on the Canada Pension Plan alone, that currently does not provide enough to support an adequate standard of living;

“Whereas the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan will provide the safe and stable retirement that Ontarians need;

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

“That all members of the Ontario assembly support a plan to move forward with an Ontario-made pension retirement plan that will provide a financially secure retirement for Ontarians.”

I've signed the petition and I'm going to pass it on to Joséé from the riding of Northumberland-Quinte West.

HOSPICE FUNDING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I recognize the interim leader of the official opposition, the member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I expire in eight months.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas there is a discrepancy”—

Interjection.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I just caught that, Minister—“between how hospices are funded in Ontario; and

“Whereas Matthews House Hospice is the lowest-funded hospice in the Central Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) and among the lowest-funded in the province, even though it serves as many clients or more than other hospices that receive greater provincial support; and

“Whereas Matthews House has been told by the Central LHIN that LHINs do not fund residential hospice operational costs and yet hospices in other LHINs, including Barrie, Huntsville, Richmond Hill, Owen Sound and now Collingwood, all receive operational funding from the province; and

“Whereas in February 2010 Matthews House Hospice was promised a solution to its underfunding by the Central LHIN which has never materialized;

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

“That the Wynne government immediately develop a comprehensive strategy to deal with hospice funding to ensure that people in south Simcoe and all Ontarians receive equal access to end-of-life care.”

Mr. Speaker, I agree with the petition, and I have signed it.

1600

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Ms. Catherine Fife: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas in 2013, 16 construction workers in Ontario were killed in tragic falls, almost 3,400 WSIB fall claims were accepted, and many other falls were never reported;

“Whereas in addition to the human tragedy of workplace falls, the financial cost of each year’s WSIB fall claims is about \$100 million;

“Whereas the provincial government of Newfoundland and Labrador implemented new fall protection training regulations on January 1, 2012, after which fall claims declined by 25%;

“Whereas a similar training requirement and result in Ontario could prevent over 800 fall tragedies each year and avoid \$25 million in costs with the WSIB; and

“Whereas in 2010, the Ontario government promised to implement a similar training requirement by December 2011, but still has not done so; and has thereby left workers at risk;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Minister of Labour to make saving workers’ lives a priority and stop delaying fall protection training regulations.”

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Arthur Potts: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ontario government is committed to providing the right care, at the right place, at the right time, and by the right health care professional; and

“Whereas patients that are not satisfied with their care deserve the opportunity to voice their concerns and seek resolutions to their complaints; and

“Whereas the patients sometimes need a third party to turn to when they have exhausted all local complaint resolution processes; and

“Whereas a patient ombudsman would facilitate the resolution of complaints, investigate health sector organizations, and make recommendations to further strengthen Ontario’s health care sector;

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

“That members of the Legislative Assembly pass Bill 8, and create a patient ombudsman.”

It’s something I agree with wholeheartedly and will sign and leave with Meher.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRONGER WORKPLACES FOR A STRONGER ECONOMY ACT, 2014 LOI DE 2014 SUR L’AMÉLIORATION DU LIEU DE TRAVAIL AU SERVICE D’UNE ÉCONOMIE PLUS FORTE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 20, 2014, on the motion for second reading of Bill 18, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour / Projet de loi 18, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l’emploi et la main-d’oeuvre.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): When this item of business was last debated, we completed questions and comments on the speech of Mr. Vanthof from Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Further debate? I recognize the member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It is great to see you in the chair again, and it’s good to be back.

I’m very pleased today to stand to speak to Bill 18, the Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act. I would like to congratulate Minister Flynn and Minister Naqvi, who put forward this bill in the last Legislature. We have had some time to debate this bill. I would also like to congratulate Minister Flynn on his work on work-related traumatic stress. I know that continues to be an

important issue to him. I know it's not included in this bill, but I would be remiss if I didn't say that. I didn't get an opportunity to say it yesterday.

Of course, the bill is a combination of two bills in the last session that we had some opportunity to debate. I had the opportunity, as well, to be here yesterday and hear some of the comments in the leadoff debate. I know that the member from Leeds–Grenville raised some concerns that this was an omnibus bill. I don't think that's an accurate representation. It's a combination of one bill that's a bit bigger and one very straightforward bill—the increase in the minimum wage and tying that to CPI.

You know, we're taking action to try and provide a fair and consistent approach to setting Ontario's minimum wage, and in this bill, we propose legislation to index future minimum wage adjustments to Ontario's CPI. This approach has been supported by both employees and employers and is based on the recommendations of the panel.

That Minimum Wage Advisory Panel was established in July 2013 as part of a 2013 budget commitment, and it was composed of employer and labour representatives, community and anti-poverty groups, and a student.

The panel's report was based on extensive research, and I know they did go across the province and queried over 400 Ontarians. It recommended the following:

- that the minimum wage be revised annually and linked to the consumer price index;
- that at least four months' notice be given of that change; and
- that, in five years, a full review be conducted with a panel of stakeholders and an independent chair.

I know that in some of the responses in the leadoff yesterday—there was some concern expressed by the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington that this was going to have some impact on our economy, and I was concerned that this would go unchecked. I think it's very clear that—first of all, I don't agree with his assertion that tying this to CPI would affect our economy in a negative way. However, it is provided in this bill that, again, the full five-year review be conducted by a panel of stakeholders and an independent chair to take a look at how it has been working.

When we first came to office in 2003, the minimum wage had been frozen for eight years straight. Since then, the minimum wage has increased from \$6.85 to the \$11 it is today. In the past, you can see that these increases to minimum wage were basically ad hoc and were subject to a political process. We think that, for people earning the lowest incomes in Ontario, simply tying it to the increases in the consumer price index—these are the people who are most affected by those increases—that this is just the right thing to do. That's why we introduced this legislation.

I was also very pleased yesterday to listen to the members on all sides of the Legislature talk about how important it is to protect vulnerable workers. By acting to strengthen workplace protections for the most vulnerable and increasing fairness for employees and businesses, we

build a stronger workplace and we'll build a stronger economy and thus a stronger Ontario.

We all recognize here that the nature of work is changing and we have to change our rules to keep up. A significant portion of vulnerable workers have been immigrants, women, young workers and individuals in minority ethnic groups. These individuals often start in precarious jobs. In drafting this legislation, we built on reports from people like the United Way and the Law Society of Upper Canada, and we also consulted with 14 other provincial government ministries, as well as with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

We have proposed this bill because it's the right thing to do for vulnerable workers and for businesses. By acting to safeguard workers who need our protection and helping responsible, law-abiding businesses stay competitive, we are protecting Ontarians and working to strengthen our economy.

Our legislative proposals respond to these key recommendations in recent reports from our stakeholders, and they include:

- eliminating the \$10,000 cap on recovery of unpaid wages and increasing the period of recovery to two years for employees;
- making client employers who use temporary help agencies liable when agencies don't pay certain types of wages, encouraging those companies to use agencies that treat employees fairly;
- extending the Occupational Health and Safety Act coverage to unpaid co-op students, other unpaid learners and unpaid trainees; and
- prohibiting employers from recovering certain costs and seizing personal documents like passports from all foreign employees, not just live-in caregivers, by extending the application of the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals legislation to cover all foreign employees who come to Ontario under an immigration or foreign temporary employee program.

The number of temporary foreign workers in Ontario has risen from 91,000 in 2008 to 133,000 in 2013. It is fair, and our responsibility, to protect them, and now is the time to act. No one should ever have to surrender their passport or leave their country and come to Ontario because they are promised a job that doesn't exist, or be charged for inappropriate recruitment fees.

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That is why the proposed legislation would amend the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act, 2009, that our government introduced and that was passed. We would amend this act to apply to all foreign employees in Ontario who are here through immigration or temporary foreign employee programs. This means foreign employees in Ontario would be protected from illegal recruitment fees and from having their passports or other documents withheld by their employers.

Under Bill 18, the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act would be extended to cover approximately 110,000 additional temporary foreign employees. It prohibits recruiters from charging any fees to the person,

either directly or indirectly. It prohibits the employer from recovery of recruitment and placement costs. Importantly, it prohibits reprisals against individuals for exercising their rights under the act.

It requires that the employer provide information sheets about the employee's rights under the act, and also requires employers and recruiters to maintain records. It will prohibit an employer or recruiter from taking possessions or property, including personal documents, from the employee. It contains no monetary limit on the recovery of monies pursuant to an order under the act, and it also provides a 42-month time limit on filing claims under the act.

Extending these protections to most foreign employees in Ontario will help ensure that these workers get treated fairly, regardless of occupation or skill level. In the debate yesterday, the member from Essex put it very well when he essentially said that we all believe here that when people come to Ontario to work, Mr. Speaker, we want them to be treated fairly and ensure that they have the same rights and responsibilities as residents here in Ontario. I'm very proud of these measures in the act.

As well, there are going to be changes to the Employment Standards Act with respect to the recovery of wages. There will be a removal of the \$10,000 cap for the recovery of wages. People work hard for their money; at the end of their shift they expect to be paid. As well, if they operate a business, they deserve to know that their competitor is not unfairly advantaged because he's not respecting the Employment Standards Act.

Right now, there are both time and monetary limits on recovering wages. By making it easier for employees to get money owed them—by proposing to remove the \$10,000 cap under the Employment Standards Act, and on the recovery of unpaid wages through a Ministry of Labour order to pay—it means the employees will no longer be forced to pursue large claims in the courts, saving employees and businesses both time and money.

