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Monday 27 October 2014

Lundi 27 octobre 2014

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 27 octobre 2014

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: In the members' gallery this morning, I have a former nursing colleague and very good friend, Diane Jolliffe, from Kincardine, and her daughter, Sarah Jolliffe, from grade 11, Kincardine District Secondary School, who has brought along her French foreign exchange student from Grenoble, France, and that is Marine Mannechez. Welcome to Ontario.

Mr. Jim Wilson: On behalf of all of us, I'd like to welcome Mr. Peter Shurman, member of provincial Parliament for the 39th and 40th Parliaments for the riding of Thornhill, and a great friend to all of us. Welcome, Peter.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to recognize one of today's page captains, from the riding of Kitchener-Waterloo, Ben Wahl, a student from Centennial Public School. I'd also like to welcome Ben's family, who are joining us today in the members' gallery: his parents, Bettina and Scott, and his grandparents, Doreen and John Wahl—who is celebrating his 80th birthday. Happy birthday. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Fraser: Please join me in welcoming the staff and volunteers of Prostate Cancer Canada, here in the gallery today, to Queen's Park. As my fellow members are aware, Prostate Cancer Canada is Canada's only national foundation dedicated to the elimination of prostate cancer through research, education, support and awareness.

I also welcome all members to join Prostate Cancer Canada in room 230 for their lunch reception right after question period.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce to you, sitting over there beside Peter Shurman, three girls from my riding: my executive assistant in Orillia and the lady who makes me function all the time, Mary Silk; her sister, Cathy Daley, who is from Dufferin-Peel; and a girl who would like to be my older sister, but we're not related at all, and that's Andrea Dunlop. Thank you very much and welcome.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have a visitor this week—

Interjection: This year?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes, I don't get them very often, so maybe it is this year. His name is Len Sedore.

He's with OPSEU, and he came down from Nickel Belt to talk about the privatization of IT services.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Today I have the privilege of introducing Dave and Sonya Robertson, the parents of page captain Callum, in the west gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'd like to welcome guests joining us today at Queen's Park: OPSEU president Mr. Smokey Thomas; AMAPCEO president Mr. Gary Gannage; OPSEU central bargaining team chair Ms. Roxanne Barnes; OPSEU central bargaining team vice-chair Mr. Ron Langer; and 16 IT professionals here with them today from Ontario government offices in Sudbury, Ottawa, Guelph and Toronto. They too are having a reception at lunch today focused on privatization and the negative effects of it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As is the tradition, I shall maintain it: With us today in the west members' gallery is Mr. Peter Shurman from Thornhill, from the 39th and 40th Parliaments of Ontario.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Heckling the introduction of guests, that's an interesting one. That's a new one.

We have in the Speaker's gallery today two distinguished guests: the Honourable André Antoine, the Speaker of the Walloon Parliament of Belgium; and Mr. Frédéric Janssens, the secretary general of the Walloon Parliament. Please join me in welcoming our guests from Belgium.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, last week we learned about an Ottawa man by the name of Eric Law. Mr. Law is 63 years old and has been diagnosed with multiple sclerosis, diabetes, cancer behind his right eye and a serious thyroid condition, yet the community care access centre in Champlain that once treated Mr. Law has told him that they are no longer able to provide services to him because of an 11.3% increase in new and sicker patients. I don't know how much sicker you have to get.

Minister, how many people across Ontario are being refused care by their local CCAC because your government wastes money on scandals like eHealth, Ornge, gas plants and MaRS?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I, of course, appreciate the question, and I'd be happy to follow up on this individual case that has been referenced by the Leader of the Opposition. It's important that we do whatever we can to ensure that patients with complex needs—it certainly seems that this individual fits into that category—are able to receive the services that they require.

There are 14 CCACs across the province. They are the primary mechanism through which we provide those services—particularly home care but also community services—with many, many transfer payment agencies and individuals that are providing that support.

It's important to note that this year, in the budget, we significantly increased our funding to home and community services by \$260 million.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the minister, Mr. Speaker. It's only going to get worse. As you know the Conference Board of Canada recently reported that even without a single new program, a single new drug or a single new health service, your government will have to increase health funding each year by 4.7% just to accommodate population growth and inflation. That's twice what you budgeted for so far.

1040

Minister, how can you possibly accommodate the needs of an aging population when you're paying \$11 billion in debt interest payments alone this year—\$11 billion—when interest payments are at a 20-year low? What happens when they go up? How many more people won't be able to get front-line health care services?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, the reality is that we are providing more care to individuals like the one referenced by the Leader of the Opposition, and partly because of that \$260-million increase to home and community care, which actually represents a 6% increase in funding for that sector. It has allowed us to do many things, including setting that target of a five-day wait time for individuals from point of assessment to getting their first treatment through home care.

In fact, as I think the member opposite is well aware, we've dramatically increased our funding for CCACs. In fact, we've doubled it in the last decade from just over \$1 billion to \$2.4 billion, where it stands now. That's a significant increase that makes a difference and can translate, actually, very specific to—there are more than a quarter of a million people who are receiving home care through our CCACs, Mr. Speaker, than were a decade ago.