Mr. Speaker, you can imagine being a person who is working at minimum wage or just above and who has a case for recovery of wages because they were unfairly treated. It would be easy for that amount, over the period of a few years, to get up into the range of over \$10,000. It would be virtually impossible for them, without the assistance of somebody in the community, to take an employer to court. Some employers would be unfairly advantaged in that circumstance, so I think that this measure in the bill is very important and will go to level the playing field.

The legislation will also increase the time limit for recovery of wages through an order to pay under the Employment Standards Act to two years. We're doing this so older claims are dealt with fairly and employees get the money they're owed. We all believe that people should get paid for the work that they do.

We're the only jurisdiction in Canada that currently has a cap, and it's important for us to remove that right now, so vulnerable employees who have larger claims will be able to go forward with that.

Court proceedings can also be a disadvantage for small businesses, and this will be a savings to them as well.

One of the important things the legislation also does is require the employment standards handout to be given to all employees.

Now, having had a background in business and working in both organized and non-union shops, I know the difference between people understanding what their rights and responsibilities are. I think especially with young workers, vulnerable workers, workers who are earning minimum wage, they're very easily taken advantage of. I know in our own circumstance at home, our youngest son, James, had a job at a local gas station and was often asked—I wouldn't say "asked"; he was often told what he was going to do. Some of those things included double overnight shifts because somebody didn't show up—they didn't have an option—and working alone in those circumstances. So making sure that people, employees and employers, understand the rules is very important to making sure that that relationship works and that everyone is treated fairly.

Mr. Speaker, the bill also speaks to temporary help agencies, and there are provisions around joint and several liability which simply say that any business engaging a temporary help agency will be liable for wages that are unpaid by that agency. I think this levels the playing field. It encourages employers to use agencies who are scrupulous. It will ensure that those employees, the people who are vulnerable, the people who are missing their paycheque, will be fairly dealt with.

This, of course, builds on the legislation we introduced with regard to temporary help agencies in 2009 that made sure that employees were not unfairly prevented from being hired directly by agency clients and prohibited agencies from charging fees to workers for such things as resumé writing and interview preparation. It also requires agencies to provide employees with information about their rights under the Employment Standards Act.

Again, in yesterday's debate—I mentioned the member from Essex a couple of times, but he did say a couple of things that struck a chord with me in regards to extending health and safety initiatives of the Ministry of Labour to cover unpaid learners.

We know that workplaces can be dangerous places and that it's a perfectly reasonable thing to extend to those people who are in those workplaces the same protections that a paid employee has. Many of these students are young people. They're learning a job; it's an opportunity. It's very important that they understand their rights and their responsibilities to other workers in the workplace. It will also give, in the event of an unfortunate incident—and we heard of a few of those. We all know of a few of those in our communities where an unpaid learner is injured at work. This will give an opportunity for the ministry to be able to investigate. They can't do that right now. Again, I think that is just the right thing to do, it makes sense, and I'm glad that it's in the bill.

There was another issue that came up yesterday that was a matter of some debate, and that was in terms of the employment standards self-audits. Mr. Speaker, in order to proactively protect the rights of workers, the legislation will give the Ministry of Labour the authority to require employers to conduct self-audits to determine compliance with the Employment Standards Act. The intent of this proposal is to provide a tool to promote compliance with the ESA and expand the program's reach in a very significant way, in a way that is efficient and cost-effective. It's an important complement to inspections.

I want to just expand on that a little bit and say that the ability to comply, self-audits, will go a long way to create awareness. It would also go a long way to institute a sense that there is going to be enforcement. In many organizations we do health and safety audits. Those are things that are required in the workplace. They create an awareness around doing that, and I believe it is something that works hand in hand with enforcement. That alone will not force an employer who isn't complying to comply, but it is an important tool. I think it's important that it's in the bill. It's one piece of that puzzle.

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Again, to go back to one of the last changes in the Labour Relations Act, which is to strengthen the Labour Relations Act by proposing to reduce the collective agreement open period in the construction industry from three months to two, as a member put it very well yesterday, if you can't organize in those two months, maybe you shouldn't be organizing. I fully support this measure in the bill.

I look forward to the continuation of the debate this afternoon. I think this bill—again, I don't think it's too big a bite of the apple. To wrap up, I think the provisions around tying minimum wage to the consumer price index are fairly straightforward and simple. I think all of these measures that we've put in the bill we've debated before. One part of the bill has been through two other sessions before this. I think these are all timely things. It's important that we protect those workers who are most vulnerable in our communities and in our province.

I fully support this bill. I look forward to the continuation of the debate this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I am pleased to rise to comment on the 20-minute speech that was just given by the member opposite. I think there are a couple of things that we have to be careful of in this piece of legislation, and one has to do with the minimum wage. Certainly it's difficult to live on the minimum wage as it is right now, but it's still going to be difficult to live on the minimum wage as it is being proposed to increase.

We have to be careful with the fruit and vegetable industry in Ontario. They are importing food into this country that is directly competitive with the products that are grown in Ontario. They have rules and regulations that are different than ours. They can use pesticides that

we can't, in other countries; their labour force works for a lot less money than, certainly, what our labour force works for in Ontario. So we have to be very careful on the minimum wage in the agriculture industry, that we don't make them just remove their competitiveness in that sector.

The other issue that I will address, as I'm speaking on this bill in a number of minutes, will be the WSIB provisions in this bill. As my wife still operates her small business at home, I have some reservations about how the new WSIB rules are going to be applied concerning the agencies—

Interruption.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I see, Speaker, that we have an interruption in the House here right now, so I'm going to sit down and let you find that. We'll take it away. Thank you, Speaker.

Interjection: Saved by the bell.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you, member. Saved by the bell—saved by the bell for sure.

Further questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is indeed an honour to stand and comment on my friend from Ottawa Centre and his comments on this bill. He concentrated much of what he had to say on the minimum wage. I don't necessarily disagree with everything he had to say, but I would say, when you talk about the minimum wage, when you talk about reducing poverty, the minimum wage is but a small—very important, but a small—piece of the puzzle when it comes to reducing poverty. I think what we need are more better-paying jobs. We need an affordable housing strategy. We need more money to increase access to public transit. We need to have safe and affordable daycare, so parents then can afford to go out and look for work and make money and bring it home without paying every cent of that back into child care. I'm very delighted to hear the federal NDP policy that they're proposing, once they form the next government in Ottawa, of \$15-a-day daycare. That should be supported in this House, because we all know the importance of good, safe and affordable child care.

When these people come home after earning more money—a good wage, a higher minimum wage—they can then go out and buy fresh, nutritional, Ontario-grown fruits and vegetables, and put a nutritious meal on the table for their family and for their loved ones. That's one of the benefits of having more money coming into the family, more money coming into the household income.

I think that what we have to do when we talk about the people who earn minimum wage and need more money—these aren't people who go out and buy RRSPs. These aren't people who have been doing financial planning for 20 years down the road. These are the people who will recirculate that money and put it right back into the economy—right back into the system, if you will, Speaker. That money will be used and reused, and all of us in Ontario will benefit.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I think, very clearly, that on June 12 this government was given a mandate to take a balanced approach to government. In that case, I believe that this bill does that. We have taken into account the people who need more money, and we've also taken into account that we cannot hurt businesses by doing so.

This will increase income for the most vulnerable, such as single parents, who have a hard time making ends meet when they're on minimum wage incomes, and also immigrants who have come to our country to work for us, to do special jobs. Also, in my riding there are seniors who have had to supplement their income by taking minimum wage jobs in order to supplement their retirement income.

This is a fair way to do it. There is a system put in place so that it will go along with the CPI, and there will be six months' notice for businesses. So the people earning the money will have some idea as to how much money they will be making and can plan around that. It is a fair and balanced approach to making people's lives—at least some better quality to their lives.

I urge everyone to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further comments and questions? The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Thank you, Speaker, for allowing me to comment on the speech from the member from Ottawa South. I find it really interesting that this government, for the last six months or so, seems to focus continually on minimum wage jobs. I think we need a government in this province who will actually step forward and focus on well-paying middle-income jobs and creating the environment so that jobs will return to our province, so that people can actually afford a house, raise their children, have them go away to university and start their own lives.

This is a government who, in their time over the last 15 years, has destroyed 6,000 manufacturing jobs out of my riding through their policies of high energy rates, high taxation and just blowing the deficit every year—6,000 high-paying jobs, 6,000 jobs where people were making \$60,000, \$70,000, \$80,000 or \$90,000 a year.

Now these people are left with nothing. What they're left with is the promise of this government to create more minimum wage jobs, jobs where they aren't able to raise a family, aren't able to pay for their kids to go to school and aren't able to enjoy life as people would like to do in this province. For this government to continually focus on minimum wage jobs—let's wake up over there and actually have some economic policy to create high-paying jobs for the people of this province.

Of note, though, with minimum wage jobs: I have talked to a local farm producer in our area who grows quite a bit of fruit. With the last minimum wage increase going forward, he has totally ended a whole crop. I think it was melons that he was growing. He can no longer actually afford to grow them and have them harvested under the increase in the minimum wage, and this is only going to compound further going down.