We continue to make those investments. We're seeing the results, the improvement in the quality of care that's so important to those individuals.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Well, Minister, you're already firing health care workers and cutting front-line services. The Timmins and District Hospital is feeling the full brunt of your inability to budget properly and your wasteful spending and inability to set priorities. They currently

face a \$4.5-million deficit, and they're being forced to make tough decisions. They're cutting jobs and cutting services. They're actually laying off 40 health care workers, including nurses, and removing 26 hospital beds.

Will you admit to people like Mr. Law and the people of Timmins that this is just the first of many cuts that you'll be making to health care in Ontario over the next four years because of your fiscal mismanagement?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I can only imagine how serious the cuts in personnel and health care might have been had the party opposite actually won that last election.

The reality is that the transformation we've made in health care through the action plan for health, through the mechanisms that we put in place to improve the quality of health, through our hospitals and through our home and community care, have already had significant impacts in terms of the delivery of health services.

To get back again to the original component of the member's question on the CCACs, half of patients with complex care needs referred through the hospital had their first service visit within one day, Mr. Speaker. It can't get any better than that. In fact, 90% of patients had their first visit between one and five days.

So we are making a difference, we're improving quality of care, and we're doing it on budget.

NURSES

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again, my question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. It's obvious that your government's poor fiscal management is affecting front-line health care, whether you want to admit it or not, Minister.

As of August, the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN's wait times were worse than the provincial target in areas like MRIs, CT scans and knee replacements, and this LHIN had the highest overall wait time for cancer surgeries in Ontario. My colleagues and I in the Progressive Conservative caucus believe that the dedicated health care workers in those regions work hard day in and day out to help Ontarians who need their help, but, Minister, you're not giving them the resources and the tools they need to do their job.

Do you really think that cutting 58 registered nursing positions—the equivalent to 110,000 hours of care each year—at St. Joseph's hospital in Hamilton is going to help improve wait times in that region?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question.

Mr. Speaker, again, I go back to their commitment to fire 100,000 workers, many of them in the health care sector, many in the education sector. I can only imagine what our health care system would look like now had they won the last election earlier this year.

In fact, when that government was in power, they didn't even measure wait times in our hospitals for important surgical and other procedures. We decided to change that. When we came into government, we began

to measure wait times. In fact, we're now investing \$83 million specifically to address the issue of wait times so that people can get their important procedures, including surgery procedures and cancer treatments, earlier.

When you look at our hospitals, we've lowered wait times. The ER wait times for the sickest patients have been cut, Mr. Speaker, by 29.3%, while at the same time the volumes in our ERs have increased by 39%, so we're making progress because of those investments.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Well, Minister, these cuts are happening, whether you want to admit it or not. They are a result of wasted money, inability to set priorities, and billions of dollars wasted on your gas plants, eHealth, Ornge and MaRS scandals. Ontarians are seeing the effects of your fiscal mismanagement on the front lines of health care.

And it's not just in Hamilton and Timmins. Nurses are being fired across the province: 27 in London, just recently, 22 nurses fired in Muskoka, 40 laid off in Oshawa, 40 in North Bay, another 90 in Ottawa, and I could go on. Minister, can you tell this assembly how many more registered nurses' positions your government will cut throughout the province over this term of office?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I can certainly assure the member opposite that we won't be cutting the 10,000 nursing positions that you cut when your government referred to them as out of date like hula hoops in the 1990s. We're actually increasing the nursing positions—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. I'm noticing a trend that I'm going to stop, on both sides. When questions are put and when answers are put, bring it down.

Minister.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's true: The truth demonstrates that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sit down, please. The member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound will come to order, and the member from Huron–Bruce will come to order.

Carry on.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: It is a fact that over 24,000 more nurses are working in Ontario since we took office, including more than 4,000 new nurses in 2013 alone, so I don't know where the member opposite is getting his information.

In fact, on our end alone, we've added more than 10,800 RN positions since 2013; and we have programs in place that support them, including the guarantee that they'll get a job coming out of graduation. It gets them on that path for a nursing career. We're continuing to invest in our nurses.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's interesting when the Liberals talk about nursing cuts when we were in office. They forget to mention the tens of thousands of nurses that we

hired. There was a net increase when we expanded Telehealth—it was started by the NDP—and when we established community care access centres across this province and shifted billions of dollars into front-line community home care, which no other government prior to us dared to do.

Now, the minister asked me where I'm getting my facts. Well, the president of the Ontario Nurses' Association, Linda Haslam-Stroud, said recently, "Ontarians have lost millions of hours of RN care from their hospitals in the past two years because of flatlined hospital funding." She said that your government has cut 1,600 registered nursing positions.

Mr. Speaker, he wants to know where we get the facts. I'm quoting the president of the nurses' association herself. Is she telling the truth? Is she not telling the truth, Minister? Some 1,600 positions—how many more are you going to cut?

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex will come to order. I didn't get everyone quiet so that everyone could get their last shots in.

Minister.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I should start by saying that Linda is not the president of the RNAO. She's the head of the Ontario Nurses' Association, and when I met her last week—and, quite frankly, the week before—to continue our work with our front-line nurses, with the organizations that so aptly represent them—we are working together to continue to make progress on important issues with our nurses, as we are with all health care professionals.

The member opposite neglects to say that we've opened 25 nurse-practitioner-led clinics in this province, as well, so we're not only expanding the use of our nurses, but we're also expanding their scope of practice so that they can do more, so that those well-trained RNs and RPNs can actually provide the care that they're trained to do in our community and in our hospitals right across this province. They're doing a fantastic job. I don't know why the member doesn't realize that there's always more work to be done—

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

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Selling off our hydro system didn't make sense when Mike Harris did it, and it doesn't make sense when the Liberals are doing it. We've seen this movie before, Speaker, and we know how it ends. If this government wants to ensure that Ontario can pay the bills, will they say no to privatizing hydro and say yes to closing HST loopholes that will cost us billions of dollars?

1050

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I can tell you is that on this side, we are saying yes to building transportation infrastructure. We are saying yes to building highways, bridges and transit. These are important public assets that we have to pay for, so we have engaged with experts to see how we can recycle the assets that we hold so we can build that transportation infrastructure that Ontarians so desperately need.

Speaker, we need to maximize the benefit for Ontarians. We actually laid out this plan in the budget. We laid out this plan in our platform. What's interesting about this is that the leader of the third party actually ran our fiscal plan, which included maximizing assets.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberal government plan is one that gives the wealthiest corporations a brand new loophole so that they can write the HST off of the company car and box seats for the Leafs, while at the same time Ontarians will have to add private hydro profits to their monthly bills because the Liberals are privatizing local hydro utilities.

Both schemes help out those who need the help the least and leave Ontarians falling behind. Is this the Liberals' definition of "progressive"?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Speaker, do you know what was progressive? The budget that we introduced in this House, twice. That talked a lot about investing in our people, investing in infrastructure, investing in public transit, investing in our children's future.

The third party recognized the opportunities that existed in that budget for the benefit of all Ontarians and they chose not to support it. Ontarians did choose to support that budget. They did realize and recognize that we need to optimize our assets in order to contribute to those investments that are going to get better returns. That's exactly what we're doing, and we'll continue to do so.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals like to say it was short-sighted when the Harris government sold the 407, but they're directing the sequel to that movie here and now. Stopping new HST loopholes will keep money in the provincial treasury year after year after year, money that could be used for projects like infrastructure. Selling our local hydro utilities will bring in short-term money, but leave us all paying more in the long run.

Liberals used to oppose privatization. How did they lose their way?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the NDP did the following: They did nine private power deals when they were in office.

We have made it clear that we are not going to sell off our assets. What we are doing is maximizing the opportunities to generate more revenue, more dividends for those investments we're making in transit. That is all we're doing. It would be irresponsible, I believe, for

someone not to look at the opportunities that exist within government. They choose to turn a blind eye, yet they did exactly what they said we're threatening to do. They, in fact, made private power deals.

We are saying we're going to protect the public interest. It's the priority of what we do, and what we said to the council. That's exactly how we're going to proceed.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, we didn't sell off public utilities.

My next question is for the Acting Premier. Auto sector jobs are at the heart of the Windsor economy and are critical to our provincial recovery. I know first-hand what an auto sector job means. I know that it can raise a family. As people in this room know, my father was an auto worker, so I know what that means. That's why, like so many people in Windsor, I was pretty frustrated to learn that Ford's new engine line is going to be located in Mexico and not in Windsor.

This isn't good enough for the people of Windsor, nor for the people of Ontario. Does the Deputy Premier get that?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Our government is absolutely committed to partnering with the auto sector. We have a very strong track record. In fact, I think there is no government in the history of this province that has done more to support the auto sector. Speaker, we will do that. We will invest taxpayer dollars only when there is a strong return for Ontarians.

I do want to say thank you to Jerry Dias and to Unifor for really working hard to seek out some possibilities. I want to say thank you to Ford for their ongoing investments in Ontario.

Since 2003, we've made strategic investments with five auto assemblers in Ontario, as well as numerous auto plants across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, Ontario's unemployment rate has been above the national average for years, and this province still has not recovered the 300,000 manufacturing jobs lost during the recession. Windsor has been one of the hardest-hit communities in this province. After almost a dozen years in government, don't the Liberals think it's finally time for a comprehensive auto strategy in this province?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Our government is proud of the progress we've made, but we certainly acknowledge there is more to do. We have created over a half a million—514,700 to be exact—jobs since our recessionary low in 2009. The unemployment rate has dropped to 7.1%—still too high—down from the recessionary high of 9.4%. Net new jobs since October 2003: 723,900.

The member opposite, the leader of the third party, is trying to create the idea that we're not getting the job done on this side. In fact, we are. The numbers speak for themselves, and we will continue to work hard. We have a strategy to do that.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The fact of the matter is, when it came to bringing Ford's engine plant to Windsor, the Liberals got caught flat-footed. This won't be the last time that an opportunity for new auto sector jobs comes along. We need a comprehensive strategy that puts us on the front foot.