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Now, I'm not against raising the minimum wage up, but the rate at which it was raised sent shockwaves through the farming community. If there are ways to have better fruits and vegetables on the table at the end of the day, raising the minimum wage and causing farmers not to produce—I'm almost done, Speaker—the proper fruits and vegetables—in essence, we'll be bringing them in from Mexico and such at a higher price. They need to step forward and figure out what is going on.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: On a point of order: The member from Elgin–Middlesex–London put such emphasis on the word “south,” it reminded me that I made a reference to my friend the member from Ottawa Centre. I just wanted to correct my record. I should have said Ottawa South when I was making comments earlier. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you. You are permitted to correct the record.

Now we'll go back to the member from Ottawa South for his two-minute response.

Mr. John Fraser: I'm a bit of a different size from the member from Ottawa Centre, so I should be somewhat recognizable.

I'd like to thank the members from Perth–Wellington, Windsor–Tecumseh, Barrie, and Elgin–Middlesex–London for their comments. It was unfortunate that that buzzer went off and we couldn't get the rest of the remarks with regard to the WSIB that the member from Perth–Wellington was going to make. I look forward to hearing those going forward in the debate.

To the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, thank you very much for correcting your record. I don't take any offence to that. I agree with you. We have to do whatever we can to get better-paying jobs. This discussion and debate over minimum wage is not where it's set; it's just how we continue to set that. We've debated and talked about it a lot. I think it's fairly straightforward that we all want better-paying jobs. You spoke in regards to child care and pensions, and I do want to point out that in terms of putting forward full-day learning, which is across Ontario, that is helping families with those costs of child care, especially those families of lower income. Again, the Ontario pension plan is designed to help those who don't have a workplace pension, often minimum wage workers.

I'd like to thank the member from Barrie for her remarks as well.

And to the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London, I appreciate his comments very much as well, too—the need for high-paying jobs and how we should be focused on that. I did find it very interesting that he speaks from the side of the House that wanted to get rid of 100,000 good-paying jobs. That's the record. I just wanted to point that out.

I appreciate it very much. Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much. I'd like to thank all of those who participated in this debate.

I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mrs. Martins assumes ballot item number 7 and Mr. Milczyn assumes ballot item number 44.

Further debate? I recognize the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's great to be recognized, Speaker. Thank you very much.

I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 18 today, although I want to preface it by saying that the Premier—there was a story in the *Globe and Mail* about her having this ambitious agenda for the fall. One of the things she was doing was wrapping a lot of bills that were in the previous Parliament. They're being reintroduced into this Parliament, but they're being rolled into other bills, so two-for-the-price-of-one or three-for-the-price-of-one kind of thing. It's kind of a special going on here, except that the opposition doesn't get to vote on each portion of the bill; they only get to vote once. She's creating a number of omnibus bills. That's a big word—not a big word but it has a big meaning. I don't want to be quite so exact about that because they're not stacked three feet high or anything, but they are rolling other items into bills that didn't exist before, such as Bill 15, which now has the towing regulation changes in it that were in a bill that was, I think, Bill 178 in the last Parliament. In this bill, of course, they've brought the minimum wage issue into some labour standards changes as well.

The challenge for opposition always is—it's like the budget. You listen to the guys on the other side—and I don't mean specifically "guys"; I mean the folks. You listen to the folks on the other side, and of course we voted against the budget. I'm proud to have done so, proud to have done so, and my people in my riding must have agreed with me, because just as the member for Barrie says that she believes the government must have this mandate to do whatever they want because they got elected, well, I no more believe that than I believe that the people in my riding gave me a mandate to stand against everything you do.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: But you do.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I do not. There are those occasions where I actually support what you're doing.

Mr. Mike Colle: What are those? Give me one example.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'll come up with an example. I just might have to dip into the history books here a little bit.

However, the point I'm making is, just as I voted against the budget, there were specific items in that budget that I might have liked to have voted for. However, I only get one vote. On any bill, there may be some components of a bill that I would like to vote in favour of, but if the bill in its entirety is not one I support, then I have to vote against the bill. It's a little game that gets played by the government. They try to inject the poison pill into this, or take it out of that, kind of thing, Speaker,

and hope that they'll box the members of the opposition into feeling they're forced to go one way or the other, depending upon the need of the government at the time.

I think that while there's an awful lot of stuff in this bill that we support—and I think our labour critic, the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, yesterday articulated it very well that there are many, many things in this bill that we support. It's not that we are diametrically opposed to any part of the bill, but we do think it requires some explaining—a little splainin' to do.

I want to touch on that, because it would have been great if the government would have had a separate piece of legislation, as has been the practice in the past. When they've introduced minimum wage legislation in the past, it has been done as a separate piece of legislation. It would have been good if they had done that. It would have given us an opportunity to debate specifically on that issue.

So let's talk about the minimum wage issue. Some of our members have spoken about how perhaps it would have been nice to have a separate agricultural sector wage scale, if you want to call it that, because we're trying to be competitive with an awful lot of jurisdictions. Agriculture is the kind of business that you work some long, long hours in stretches, because you've got to make hay when the sun shines, as the old story goes. It requires, sometimes, a different look. You have to look at it from a different perspective than you might some other jobs that are specific that you're going to do this job, work this many hours that day, and continuously repeat that over the period of time that you have that job.

The other thing is the retail sector. It's very competitive. The member from Ottawa South would know that there's a new retail Tanger mall opening up in Kanata. That's going to change the retail landscape in Ottawa and, in fact, in much of eastern Ontario, because these things have an impact. So we have to be cognizant at all times about what the environment around the business sector is with respect to what we do in reference to enforcing a wage scale on them.

I know when this debate was going on earlier, and I'll give the government credit—are you listening, the member from Barrie? I'll give the government credit that they didn't listen to all of the protestations from the third party, which wanted to see an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$14 an hour and incremental increases thereafter.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That would have been, quite frankly, damaging.

Miss Monique Taylor: We didn't say that.

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Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, they can explain in their hits what they actually did say. If you want to question me, feel free. You'll have two minutes later on.

Anyway, they definitely wanted to see a more accelerated increase in the minimum wage. That would have been very, very challenging for retail businesses. I know

the ones in my riding would have been significantly hurt by it.

It's not just the fact that it increases the minimum wage, but what it does is, it puts pressure on every other wage within that organization. Because when the people who are making above the minimum wage are made aware that the minimum wage has gone up, they immediately want their wages to be adjusted commensurately. They want to have the same treatment. So what it does is inflationary.

Some of the statistics that my colleague from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington brought forward yesterday were very, very interesting. I'll say one thing: When it comes to the numbers, he does his homework. We saw that the 15-to-19 age group makes up 42% of the people that make minimum wage. That's the way it was designed, so that entry-level positions would start at the bottom of the ladder. You can't make the guy the CEO of the company day one on the job—unless you came as a CEO from some other company. You've got to start somewhere. But what we found was, they only make up 4.9% of the workforce but over 42% of the minimum wage jobs. He also found that the average wage in that age group—even though the legislated minimum wage was lower in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Newfoundland, the average wage actually paid to the people in that group was much higher.

What that tells you, Speaker, is that Ontario is lagging behind in the creation of good-paying jobs. The challenge to the government is not simply—you can't just legislate. You can pay a minimum wage of \$30 an hour, if you want, but that will just destroy your economy. Everybody could make a million dollars a year. The only thing you could ever do is spend the money at home, though, because you couldn't spend it anywhere else. You couldn't trade with anybody. We live in a global market today. The world is smaller than ever and you've got to be aware of what is going on all around you. When you make these changes within your own borders, you have to be aware of how that affects your ability to work outside your borders.

What the government has failed to do is to create those jobs that actually pay more. In fact, Ontario has the highest percentage of workers working for the minimum wage. So they're not doing their job. What they need to be doing is helping create the circumstances, helping create the environment that encourages employers to create those higher-paying jobs. Our economy is driven much by government policy. And they're failing in that regard. If they were creating those jobs, it wouldn't matter what the minimum wage was. If the unemployment rate was not higher than the national average for, what, 96 months consecutively here in the province of Ontario, we'd have a competitive environment for jobs and for workers here that would naturally drive up the wages for everyone. Because if there are 10 people looking for 10 jobs, it's a perfect balance; but if there are five people only looking for 10 jobs, you're going to have to pay more to get somebody take those jobs.

You're going to have to pay more because you don't have enough people looking for them.

We'd never likely be in that place in Ontario. But if we were in a position where there was more competition for the jobs, more competition for the people looking for the jobs, that would naturally drive up the amount of money we would have to pay for them. The free agent in the NHL, the guy that scores the 50 goals? He pretty well writes his own ticket, because it's really hard to find a lot of 50-goal scorers out there.

In the minimum wage market in Ontario, we find people that we can put in those jobs every day because there are so many people out of work in this province. The government should be looking at themselves and asking themselves, "Are we actually doing what we need to do to create the environment or help create"—governments don't create jobs; I'm not suggesting that. But you have to set the foundation. You have to incubate the conditions, so that everybody out there who believes that this is the place to establish a business, to become, maybe not wealthy, but at least comfortable—if this is the place, then it's your job as government to try to help that along and maybe start the process a little bit.

Stop worrying about some of the things you people worry about all the time—the rinky-dinky stuff, the stuff that you like to make headlines in the papers with—and start thinking about the jobs, not just for the people today, but for the generation following us. These young pages sitting in front of the Speaker here: What kind of economy are we going to have in Ontario when they hit that market? What kind of opportunities are they going to have for long, fulfilling careers here in the province of Ontario, ones where they can be satisfied—when the day comes when they're going to pack it in, announce their retirement or whatever—that they'll have been able to work in an environment that allows them to have provided for a comfortable retirement in the next days of their lives?