When is this government going to get serious about auto sector jobs?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Just to repeat, no government in the history of this province has done more for the auto sector than this government. Let me remind the member opposite of some of those investments: \$100 million for the Oakville assembly complex in 2004, \$98 million for the Essex plant in 2010, almost \$70.9 million for additional investment in Oakville in 2013 to modernize and provide a global platform in that plant for decades to come. Speaker, there is a long list. Those are just the Ford investments. We have made other investments where they make sense for the people of this province.

We will always work hard, we will always do our due diligence because we really believe in this sector, we believe in Ontario's leadership in the auto sector, and we will continue to make investments where they make sense.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Deputy Premier and it concerns the MaRS bailout.

We now know that the government changed the rules for Infrastructure Ontario loans so that it could cut a special deal for MaRS after Alexandria Real Estate couldn't finish the phase 2 parking lot, let alone the upper floors—throwing more good money after bad.

Since 2011, the government has known about the details of the MaRS phase 2 loan agreement, yet has not been open and transparent about it. If no bank or conventional lender was willing to back the MaRS project with only 10% of it pre-leased, 30% to 40% lower than conventional industry standards, why did the minister change the Infrastructure Ontario rules so that the government could bail out MaRS with money we don't have?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think we have to start with what MaRS is and what MaRS does: It is a world-renowned centre of excellent innovation and technology. It's an important part of the innovation landscape in Ontario.

I would love, in the supplementary, to hear exactly what their plan would have been. Would you have left that hole in the ground, surrounded by those construction hoardings? Is that your plan?

1100

Our plan: We had a problem. We've worked to address the problem. The entire loan will be repaid. This is a very good deal for Ontarians. I know you don't like it,

but I'd love to hear what you would have done in the same circumstances.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Ted Arnott: It is true: The government has a problem and continues to have a problem, and the government continues to lose credibility by the day when it comes to their promises on openness and transparency. They're not being upfront about the cuts they're making to vital health care services, as we learned this morning, due to their years of fiscal mismanagement going back to 2003, and they're continuing to hide relevant facts on the \$224-million bailout to MaRS.

The Deputy Premier should explain why they're breaking their promises to be open and transparent. My question to her is this: If, indeed, the MaRS documents the government refuses to release have commercially sensitive information, as they claim, then why won't they let the estimates committee examine them in camera?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What you're not going to hear from the opposition, but what I think the people of Ontario need to know, is that the value of the MaRS building is greater than our total investment in that building.

This is no bailout. This is an investment. We have an asset that's worth—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to come to members and give them a warning, and you know what that means. That's enough.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have an asset that's repeatedly been valued at or above the amount that has been invested.

We have established a panel, led by two eminent Ontarians, Michael Nobrega and Carol Stephenson, to give us independent advice on what we do going forward. We will ensure that what we do is in the best interests of the taxpayers.

GOVERNMENT CONSULTANTS

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Minister of Finance. The Ontario government directly employs more than 3,600 qualified IT professionals. However, over the last five years, the portion of the government's IT budget that has been outsourced to the private sector has increased by 63%. During the 2013-14 fiscal year alone, the government spent \$703 million on private sector IT services. This includes hiring almost 1,500 fee-for-service consultants at a total cost of \$131 million.

Why is the government expanding its use of private sector consultants when a 2012 consultant's report commissioned by the Ministry of Government Services found that several key IT services cost two to three times more when provided by the private sector?

Hon. Charles Sousa: We are investing in a number of areas, trying to ensure that we procure appropriately. We have a number of IT consultants and contracts that we put out. We use RFP and procurement practices that are

open and transparent. We will continue to invest in those matters that will improve our overall productivity.

I know we're managing our user consultants through a three-pronged approach: by transferring work to government staff, by creating a central pool of government IT staff to work with government-wide projects and by centralizing the acquisition of IT consultations.

We invest a tremendous amount of money and we want to make certain that it's appropriately invested, and we will continue to take proper cautionary measures to ensure that it's spent appropriately.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: The problem, Minister, is that IT outsourcing ends up costing taxpayers more money, and they don't get value for that. The government should have learned this with eHealth. The Auditor General at the time found that the eHealth program branch alone was engaging more than 300 private IT consultants compared to fewer than 30 full-time ministry IT employees. Even a number of senior management positions were held by consultants.

Why is this government continuing on the wasteful and expensive path of outsourcing the government's IT services when it has thousands of highly competent IT professionals already in its employ? You are looking to save money. If you want to save money, contract in; stop contracting out.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have a strong record of reducing the use of consultants across the government. In fact, we have turned to IT consultants when we need to gain external advice and specialized expertise. Since 2003, a total of 1,519 consultant positions government-wide have been approved for conversion into OPS staff positions, resulting in ongoing savings of approximately \$60 million per year, and of those converted positions, 1,335 were IT consultants. We recently approved the conversion of an additional 90 IT consultant positions to full-time equivalents. This will result in a further \$3.6 million in annual savings at maturity.

Mr. Speaker, we're continuing to hire. We recognize the importance of that sector. It's essential that we have good people doing it and save money all the while.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Minister, it's important that you understand why your lack of transparency around health care cuts and bad MaRS bailout deals makes people nervous. Your government recently issued necessary new directives on Ebola preparedness requirements for Ontario hospitals. These new Ebola initiatives and directives will come with costs that need to be absorbed by the existing capped funding folders.

Minister, can you confirm that even with your government's huge deficit, your Ministry of Health will reimburse hospitals for the cost of these preparations?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Yes, I can confirm this.

Mr. Speaker, this gives me the opportunity to talk about the preparations that Ontario is making and has made with regard to preparing for the possibility that an Ebola case may arrive within this province. We've been working for a number of months now with our front-line health care providers, with our hospitals, with our community agencies, with our public health specialists, with Public Health Ontario and with the interim Chief Medical Officer of Health to ensure that we have put into place the protocols, procedures and measures so that at every level of this province, we are protected and have taken sufficient measures to ensure that, should a case arrive on Ontario shores, we'll be prepared to deal with that effectively.

Mr. Speaker, I have to say that we're focusing specifically and particularly on the health and safety of our health care workers.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Again to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: There may be many other costs associated with the Ministry of Health's new directive—for example, overtime pay for training and staffing increases due to the need to increase rotations for exposed workers. It's important that our patients and our front-line workers are safe, but your plan isn't credible without knowing how you'll pay for it. You're cutting nurses, and we're wondering where this funding will come from. The hospitals in my region are asking me these questions.

Minister, with your Liberal government's spiralling deficit and a health care budget that is already strapped to the max, how will you pay for Ebola emergency management?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Well, I just told the member opposite how we would pay for that, and we've asked our hospitals, our front-line facilities and our acute care centres to actually keep a record of those additional costs so that we can then, at a later date, come back and ensure that those costs are covered.

I'm not sure what the member opposite is suggesting—if we somehow shouldn't be doing that or providing the level of preventive care that we are, given the current risk, the potential for an Ebola case arriving here.

But I want to assure the Ontario public that we are taking those measures. It's important that Ontarians understand as well that cost is not a factor when it comes to the health and safety particularly of our front-line health care workers, who are working so hard to keep Ontarians safe. In fact, I believe the way that we keep Ontarians safe and secure is by keeping our front-line health care workers safe and secure. That's why we're working so closely with them on this Ebola risk.

INFECTIOUS DISEASE CONTROL

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est également pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

This morning, it was revealed that hundreds of paramedics in the GTA were prepared to do a work refusal—to refuse work—because they had no training to deal

with Ebola. First responders had no information on the disease, no idea how to use their protective gear and no guarantee that the gear was even fluid-resistant and up to the job.

Our paramedics are on the front line each and every day, but they can only do their job if they receive support from the Ministry of Health. Why was this government prepared to put our front-line health care workers in harm's way without doing everything possible to keep them safe?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I disagree. We are doing everything possible to keep our front-line health care workers safe, just as I mentioned in the answer to the last question. That includes our first responders, our EMS—emergency medical services—as well.

In fact, as a result of my commitment to work closely with all front-line health care workers, including EMS, I committed to setting up a table—specifically, a minister's advisory table—of those front-line health care workers, including EMS. Last week we had our first meeting, and members representing the EMS and ambulance community were present there for that discussion we had.

We're going to be meeting on a regular basis. We've designated within the EMS system, as we've designated in hospitals, precisely how that aspect of this challenge will be managed.

1110

I have to say as well that we will add the issue to a directive focused on our hospitals. We will be issuing, through the interim Chief Medical Officer of Health, a directive specific to our front-line EMS, ambulance and emergency first responders.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Our paramedics and our first responders are called on to do tough work each and every day, but they should not be forced to do this at the risk of their own safety or the safety of their family. From nurses to emergency responders, our health professionals are worried about our Ebola preparedness, and this does not match what the minister is talking about. How can you explain the disconnect between what you are saying regarding Ontario's preparedness versus our front-line workers saying the exact opposite?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Due to the close collaboration and coordination with our front-line health care workers, we are getting prepared. We're taking what's known in public health as the precautionary principle to make sure that we're doing everything possible to ensure that our front-line health care workers are safe, to the point where Doris Grinspun, the CEO of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, said approximately 10 days ago, "I am feeling very comfortable that we have a minister that listens, a minister that responds."

In fact, the federal health minister, Rona Ambrose, as well indicated that as a result of the measures Ontario has put in place, this "really sets the bar for the country."

This table that we've set up, the minister's advisory table for health care providers, of those front-line health care staff—I'm listening to them because I know that

they are best placed to be able to provide us with the advice that we need to ensure that we're keeping those health care workers safe and secure.

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels, l'honorable Yasir Naqvi.

One of the regrettable, tragic and wholly unanticipated duties of a member of provincial Parliament is to attend the funerals of young men who have been senselessly murdered. I had to perform such a duty not long ago while attending the funeral of 19-year-old Hamid Aminzada, a young man who was fatally injured while trying to break up a fight at NACI, North Albion Collegiate Institute.