I want to talk a little about—oh my goodness, that clock. Is that clock running fast? Can somebody check that clock? I think it might be running fast, Speaker. I want to talk about another little section of the bill, and that is with regard to—I just have to pull that bill out here for a second, and get my glasses on. I do wear them for reading, you know.

Oh, yes: the two-month open periods to establish a union in a shop, two months to organize. It's not a bad idea; the member from Ottawa South rightfully indicated that, if you can't organize in two months, maybe it's not there for you. But it goes back to some of the other changes you made back in 2003 or 2004—card-based certification. The way you did it, all you have to do is have a majority of the employees in the shop sign a card, and that shop is now a union shop.

I'll tell you a little thing about what happened in Arnprior. On the 30th of December last year, 2013, Lorne's Electric in Arnprior was visited by a fellow from the IBEW, the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. We heard about the boss that lives in

Shawville, Quebec; he was donating money to Liberal candidates in the election, and somebody caught him. That's a no-no, Mr. Speaker, but I wonder why he was donating money to Liberal candidates—perhaps because Liberal candidates were ensuring that his agenda would be furthered. Anyway, it was illegal for him to do that, and he was caught.

Anyway, on the 30th of December, on a day that the shop was actually officially closed, there happened to be three employees there. Coincidental? I don't know, but down comes the organizer from the IBEW. He raps on the door, and two of those people signed a card. Eric Glahs's business, Lorne's Electric, was now unionized, a business that had been in existence in Arnprior for 70 years.

On September 25, Eric Glahs closed the doors on Lorne's Electric. Yes, they were going to work with him, all right. In that period of time, his expenses went up by over \$450,000. He closed the doors. He's 54 years old, and now he doesn't know what the next step of his life is going to be.

You have to ask yourself—on December 30, two days away from New Year's, he is visited by, in my opinion, a predator from the IBEW, who unionizes his shop, getting two people. Between 35 and 40 people work there, but because two people signed a card, he now became unionized. He'd never had any trouble with his employees, but now the shop is closed.

1650

The same thing happened a couple of months later to another business, in Killaloe, and I haven't spoken to that gentleman about whether or not I can speak about his business, so I'm not going to give you any names. But I did speak to Mr. Glahs. In fact, I have an email from him. I could read it out, but in the interests of time, I'm not sure that I will.

But it gives you some indication of what can happen when a government throws itself in with an organization without considering what the consequences may be. The card-based certification, which we voted against—I'm proud to say that I voted against it when that legislation came up here in I guess it would have been 2004 because I only got here in the fall of 2003. I don't think it would have been voted on before we left for the Christmas recess. But that's what can happen. You know the old saying, "Be careful what you wish for"? That was a pretty sad end to a very, very successful business in my riding, in the town of Arnprior.

I'd have to ask the folks on the other side, was that really the intention of bringing in that card-based certification? I know it put the unions on board for you guys in the 2003 election, because you made that promise, but were you really wanting to put people out of business? Is that what you hoped for? Was that what you expected?

That's going to happen a whole lot more. I mean, the IBEW has become extremely aggressive in wanting to ensure that every shop out there is unionized. Well, the one thing it will do if it happens—we want to talk about inflation? I can guarantee you this: That poor pensioner

living on an old age widow's pension in small-town Ontario is not an electrician, and she ain't going to be able to do it by herself. When she has to hire that electrician and all the shops are controlled by the IBEW, she's going to pay a lot more than she used to.

What about that poor lady who lives by herself and barely gets by, wasn't a member of the workforce herself, widowed, trying to pay her hydro bill? I guess we could talk about that too, couldn't we?

Mr. Arthur Potts: I don't know what it has to do with this bill.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You know, a bill is a bill. I say that to Mr. Potts—oh, I'm sorry, the member for Beaches—East York. I could be the Speaker someday, eh? That's something for me to look forward to. What's the minimum wage for the Speaker? I'll be looking for an increase.

Anyway, there is nothing that is just all by itself in this world; everything is connected. So when the Liberals think that they can do something—"Look at that. We've solved the problem, and we've got those folks on our side now. Oh, we're so happy, because in the next election they're all going to be voting for us"—well, you've got to think about some of those problems that you create with those decisions. That's what you need to think of before you pass this bill or any other bill. You're in a majority, you're going to get your way, but think about it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Questions and comments?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: The comment of my friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke—he's a colourful character, and he brings great entertainment value to the House at times. He does represent friends and family members of mine up in the Pembroke area. I'm not sure they all voted for him. However, he is their elected representative, and sometimes he does stretch the truth. He was wrong—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask the—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: If you want me to withdraw, I'll withdraw, although you should have—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I would ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I withdraw, Speaker.

The member said that the NDP policy was a \$14 minimum wage. He's absolutely wrong. Nothing could be further from the truth. Our policy three years ago was \$11. This time we said we'd make it \$12 and index it—nothing about \$14 in the NDP policy book.

This is supposed to be the kinder, gentler party that we're facing. Instead, we're going back, at times, to driving wedge issues and making accusations that just aren't true. Now we're talking about anti-union propaganda. I almost got the feeling you were going back on your former leader's withdrawal of the right-to-work state in Ontario. Remember, there was so much pressure back then that he dropped it off the table—"Oh, I won't

talk about that”—and then he propped up the 100,000 jobs: “I’m going to take those away.” But you’re not talking about that. You’re blaming the IBEW, a good union, a strong union that represents good, high-paying jobs and people that work hard for a living, and you’re knocking them, and yet you should be talking over there about how to improve working conditions in Ontario.

Please, Speaker, at some point ask the gentleman from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to correct his statement, his wild and crazy accusation, that the NDP policy called for a \$14 minimum wage, because we did not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I’d like to speak to the proposed Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act, presented and spoken to by my colleague MPP Kevin Flynn.

We cannot build a strong economy and fair society in Ontario without standing up for our workers. I’m pleased to say that our government is committed to standing up for Ontario’s workers with this legislation. It strengthens workplace protections for workers and increases fairness for businesses that play by the rules.

This proposed legislation covers a lot of ground, but at its heart, it is about taking important steps to ensure that every Ontarian gets the paycheque they earned at the end of the day. It also protects our most vulnerable workers from dangerous workplace situations, and it increases competitiveness for businesses who play by the rules.

Now, removing the \$10,000 cap on unpaid wages is an important step. This gives workers the support they need. And the move to now be able to claim up to two years ensures workers get the support when they need it. Protecting our foreign workers through things like translations and access to other supports encourages fairness, justice and compassion. Finally, extending occupational health and safety to co-op students is the right thing to do for our young people.

I’d like to say that when it comes to poverty reduction, this is a key piece in this legislation. In reference to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, I’d like to say that increasing the minimum wage is a first and important step towards reducing poverty. How much a person makes sets the bar in terms of support and income for the family.

This legislation is definitely about building a stronger Ontario and economy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I’d like to congratulate the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for updating us on the status of businesses in his riding that, due to unforeseen circumstances from this Liberal government and the policies they bring forward—and the destruction of small businesses throughout Ontario. I’d like to take forward the one statement he made, “incubate conditions.” I think that was a great statement: Incubate conditions in order to create the environment for our businesses to grow and invest in Ontario.

But if you look at what this government has done over the last few years, I don’t think they’re fully incubating any conditions to bring forth small business or high-paying jobs into this province. You look at the College of Trades that they brought forward, which is killing the many trade jobs throughout the province. Most of our young kids are heading out west because they can’t get the apprenticeship ratios. Hydro expenses are huge. Hydro expenses have gone through the roof—

Hon. Brad Duguid: Name one that’s been lost because of the College of Trades. Not one job has been lost—not one.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Order, please.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I know the Minister of Economic Development is a little half-cocked today, but we’ll listen to him go off again, as a chicken with its head cut off—but we look at the hydro rates that have shot through the roof throughout this province. Small businesses can’t get ahead with the high hydro rates. And look at the pension plan that this government wants to bring forward. It’s going to devastate small business to add another tax to their payroll line. It’s not going to help create jobs at all.

1700

As we go forward, this government isn’t incubating the proper conditions for job growth, and they’re bringing forth bills as they have put forward today. More small businesses, like the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said, are going to lose their jobs. Small businesses are going to be totally wiped out throughout rural Ontario.

I hope this government shakes their head. They have four years to fix this problem. Maybe they can step forward today and start creating the legislation necessary to bring forth change in our province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further comments and questions?

Mr. Wayne Gates: I’d like to add to my colleague’s comments around the NDP. Not only did we talk about the \$11 wage a few years ago, in 2011, but we also talked about taking into consideration the small business tax. We were going to reduce that as well, so that was also part of the platform.

I also want to talk about IBEW. The IBEW workers in my riding just built a brand new arena—did all the electrical work there. It was built on time. It was built on budget, with not one safety violation, and nobody got hurt. These are very talented workers who provide a great service. Are they compensated? Absolutely, but they do an incredible job.

We just had the opening there last week: 6,000 people there watching the Niagara IceDogs play. Everybody is proud of what happened there. Not only that; they put some of their sponsorship back into the hockey team, back into the community. That’s what the workers did.