On behalf of the Premier and, indeed, all members here, I offered the father, Mr. Sabir Aminzada, as well as the principal of NACI, Mr. Naem Siddiq, both a figurative and physical embrace, as well as a pledge of support.

People in my riding of Etobicoke North and beyond deserve better: safe communities without fear of violence or gang reprisals. On behalf of my community, I look to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services for help and direction in this matter.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to thank the member from Etobicoke North for a very important and pertinent question. First of all, our thoughts and prayers are with the family and friends of the victims of the recent acts of violence in Toronto. Our government is firmly committed to helping at-risk youth achieve a brighter future through a wide range of programs and initiatives.

Our recent youth action plan provides young people with supports and services to help them thrive and succeed. We're investing over \$8 million through the Safer and Vital Communities Grant focusing on community engagement, community mobilization, prevention and, of course, education. We have also provided over \$100 million to combat guns and gangs under the Provincial Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy, commonly known as PAVIS, and the Toronto Anti-Violence Intervention Strategy, TAVIS.

These programs help communities target illegal gangs, drugs and weapons activities in communities. Of course, we need to do more to protect the young people in our communities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Thank you, Minister Naqvi, for your response. I know that you and I are both fathers of sons, so you no doubt can sympathize with the staggering loss that these families feel. Unfortunately, it seems that violence of many motivations is now part of our society. There is, of course, no simple solution, quick fix or instant remedy—we all appreciate that—to this complex issue of youth violence. Perhaps focusing purely on fighting gangs and guns will not fully achieve our goal of making our streets safer, but it is a welcome initiative.

Nevertheless, I want to know on behalf of my community and others that are affected, what is our government doing regarding youth crime prevention?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thanks again to the member from Etobicoke North for raising this very serious and important question. As far as I'm concerned, as the Minister of Children and Youth Services, one child or youth death in Ontario is one too many. We want to ensure our communities are safe for our children. We want to focus on prevention in terms of these tragedies so that they don't happen again. We want to provide youth with opportunities so they can succeed.

In 2013-14, we increased the number of youth outreach workers by one third, from 62 to 98. These workers support over 13,600 hard-to-reach youth and young people across this province. Our government also established the Premier's Council on Youth Opportunities for youth to give their voice on how to improve the delivery and design of government programs and services. As mentioned before, we have the youth action plan.

We must work together and invest in our youth to ensure that we stop this violence before it starts.

HOME CARE

Mr. Jim McDonell: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: Your government came to power with a promise to focus on home care and deliver more of it to Ontarians. Instead, Ontarians are seeing quite the opposite.

Many residents in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry have seen their services either reduced or dropped altogether. The funding formula has been changed so that seniors who were on waiting lists just a few months ago no longer qualify, due to new budget restrictions. Our seniors population is growing, yet your government refuses to fund the CCACs to meet the demand.

Minister, will you commit to sufficient and predictable funding for the Champlain CCAC or will you continue to let our seniors down?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question. Again, I know we all acknowledge the important work that our CCACs do, and the health care workers and non-health care workers, the field of individuals who provide that important care at a moment in time when Ontarians most need it—of course, ideally, in their home or as close to home as possible.

But, Mr. Speaker, we actually made a very strong commitment in the last budget, that was passed earlier this year, of an increase of \$260 million, which is roughly a 6% increase in the funding provided for home and community care.

In a more general sense as well—apart from the fact that the party opposite and the member opposite actually did not support that budget—since 2003 we have

virtually doubled the amount of financial support that goes through our CCACs to assist people in home care.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim McDonell: In this current fiscal year, the Champlain CCAC is experiencing a 12% increase in demand for its services, yet has been allocated less than half of that amount to meet the demand, and patients are suffering. Experts agree that money spent on home care not only saves the health care system money, but allows one to enjoy the comfortable surroundings of their home.

At the same time, the Champlain CCAC has experienced a 130% increase in the number of employees on the sunshine list since 2010. Minister, when demand for an agency's services increases, you don't double the high earners. You double the front-line workers and the services they provide. Residents of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry agree. If the minister does too, does he plan to act accordingly?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: There's no question that there is always more work that can be done. We all acknowledge the important work, and the priority that we must pay to providing those services at home or as close to home as possible. By providing that home care, it actually lessens the burden on our hospitals and our ERs, so it has an impact throughout the health care system.

I mentioned the \$270-million commitment in this year's budget for home and community care. That commitment actually increases to over \$750 million by 2017.

We are making these investments. We are recognizing just how important—and from a cost-benefit perspective as well. It's not only better in terms of quality of care and quality of life for the individuals that can benefit from home and community care, but also, from a cost-effective perspective, it makes sense to invest these health care dollars in providing that quality of care for people as close to home as possible, when and where they need it.

NORTHERN HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

Ms. Sarah Campbell: To the Minister of Transportation: Highway 105 is the only highway serving the communities of Ear Falls and Red Lake in my riding. This past summer, the Ministry of Transportation replaced every culvert along the route, but instead of paving over the cut sections, they left gravel. Because the ministry did not place adequate warning signage, these gravel sections often catch people off guard. Drivers can often lose control, and some vehicles have been damaged.

Winter is coming, and these risky gravel sections need to be properly maintained and repaired, but the ministry and the private contractor can't seem to agree on who is in charge of paving these sections. Each time the ministry gave me a repair date, the date came and went and nothing happened.

1120

Snowplows have already been out along this highway, and snow is expected again in Red Lake tomorrow. Will

the minister tell us for certain when Highway 105 will be completed?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I appreciate receiving that question from the member opposite. I know that we had a chance to exchange correspondence last week here in this Legislature. I also know that staff in my office have been in touch with that member's constituency office. I certainly understand and respect where she's coming from, and I know that she's doing a job to represent her community. I know that my office will continue to work closely with her office and her community to make sure that this can be addressed.

The member opposite mentioned the matter, or the issue, of winter maintenance. It's why I was very happy to stand in my place in the House last week and discuss the significant additional resources that we're bringing to bear this year to anticipate, deal with and be prepared for the upcoming winter season.

Of course, I'll continue to work closely with that member and her community to make sure that we can be prepared for the upcoming winter season. I look forward to the ongoing conversation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: The people of Ear Falls and Red Lake depend on Highway 105. They can't simply take another route if the road conditions on Highway 105 are unsafe. It shouldn't be the case that only the squeaky wheel gets the grease, and people will only receive action after I literally hound this government.

This ministry keeps cutting corners when it comes to maintaining Highway 105. This highway has been classified as a low priority for snow clearance. Now the ministry has left this culvert repair job unfinished, with winter fast approaching.

There will be accidents this winter if the ministry does not properly manage the gaps between the MTO and its private contractors. Will the minister personally make sure this job gets done within days, and not weeks?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Speaker, as I said in my response to the initial question, I'm very happy to be able to continue to work alongside this member to deliver positive results for her community. Again, it's one of the reasons I was so happy to answer a question in the House last week from the member for Newmarket–Aurora, and very happy to participate in an announcement the week before, where we talked specifically about the new resources we're bringing to bear both in southern and northern Ontario.

Last winter season, for example, our government launched or put 55 new pieces of equipment on the roads in northern Ontario to help make sure, as the season last year finished, that we were prepared to deal with the weather. We are doing the same thing again this year, not only in the north but also in the south.

Again, I undertake to continue working with this member and all members in this Legislature to make sure that our roads and highways across Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: —that we're prepared for the upcoming winter season, because road safety is one of my most important priorities.

PROVINCIAL PARKS

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry. No matter what time of the year it is, parks provide great opportunities for families and visitors to enjoy recreational activities and learn more about conservation and our environment.

In my town, Presqu'ile Provincial Park is open for day use all year round. It is home to over 10 kilometres of trails that travel through several habitats and fantastic vantage points along Lake Ontario.

Presqu'ile also provides natural heritage education programs, which include curriculum-based children's programs for schools in the spring and fall. I'd be remiss if I didn't plug the Christmas at Presqu'ile arts and crafts show, which is coming up on November 1, 2, 5, 8 and 9.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could the minister please explain to the House what our government is doing to ensure that Ontarians from all parts of the province have the opportunity to enjoy our provincial parks?

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Northumberland–Quinte West for his question and for drawing attention to a very important part of Ontario's social and natural heritage.

Our parks are a great way for families to be active and learn more about wildlife and Ontario's environment. Ontario has 109 operating parks across the province, from Quetico Provincial Park in Atikokan to Wheatley Provincial Park in southwestern Ontario.

These parks see over 8.5 million visitors each year, supporting jobs and strengthening local communities. Residents and tourists from around the world come to our parks and enjoy spectacular views and take part in unique outdoor activities. In fact, Ontario Parks is the largest provider of outdoor recreation opportunities in our province.

Our government remains committed to ensuring that all Ontarians, whether in the north or the south, have access to provincial parks. I would encourage everyone in this House and families from all parts of Ontario to visit one of our provincial parks this fall and take advantage of the more than 2,200 kilometres of trails through some of the province's most spectacular scenery.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Thank you to the minister for his answer.

As the 2014 camping season comes to a close in many of our provincial parks, my constituents are already anticipating next summer and are looking to reserve their campsites for 2015.

Speaker, I understand that two years ago our government was faced with a difficult decision regarding the operating status of Fushimi Lake, René Brunelle and Ivanhoe Lake provincial parks. I'm pleased that this gov-

ernment implemented a pilot program and formed partnerships with local municipalities to maintain camping for the past two years.

The pilot program with these three parks has now ended. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Could the minister please update the House on the status of these parks and confirm if they will be open for the 2015 camping season?

Hon. Bill Mauro: Again, I want to thank the member from Northumberland—Quinte West for this very timely and thoughtful question. I am pleased to inform the House that our government will be operating, in fact, Ivanhoe, René Brunelle and Fushimi Lake provincial parks for the 2015 camping season.