I want to talk about the entry-level positions that he talked about—minimum wage. We can recall, for eight years under the Conservatives, that it was at \$6.75. They never touched the minimum wage for eight years.

I want to tell you: We live in one of the richest countries in the world, we live in one of the richest provinces in the world, and government plays a role in policy and how it works. What happened with our manufacturing sector, which I represented for a number of years, as our Canadian dollar went up because of the petrodollar, and as our manufacturers got hurt because of it? Our plants, right across the country, started to close, in particular in the province of Ontario. It was because of our high dollar. They went elsewhere.

When you take a look at what the high dollar did—it also hurt our tourism. I'm from Niagara. Niagara-on-the-Lake, Fort Erie, Niagara Falls: We depend on tourism, and what happened is that, as the dollar went up, the tourists didn't come.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now back to the member for two minutes for his final response.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'd like to thank the members from Windsor–Tecumseh, Halton, Elgin–Middlesex–London and Niagara Falls for their comments. I'm fairly certain that, based on the comments today, I have scuttled any chance of being the next leader of the NDP here in Ontario. However, I'm still hoping that some of the relatives of the member from Windsor–Tecumseh might vote for me in the next election.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Not unless you correct your record.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, I'm jeopardizing that as well.

Apparently I may be wrong. Maybe it wasn't the policy of the NDP, but it certainly was the policy of one of their front-benchers here to have an immediate increase to \$14 an hour in the minimum wage. But anyway, we're just splitting hairs there. The point is about how we actually create a stronger economy.

To the member from Niagara Falls: This is not about the individual members of the IBEW. This is about the right to go in and unionize a company when there are only 10% of the workforce even there—less than 10% of the workforce in attendance. You just wouldn't allow that, Mr. Speaker. Every member should have the opportunity to vote.

I want to point that out: When that vote was taking place, three people made the decision for the company. There's no scheduled election, like we have here in Ontario. There's no opportunity, even, for the other workers in that company. They never, ever have an opportunity to vote themselves. That vote happened on December 30, and that was the end of it for Mr. Glahs at Lorne's Electric.

So let's just keep things in perspective here. That kind of law is wrong. Every member of that organization should have the right to vote, just as every citizen in the province of Ontario has the right to vote in a general election. Whether they exercise that right or not is their prerogative.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further debate? I recognize the member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank you for giving me the time to speak to Bill 18.

Coming from Niagara, any bill that touches on the local industries and the small businesses is of great importance to my riding. This is the same of any bill that affects the lives of working people here in the province of Ontario.

With that in mind, I'd like to point out that this piece of legislation does do some things that I think are good. They're good for business and they're good for workers alike. I think there are measures here that we as New Democrats see as a step in the right direction.

But the bill also needs to go further. Let's start with the minimum wage. We've spent a lot of time on that this afternoon. I've spoken about this before. Bill 18 regulates that every year the minimum wage is set to the rate of inflation and reviewed every five years. This is a step in the right direction and sets out to help working people in the province of Ontario.

However, I'd like to see more action taken sooner. As many of you know, the number of people over the age of 35 who are working for minimum wage has increased around 10% in the last decade. That doesn't even begin to touch the young people here in Ontario who are working for minimum wage.

Those are the kinds of people who would benefit in the future from legislation that brings minimum wage in this province to a standard of living. Regulating it based on inflation is a good thing to combat increased costs of living, and so is reviewing the wage. But more needs to be done, and it needs to be done sooner.

Coming from Niagara Falls, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Fort Erie, where industry is heavily based on the tourist season, we also need a strong, practical plan to implement increasing the minimum wage. We need to make sure small business has the time to assess the wage increases and have their input heard. My riding is full of businesses that would support paying a higher minimum wage, as long as governments make sure that the proper steps are taken to account for it.

Mr. Speaker, in my riding I heard stories every day from my constituency office, stories from people they call the "working poor"; that is, people who work full-time jobs and still live in poverty. There are people who just want to work hard and live a good life. These are the same people who need the province to take a deeper look at the minimum wage, and quickly.

The members opposite have concluded that an \$11-an-hour wage is good for now. I believe there are reasonable steps, and a plan, that can bring the wage to \$12 soon without negatively affecting our local businesses. For the people of Ontario working at minimum wage, that is a big difference.

A recent report—I think this is important for my colleagues on both sides here to listen to—by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives found that raising the minimum wage does not result in higher rates of unemployment. The economist behind that study encouraged the government to raise the minimum wage. If more

people have more purchasing power, it actually means more jobs, not less. I think that's an important fact. Like I said, this legislation is a step in the right direction, but not quite far enough.

There are also issues around temporary foreign workers in the province of Ontario. The number of these types of workers is growing, from 91,000 in 2008 to 130,000 today. Many of these workers are subject to long hours and denied many standards that workers from Ontario get. The government needs to make sure that these workers are given the respect they deserve. These are people, too, people who have the right to a safe and fair workplace.

Making sure we end massive recruitment fees is a good thing. All too often, workers are forced to rely on loans that are too large to manage, just so they can have the right to come here to work. More has to be done for these workers.

Mr. Speaker, we need to make sure that employers who hire foreign nationals are trustworthy and follow the rules. The government can make sure that the hiring of these workers is regulated and properly done. This will put an end to the unfair fees being imposed on migrant workers, who can't afford them, and make sure they are properly complaint-processed in case any worker in this province is treated unfairly. The committee reviewing this bill should consider putting it in language that allows foreign nationals working in Ontario to have access to proper channels of immigration and proper social benefits that come from being here in Ontario.

1710

This bill goes on to address some of the issues that exist around temp agencies—workers who are from right here in Ontario. In my riding of Niagara Falls, people are forced to turn to temporary agencies because they have no other choice. Instead of finding safe, decent and good-paying jobs, they're forced to take on jobs with companies that only offer temporary work. This is a major problem here.

We have companies that have a shortage of skilled workers, skilled labour. I spoke with the building trades and the skilled trades recently and they're all saying the same thing. Airbus Helicopters, which just celebrated their anniversary in Fort Erie, is a great example. They're a major helicopter manufacturer based in Fort Erie. They provide jobs for the town and the people who live there and they give back to their community.

They've even said they've had issues finding workers and people with the right skills to match that plant. If we've got young people out of work in the province, we shouldn't be shuffling them off to temporary work agencies or minimum wage jobs. The province should be supporting them to get an education and the skills they need and give them the support they require to find these highly skilled, good-paying jobs.

Young people need to be given the support and encouragement to go on to become apprentices. I'm a great example of that. As a young man, I was in shop classes. I was learning skilled trades that gave me the tools that I

needed to work in the auto industry. I lasted there for 40 years. Not once did I get hurt. I have all my limbs; I have everything. But it started from taking trades in high school. I used those tools to make a career, a very good one, one that pays good wages, that has got good benefits, that has got a pension plan, and it was all because of the education system we had in the 1970s. I'm showing my age here, but that's okay. It is what it is.

I want to see the young people of Ontario have these same chances and opportunities. We've got schools in the province that are closing. We can have the debate all day on whether we should be closing our schools in rural Ontario, in Niagara-on-the-Lake. We can have that debate. I can disagree with it. But I can tell you, we could utilize the school spaces to teach our young people trades. Instead of closing the school, utilize that infrastructure that we currently have today in the community and make it the hub of the community again and put trades in those schools and have them learn that, because that's where the jobs of future are. We can even help schools open by using them for that purpose. It benefits everyone. It benefits the community, it benefits the province, it benefits my kids, it benefits my grandkids. It's so easy to do; why are we not doing it? If we care about our kids, we should take a serious look at doing that.

We can't have our young people being given co-ops and internships where they aren't safe and they're not paid. We're seeing students in this province working incredible hours and not being compensated. What's even worse is the fact that they're being exposed to dangerous work without proper training.

Not too long ago, a 17-year-old co-op student died in Niagara. He was doing his co-op, gaining the skills he needed to get a career, when he was killed on the site. Parents in this province should never have to worry about their children not coming home from a co-op assignment. The province needs to act to make sure our young people, our young workers, our interns, our co-op students are given the support they need. They need to be properly compensated for the work they do, but more importantly, they need to make sure it's being done safely.

This bill touches on temporary workers. Right now in this province, 18% of our workforce is considered temporary work. In some places, it's lower. In places like Brantford, it's around 21% to 22%. That's one in five workers, one in five workers who can't say they have job security. Yes, it's true that there are major issues with temporary work legislation and we need to address it, but it's also true we have a jobs crisis.

The Niagara Falls riding is unfortunately such a case. In a place that was once the industrial heart of Ontario, manufacturing jobs are disappearing. They have left people from Niagara turning to temporary work agencies. There's a lot the government can do today—today—to fix this problem. They can cut hydro rates and insurance rates for Ontarians and make life more affordable. The province can invest in industry to make Niagara the engine in the growth of the province.

Mr. Speaker, industry isn't coming back to Niagara Falls for two reasons: the cost of the dollar that went up and hydro rates. If we bring hydro rates down, we can bring industry back to Niagara. What we're seeing today is that the dollar is coming down. I talked about the dollar for a long time while I was president of my local union. As the dollar went up to \$1, \$1.02, and one time it reached \$1.10, manufacturers were leaving our province. Today, it's down to 88 cents. I believe it should probably be somewhere between 84 and 86 cents, which will get manufacturers—if we put the right systems in place, manufacturers will come back and Niagara can grow again, and, more importantly, Ontario will grow again. If we act today, we can put people back into decent and secure jobs.

There are lots of things I've mentioned the province can do to help build Niagara as well.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): We have a point of order. I recognize the member from Beaches—East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's my understanding the member should be speaking to the bill in front of him and not, as much as we appreciate his updating us on the economic development of the region—we know it's important, but he should be speaking to the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank you. I'll just remind the member to continue to speak to the bill, please.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I believe I am, but I appreciate his comments.

There are lots of other things I've mentioned that the province can do to help Niagara as well. We can bring daily GO train service, we can build our hospitals using local workers, local supplies, local trades, get our young people back to work. I believe that's what this is talking about. How do we make sure there is a secure, prosperous Ontario?

When we don't properly deal with the jobs crisis, we run into offshoot problems, like temporary workers—I believe that's in the bill as well—and their safety. When they take on these jobs, they're not greeted with the safety standard that every worker in Ontario deserves. Now, we have some major issues regarding worker safety in this province; there's no doubt about it. We certainly have issues, major issues, when it comes to temporary workers.

The issue is simple. We need stronger laws in this province which mandate companies to provide proper education for workers, for our young people. The idea of having a good-paying job can sometimes attract them to dangerous work. We've seen time and time again that our young people in this province are incredibly dedicated. They're talented. They are dedicated. It's really unbelievable how hard they work. They just need an opportunity. Young people take on these jobs. They're excited and happy to be working, and after you give them the proper training to make sure they come home safely.

1720

They aren't told about proper safety standards or the right to refuse unsafe work. They aren't trained properly, and they're thrown right into the deep end. That's when accidents happen. These are avoidable, but these accidents leave our workers injured, sometimes without limbs, and sometimes they die.

As my colleagues mentioned yesterday, companies are asking the question—I think this is important—how much would the training cost? The real question they should ask is, how much will it cost when a worker is injured on the job? These employers need to realize that there are major costs when it comes to WSIB and benefits. If the employee gets injured on the job, it is far higher than properly training them in the first place.

Mr. Speaker, we saw this happen in Kitchener last month. In fact, my fellow member here yesterday from Kitchener—Waterloo is doing a great job to make sure this never happens again. I want to commend her for that. Eighteen workers fell to their deaths last year. That's 18 families from Ontario whose lives have been shattered because workers aren't trained properly and they aren't given proper education. The government has the power to end this by imposing stricter regulations right here in this bill.

There is more the government can do for these workers. If the government wanted to ensure there was secure and safe employment available in Ontario, why are you making it harder and harder to organize?

I'll go to my conclusion so I don't run out of time.

There's nothing in the previous two bills that talks about unionization. Never mind all the other benefits that come with having a stable and secure unionized job; we can drastically improve safety in the workplace if we invest in workers' rights.

Mr. Speaker, let me conclude by saying this: This bill is a combination of two previous bills, Bill 146 and Bill 165. I hope that when it comes to committee, the members will remember the criticisms that we have levelled at this particular bill and include them here. This bill is something the committee can improve on and truly use to make a difference in workers' lives right across the province of Ontario.

I care very deeply for every working person in this province. I want nothing more than to see every working family have access to decent, well-paying, safe work here in the province of Ontario. No one should go to work in the morning and never return home—no one.

There's a chance here for real fairness, a chance to make sure that workers are paid a fair wage for the work they have done, a chance to make sure workers have a fair knowledge of when their pay is coming. There's room here to make sure that workers have a fair chance to work in a safe workplace right here in the province of Ontario.

I don't want to see people work for minimum wage and continue to struggle to pay their bills. I don't want to see young people get roped into jobs without proper training. I don't want to see our working men and women

get lost in the system and get injured on the job. I want to see people have access to the standards they deserve. This bill begins to address these issues, but it could do more. I hope the members opposite will take this into consideration. I'm not opposed to anything that gives our workers more rights, especially those who have fallen through the system because of definitions.

I'm glad to see the loopholes closed and to see more options given to our injured workers.

Thank you very much, Speaker, for the time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I thank the member from Niagara Falls. We have comments and questions.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I want to thank the member from Niagara Falls for his comments. The times when he was speaking about this bill, he was actually quite eloquent in his support for many of the reforms and initiatives that are contained in this bill. I was particularly moved by his comment about young people who go out to get training, to get their first experience. This bill provides them more protection in the workplace: to ensure that there are safe conditions, to ensure that employers are liable for the safety of young people in the workplace. I'm very happy that the member from Niagara Falls recognizes this and supports this.

I do agree with the member from Niagara Falls that it is not the goal of this government to ensure that there are more minimum wage jobs, but it is the goal of this government to ensure that those people who do have minimum wage jobs have more money to take home to look after themselves and their families, that they have more rights in the workplace to ensure that they get paid the money they are owed and that that workplace will be safer.

I do look forward to other comments from the member from Niagara Falls and other members about how they can assist our government in making workplaces even safer. But it's clear from the member's comments that there is broad support for these initiatives to protect the earned wages of workers, to improve safety in the workplace for young people, to protect the most vulnerable workers in this province. This is something that all members of this Legislature, I believe, do support, and I trust they will support it with their votes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'm certainly interested in the speech from the member from Niagara Falls.

One of the comments I get from businesses in my riding—from quite a number of businesses—is, “I wish government would get out of our way and let us make money.” That's what they're asking for, “Get out of our way,” because every once in a while, some rule change or some regulation comes along and they have to deal with all these ministries. If you're not big enough at times—you know, you can't hire somebody to go through all the rules and regulations to see what you want. You start getting into a little bit of trouble because you have building officials to deal with, you have MTO, whatever, all these different things.

In fact, one chap on the outside of Stratford builds manure tanks. It's a very big business. He sells to China, he sells to Europe, wherever else, and his last comment to me when he got into a bit of a kerfuffle with one of the agencies of the government was, “Why would anybody do business in Ontario?” He said, “I would never start a business up in Ontario right now because of what's going on,” because of all the rules and regulations, red tape and whatever else.

If businesses don't have to spend so much money and so much time on this type of thing, that's more money to go to their workers. That's more money to go to the workers. Maybe we wouldn't be having this talk about the minimum wage, which does not solve our poverty problem in this province. It doesn't solve the poverty problem in our province. It's good-paying jobs that solve the poverty problem here.

I think governments have to listen to that. They have to listen to the businesses that are telling them, “Get out of our way. We know how to make money here. Leave us alone. We'll work safe and whatever else, but we're getting tired of the red tape and the fooling around we have to do to do business in Ontario.”

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to congratulate the member for Niagara Falls on his comments and his obvious passion for his community and his advocacy for workers in Niagara Falls and across the province.

I was really pleased to hear him talk about the report that was just released by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, about the relationship between minimum wage policies and employment in provinces across Canada. That report analyzed data over a 20-year period, from 1983 to 2012, so this is a very rich source of evidence for us as legislators to use as we are considering minimum wage policies. That analysis found no evidence whatsoever that there was any correlation between higher minimum wage levels and employment in either direction.

1730

Minimum wage is not going to bring down the Ontario economy, but it is an important tool. It is one important tool in the tool box of things that governments can do to address the needs of the lowest-wage workers in our economy.

We know that almost one in 10 Ontario workers is in a minimum wage job; 60% of those are women. Introducing policies that are going to help women, that are going to increase the earnings they can take home to support their families by indexing minimum wage to cost of living is an important initiative for government.

We also know that these policies will assist racialized workers, recent immigrants in particular, who are also highly overrepresented in minimum wage jobs.

Again, I support the government's initiative on minimum wage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments? The member from Ottawa—Orléans.

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Bonjour, monsieur le Président. Merci beaucoup. I would like to thank the members from Niagara Falls, London West, Perth–Wellington and my colleague for all the comments.

I do think that it's time to stop playing politics with the minimum wage. When you look at the people at the lower end of the pay scale, we've seen that they deserve the very best. What they need is basically to have the quality of life that they deserve. This is what this bill is all about: It's to help the people at the lower end of the pay scale get a minimum wage.

Also, if passed, let's not forget that we're going to be looking at Ontario's consumer price index, and we're going to help them, from a business perspective to the employee, make it more fair. I've heard "fair" so many times: "Make it fair to the people." This is what this bill is all about. It's to make it fair for the people of Ontario.

Also, when I think about the youth—we talked about youth. We're talking about how we're going to protect them. This is something so sensitive. I've been working with the youth for numerous years as a business person in Ottawa–Orléans. We're going to be looking at extending the definition of "worker" to include unpaid workers, such as the interns, so more youths will be protected by this bill.

One thing very, very close to my heart in part of this bill, and I don't think it's been mentioned today, is the fact that our Employment Standards Act will be available in more than 23 languages if we pass this bill. We know, as Franco-Ontarians—I'm very proud of being Franco-Ontarian—this is not easy.

I am most pleased to talk about this bill and to ask the members of the House to pass it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Now we'll go back to the member for his final two-minute response.

Mr. Wayne Gates: I do appreciate the comments by my colleagues, particularly talking about young people. I think if there's one thing we can all agree on, it's that we all want the best for our kids and our grandkids. How do we get there? The minimum wage, obviously, is a start, but I think I was very clear during the presentation that it certainly doesn't go far enough and it's not going there quickly enough to help our people.

To talk about the businesses and get out of their way—that's an interesting comment: "Why would they invest in Ontario?" I always find that to be one of the more interesting comments. It's been said a number of times when I've talked to people. Here's why they come to Ontario: We're highly trained; we're highly skilled; our productivity is high; we go and do a great job every day we go to work; we work hard; and we have health care costs that are covered. There are a lot of reasons why businesses would set up shop in the province of Ontario and in Canada.

I understand there may be some things they don't like, and we can always have those discussions, but make no mistake about it: People are investing in the province of Ontario and they're investing in Canada because of our workers. There's no doubt about that.

You talk about poverty. Is this going to fix the problem of poverty? Absolutely not. But you know what? When you talk about poverty, you have to talk about the end result of poverty and how much it costs our system. People who live in poverty have obesity problems. They have mental health problems. We have an obligation collectively here to find a way to try to alleviate poverty in the province of Ontario.

I want to close by saying this: Collectively, we have to work together to make sure that nobody is left behind. What I'm saying about the bill—we agree to a lot of the stuff in the bill. We just believe that when you get it into committee we can have more discussions and make it a better bill than it is today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I'd like to thank the speakers for their open debate. Now I'd ask for further debate.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm very pleased to rise this afternoon to support Bill 18, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour.

As you know, our government is committed to protecting workers in Ontario. That means strengthening the workplace and protecting workers, especially those we deem vulnerable, like foreign workers, as well as our young people in co-ops. But at the same time, we also want to make sure that we have fair business practices and that everyone plays by the same rules.

The proposed legislation, if passed, covers a lot of ground. I'm going to go through different parts of the bill. There are five statutes within the bill that the minister is proposing to amend, and I'm going to go through them so that the audience watching today can understand what we're trying to do.

First and foremost, the bill, under schedule 1, talks about the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act. In this particular schedule, the government of Ontario is proposing that foreign workers are protected by the same employment standards—meaning health and safety, and workplace safety insurance—as all other Ontario workers.

The Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act would extend protections for those who are currently live-in caregivers—many of them are foreign workers—to all temporary foreign workers under government work permits.

Also, all foreign workers would be protected from having their employer withhold or confiscate their passport. I have heard about that. In my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, we have a significant number of new Canadians, many of them foreign workers here. From time to time, employers will abuse their power and confiscate passports; it's a power and a control issue.

The other piece here: Foreign workers will be protected in terms of recruitment fees and other fees. I heard just recently about this particular concern, and I'm very pleased with this whole issue of protecting foreign workers and educating the community.

I have invited the minister, who will be coming to my riding very shortly to talk about foreign workers, because

this is what the concern here right now is: that many foreign workers do not know that they have rights, no different than any Ontarian who is currently working. We need to make sure that their rights are enforced and that they are being informed about their rights.

The other piece here is that the proposed legislation under schedule 1 of the act would also prohibit a recruiter or employer or person acting on their behalf, usually an agency, from intimidating or penalizing live-in care workers. Again, we hear about those stories, unfortunately, on the front page of newspaper. We need to do better, and I know everybody in this House knows that we have an obligation not just to everyday Ontarians who are currently living permanently in Ontario, but to those foreign workers who are here.

We also heard recently some of the concerns raised in reports that temporary foreign workers have been underpaid or overworked, denied their rights or not protected when they work over statutory holidays. They should be properly compensated.

So this is the right thing to do. When we talk about being compassionate as a government and an activist agenda, this is what I'm talking about. I know that every day we have foreign workers in our community.

The other piece about the temporary workers that we are concerned about is that we are building on our 2009 bill, which prohibits agencies from imposing barriers to prevent clients from hiring assigned employees directly, or charging a fee for things like writing a resumé or even taking a job. Again, in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt it has happened, such a thing as charging them to assist them because English is their second language. These are unacceptable practices.

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And then the other piece prohibiting clients of an agency from reprisal against any kind of sign that employees were asserting their employment standards rights, among other things—there will be retaliations when they speak out. That's unacceptable. Each one of us in Ontario should be free when speaking out, when you know that they're breaking the law. That foreign worker must be protected no differently than any other worker in Ontario, because that's a responsibility of all of us here in this Legislature.

The other piece is that the Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act would also establish joint and several liability between the temporary help agency and the clients for failure to pay the wages. To give you an example, recently in my riding I heard of a case, very tragic. A worker has been working extensive hours at minimum wage. His employer has not been properly paying him—because he knows that he is a foreign worker—to the tune of almost \$10,000. You and I both know, sitting here, “Hm, do they really exist?” I know they exist. I am concerned that employer may potentially declare bankruptcy or do all kinds of interesting deviant behaviours from paying for this particular foreign worker, who has done the work and has not been properly paid.

The other part of the proposed legislation is better protecting the temps, ensuring the temp agencies that operate above board, which are competing and encouraging employers, are following the letter of the law. So that's a very good, important thing, Mr. Speaker.

In schedule 2 of the proposed legislation, it is specifically dealing with the Employment Standards Act. First of all, this particular section of the act would remove the \$10,000 cap on the recovery of wages through the Ministry of Labour. Currently, this cap means that if you are owed more than \$10,000, you must go to recovery. That money goes through the legal system, which is very costly. We need to fix that, because we know the most vulnerable workers will not see that money if we don't fix this piece.

This particular schedule amendment would also allow the workers more time to recover their wages by moving the statutory time limit from six or 12 months to two years. Again, you know vulnerable workers sometimes do not know what their rights are. We know that they may not speak out. Before they file the claims, they leave their jobs, because they're so afraid of reprisal. By amending the legislation, we'll provide additional protection of these workers.

The other piece of the proposed legislative changes would also tie the increase of minimum wage to inflation. I don't know about you, but during this past election, I consistently heard that we have a duty and responsibility to make sure, when we raised the minimum wage recently, that this minimum wage increase will not come back five years from now, 10 years from now to get another raise. Every day, hard-working Ontarians who are working for minimum wage will have some kind of increase to reflect inflation. Just to give you an example, my colleague who just retired as an MP in Ottawa—his pension is going to increase depending on inflation. Why shouldn't hard-working Ontarians get the same benefit? When they work hard, they should be respected. We all agree with this premise. But the fact of the matter here is that it has taken a long time for us to even pass the increase on the minimum wage recently. We need to ensure that especially vulnerable people, especially the young people—the pages very soon will be working—will not be stuck at \$11 an hour in 2025. This House has a responsibility to especially vulnerable workers.

The other piece is that the proposed legislation under schedule 2 will require the employers to provide workers with free employment standards posters in 23 languages. I cannot stress enough how important this requirement is. Coming from my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, there are multiple languages—definitely Chinese, Tamil. There is Hindu and Urdu and a variety. But the key piece is, there is now a new requirement that the Ministry of Labour, if the legislation is passed—that the employer must complete, and post these posters so that the workers know their rights and have the proper information. Oftentimes, the workplace is seen as just a drop-in when the reality is that there is an exchange of employment-employee relationship.

The other pieces in schedule 2 of the proposed legislation talk about how the Ministry of Labour will require the employer to complete a self-audit of their compliance to help the Ministry of Labour reach more workplaces.

Again, each one of us, as an MPP, is an employer, and I believe that all of us would have done some self-audit. It's very important that we do self-compliance. I know, as a former registered nurse, I did what was called a "self-audit" of our professional development. It is very important that every employer across the board do the same.

The other piece here is that the proposed legislation also gives the Ministry of Labour—cracking down and increasing fines for those who are repeat offenders. We're not targeting the employers who sometimes make a mistake, but those habitual, repeat offenders—it cannot be seen that just paying the fine is doing the business of the day. Their fine must be significantly increased so that there will be consequences to their actions.

The other piece here, in schedule 3 of the legislation, deals specifically with the Labour Relations Act. I know the member from Niagara talked about the issue about the unions etc. Mr. Speaker, I'm going to quote the proposed legislation in schedule 3: "The new section 127.3 of the act applies to the construction industry and establishes two-month open periods during which a trade union may apply to the board for certification as bargaining agent of any employees in a bargaining unit."

At the end of the day, this part of the schedule also strengthens the Labour Relations Act by returning to the pre-Harris policy of a two-month open period in construction. This will also reduce unnecessary workplace strife, and, furthermore, our trade workers, we need to ensure—we know we respect them—that they focus on building the roads and building the Ontario that we all are very proud of.

I want to spend the remaining part of my time, Mr. Speaker, focusing on two very important parts of the proposed legislation that are very dear to me as a registered nurse. Schedule 4, dealing with occupational health and safety: This is the section that I believe the minister, when he presented this particular bill to the House—listening to the member from London West, Mr. Speaker. Do you remember that conversation about co-op students, about trainees and unpaid learners?

The proposed legislation defines very specifically about protection, making sure that there will be coverage under the Occupational Health and Safety Act to co-op students who are not receiving pay, so that they will have the same rights as all Ontario workers—making sure that the youngest citizens who are currently in training are being protected under the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Our rules are going to be strengthened, but no matter what your job title is, whether you're a co-op student, the president or CEO of the company, you are going to adhere to the legislation. If you perform work for somebody, you're entitled to the same employment standards, the same type of health and safety protections—even those who earn minimum wage.

There are also two narrow exemptions of this proposed legislation which apply to co-op students and other unpaid learners or trainees. For example, as a former nursing professor, I know that every day when I was teaching, I was bringing nursing students in long-term care, in nursing homes, in the hospital, in the community environment. These nursing students now will be protected under the proposed legislation. Every day across Ontario, from the community colleges to universities and career colleges, our young people are doing these kinds of on-the-job training. The proposed legislation will be protecting them, no differently than anybody who is currently working on a work site.

Especially right now, with the Ebola conversation we had this morning during question period, when I asked the Minister of Health about this particular issue, students—nursing students and medical students—on any kind of training may be exposed to potential viruses. I was involved during the SARS time in 2003, and I know that students everywhere who are training could be exposed to this kind of environment. This is a very important piece of proposed legislation. Even if you're paid, legally—unpaid, in the case of the co-op students or students who are in training—you will be protected under the same kind of rules as everyone else.

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The final section of the legislation is schedule 5, dealing with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. In the proposed legislation, it is very clearly defined—any time there is a challenge of legislation, it goes back to the definition. In the proposed legislation—I'm going to take a minute, Mr. Speaker, to talk about that—it actually explicitly spells out what is a temporary help agency:

"Temporary help agency" means an employer referred to in section 72 who primarily engages in the business of lending or hiring out the services of its workers to other employers on a temporary basis for a fee."

This is very important. If there is a challenge to the proposed act when the legislation has been passed by the House, they will challenge it because the legislation does not explicitly spell out and define the term "temporary help agency" or "temporary help agency worker." So in the proposed schedule 5 of the legislation, it spells it all out so that there will be no grey zone. It will be very black, very explicit, so that there will be no confusion whether you are a temporary help agency or not.

More importantly, the act, if passed, will provide protection to the most vulnerable. As I'm wrapping up my time, my 20 minutes of remarks, I cannot stress enough how important this proposed legislation is to protect every Ontarian, regardless of whether you are a permanent employee, a permanent Ontarian working here in Ontario, or one of those who are considered foreign workers—and, more importantly, our young people. I heard passionately from our colleague from London West when she presented her private member's bill last session; I know my colleagues opposite in the third party will know what I'm talking about. I agree with her proposed private member's bill.

I believe that the minister also heard you—and the member from London West will know what I'm talking about—because, at the end of the day, the proposed legislation is not just targeting those who are permanent Ontario workers, but that everybody who works in an environment, whether they are paid or unpaid, is being protected. This government has an agenda to ensure that every worker in Ontario is being protected. I believe that the minister, Minister Flynn, is very, very concerned about every worker in Ontario, because, at the end of the day, when one worker is injured or killed in the line of work, every Ontario family suffers.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for this opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Thank you very much.

Questions and comments?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I listened intently to the member from Scarborough and her address today. She referred many, many times to her career as a registered nurse, and I appreciate that because, boy, that's a profession that I have the greatest respect for, the work that they do for us, as well, making us healthy and our lives that much better, and the work they do in keeping patients, when they do need that, cared for in a very, very special way.

But today, of course, she's now the MPP, so she has morphed that career into a new career. I've always enjoyed working with her on committee and in other opportunities here in the House.

She went into some great details about the minutiae of the bill, and that's appreciated, because I think it's important that we know the details sometimes. And yet I still always fall back on the 64,000-foot level, because that's the one that the people understand, and that's the message that we have to get across.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: A hundred thousand jobs.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, right, Percy; thank you very much. The member from Windsor–Tecumseh is always so helpful. I've got to find out who those relatives of his are in my riding so I can get them on my campaign team the next time around. I'm sure they want to play integral roles in my re-election bid in 2018.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Great to see you in Killaloe.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, it would be great to see me anywhere, Jim.

But as I say, there are a lot of details in this bill, and that always presents us with that challenge, when you're looking at a piece of legislation: Do I support the bill? Do I support part A or B or C, or can I support it in its entirety? That's why I encourage the government to be a little more circumspect about this when they're putting these pieces of legislation together and not to wrap too much into a single bill, so that we have the opportunity to digest it on the merits of the bill alone.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I want to thank the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for her recognition of the work that I had been doing around work-integrated learning

with a private member's bill last session. I did want to point out, however, that the contents of that private member's bill are really in no way addressed with this legislation.

The member from Niagara Falls talked about the student in the Niagara region who tragically died just last month. Members of this House may recall that in April of this year another young man, Aaron Murray, a 21-year-old student at Loyalist College, was working on an unpaid practicum as a security guard and he also tragically died while doing this unpaid practicum.

My concern that is not reflected in Bill 18 is around the quality of the work opportunities provided to post-secondary students. This young man, Aaron Murray, was doing the work of a security guard. He was essentially displacing an employee who should have been paid. There was no real, substantive learning component in the placement he was doing in this unpaid practicum as a security guard. This was not a quality learning opportunity for this student. Yes, it's absolutely essential that there be health and safety protections for all young people, all persons doing work placements, whether they're paid or unpaid. But we need to do much more to ensure the quality of these work opportunities and to extend further protections under the Employment Standards Act to young people in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'm pleased to add my voice to colleagues from across the House today about the legislation, the Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act.

Might I say, in parentheses, that I'm happy to note that I actually lived in the ridings of two members opposite, the member for Windsor–Tecumseh's, where I grew up, in Windsor, Ontario, and of course, the honourable member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke's, having spent some time in Eganville, as the member opposite will know. I was blessed to live in Eganville in that part of the Ottawa Valley.

Interjection.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: The Opeongo trail—my husband was an OPP officer in Killaloe. The member opposite mentioned Killaloe.

Mr. Mike Colle: I've been to Douglas, even.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: And Douglas is a beautiful community, as my colleague notes.

As the member from Windsor–Tecumseh knows, I spent some time in the Chrysler plant. My dad was an auto worker in Windsor. So I grew up with an ethos and an ethic of finding quality job opportunities and protection of workers. My dad was unionized. He worked in the Chrysler plant, and I later followed him, as a young person.

I want to add my voice to my colleague's from Scarborough–Agincourt, who has, as members in this House will know, an incredible empathy and understanding of protecting the vulnerability of her fellow citizens, having been a nurse. I think our nurses, and I'm sure all mem-

bers of this House would agree, are among our most compassionate citizens. The care and compassion that they have for the most vulnerable is absolutely compelling. I think the efforts of this legislation and the focus that the member from Scarborough–Agincourt brought to the protection of our vulnerable workers, the protection of students, the protection of foreign workers is not only laudable but timely.

I'm absolutely delighted to add my reflections to my colleagues opposite and to my colleagues on this side of the House on this important piece of legislation, in the hopes that we can have ongoing positive conversations, and some addendum and perhaps some amendments at the committee that will strengthen the legislation. It's fine just as it is, but we welcome those comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Further questions and comments.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to pick up on a few things that my colleague from—I should have gotten this first—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Barry's Bay.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Barry's Bay, yes, exactly—Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke was talking about. One is the amount of different issues that are put into this bill. This is just the briefing paper that our caucus got on this bill. There's five pages.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: That's more than I got.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: So what it doesn't do is give us an opportunity to—because there's things in the bill that we certainly agree with. But because all these things are put into one bill, it's very difficult to debate and to vote against this bill because there's some things that we like about it, but there's some things that we think should be changed in this bill.

One has to do with the WSIB and the business of hiring somebody through a temporary agency—you work along with these people, and then all of a sudden, they find out that the temp agency isn't paying its employees or something, and you get nailed, maybe with their WSIB costs, which you weren't expecting. How is that other business supposed to charge a customer for that extra

cost which he or she thought was being paid by the temp agency? There's issues like that, I think, that have to be looked at.

Also, when we were going through this, my colleague from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex pointed out that a lot of these stakeholders had not been consulted on this bill. This comes as a complete surprise to many of them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): I will return to the member from Scarborough–Agincourt for her final two-minute response.

Ms. Soo Wong: I want to thank the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and my colleagues from London West, Burlington and Perth–Wellington. I want, first and foremost, to thank each of you, especially those who talked about my colleagues working every day as nurses to serve this great province called Ontario, keeping each one of us healthy and safe in our environment. I know my colleagues who are watching tonight will recognize that piece.

The other thing, Mr. Speaker, is I want to thank everybody. The suggestions from each of you are very appropriate as we debate this proposed Bill 18, but more importantly, moving forward, we cannot belabour the conversation because some time in the near future, we're going to have to go to committee so we can have more conversation.

I do appreciate some of the comments made by my colleagues opposite. At the end of the day, this is what democracy is about. This is what this whole conversation is about. But we need to have strong legislation to protect the most vulnerable.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Just as a personal point of interest: Because we had more than five minutes remaining in the original debate, we had to continue with the questions and comments until all were heard.

Seeing now that it is after the allotted time of 6 o'clock, this Legislature is adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1803.

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Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	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

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Grant Crack, Han Dong
Cindy Forster, Michael Harris
Randy Hillier, Sophie Kiwala
Monique Taylor
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Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

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Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Monte McNaughton
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Soo Wong
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Jeff Yurek
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Jim McDonnell, Randy Pettapiece
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Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qadri
Todd Smith
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Chris Ballard, Toby Barrett
Garfield Dunlop, Eleanor McMahon
Laurie Scott, Jagmeet Singh
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Vacant
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
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: Vacant
Robert Bailey, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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la politique sociale**

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Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Christine Elliott, France Gélinas
Marie-France Lalonde, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Kathryn McGarry
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

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