Speaker, I really want to take a moment, as I did last week and in my phone calls to the local folks, to thank the municipalities, the broader communities, the mayors—everybody who really took this issue to task. They did a great job in putting us in a position, as local municipalities, whereby we are in a position to actually make this announcement and move forward with an extension of this particular pilot program. The partnerships with Hearst, Moonbeam and Timmins were key to providing Ontarians with recreational opportunities in our beautiful parks.

Speaker, this is a fantastic news story. We are very pleased, as a government, to have entered into a partnership where now we are taking full responsibility for the next year on these provincial parks and hopefully looking forward to more positive news in the years to follow.

HYDRO RATES

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Minister, with each passing day, the effect of your flawed energy policies becomes more and more apparent. From exasperated seniors to struggling small businesses to manufacturers leaving the province, the results are the same: Ontario's hydro rates are making it uncompetitive in the world market.

Now some more bad news: On Saturday, rates are going up again. They will be up to 14 cents a kilowatt hour, which is more than triple what they were when your party took power.

Skyrocketing hydro rates have become a second tax on manufacturing and small business, which kills jobs or sends them to Mexico. Yet you're still signing expensive contracts for intermittent, unreliable power.

Minister, is it not time to reverse the policies that have made a few Liberal insiders very rich at the expense of everyone else?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the question from the member, although I am a bit surprised by the scope of it and how broad the question is, because he did attend my speech to the Ontario Energy Association about two weeks ago, which was a 20-minute speech, and afterwards he told me he agreed with everything that was in it; he couldn't disagree with anything.

Mr. Speaker, as he knows, the Ontario Energy Board does the rating for prices in the province of Ontario, and as of November 1, 2014, the new prices will increase average monthly time-of-use bills by about 1.7%, or 2.3 cents, on the average household.

Our government modernized an electricity system that needed significant upgrading after the Tories. The current price results in electricity bills that are below the forecast we set in the 2013 long-term energy plan.

When I get to the supplementary, I'd be very happy to speak to the industrial rates that he referred to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Speaker, the minister did deliver a good speech. Unfortunately, his policies are delivering jobs to Mexico.

Minister, you know that by continuing to sign new expensive energy contracts, Ontarians will continue to endure higher prices. You know that when new intermittent energy comes online, you will have to sell more power at a loss to our competitors at times when we don't need it. You know that as peak and off-peak hydro rates rise, Ontario's ability to compete falls.

Minister, I'll ask you again: Will you stop exporting jobs to Mexico and place affordability as a cornerstone of Ontario energy policy?

Interjections.

1130

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

Minister.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, the member knows that we had significant price pressures because we converted to a clean system, and we went from deficit to surplus. In those price pressures, we have, over a period of the last several years, created very significant price mitigation measures, including in the industrial sector, expanding the IEI Program so hundreds of newly eligible companies can qualify for electricity rates among the lowest in North America. In Pembroke—his hometown, Mr. Speaker—the MDF paperboard plant has reopened after being accepted into the program, creating 140 new jobs for the area. There are significant companies across the province accessing that. He will also know that in our budget, we had two provisions to mitigate prices further for the industrial sector.

I'm very happy to arrange a briefing for the member so he will learn about how we have taken significant steps to mitigate electricity prices in the province of Ontario.

MIDWIFERY

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

Over the past month, hundreds of Ontarians have tweeted the Premier about the value of midwives to the families of this province. #MidwifeMondays, as the campaign is known, has shown an outpouring of support for the services that midwives provide. Yet this Liberal government is refusing to engage in fair negotiations with

midwives, allowing expired contracts and pay inequity to undermine this much-loved health care profession.

It is time for this government to change course, and I think that this Monday is a perfect time to do it. After all of these tweets from all of these families, my question is quite simple: Did the minister get the message?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm really feeling the love this morning from both parties, so I appreciate that.

As a government, we value our midwives. Fortunately, I'm also on the receiving end of those tweets that go to the Premier. I have to say—it might surprise some—that I look forward to Mondays, when I receive 400 or 500 tweets coming not just from midwives but from many individuals who have and are benefiting from our midwives.

Mr. Speaker, we are so committed to ensuring that our midwives have the support that they need to carry out their work effectively. We have increased their compensation on average by 33% since we took office in 2003, but we are working closely with them to ensure we're providing for them not only on the financial side but also in terms of the other supports that are able to make a difference.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Well, let me give you an idea of the government's record on midwives. First, the Liberal government is refusing to negotiate in good faith and forcing midwives to work without a contract for months on end. Then, the Liberals are refusing to recognize the gender gap that leaves midwives being paid less for work of equal value—less than they deserve. The Liberals are refusing to meet the demand for midwives, meaning that many, many families continue to be turned away from the care they want.

It makes no sense to deny midwives the respect that they deserve. How can the minister explain his stubborn refusal to resume negotiations with midwives and his indefensible opposition to pay equity?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, we've doubled the number of midwives in this province since 2003 to 700 now. The funding for the midwifery program has increased fivefold, from \$23 million in 2003 to \$125 million. In 2003, 8,000 families were able to benefit from midwives; now that figure is 22,000.

I would say, not unimportantly, that I had the honour and privilege with my wife, Sam, of our first and only child being born at home with two midwives. It was an incredible experience. I understand first-hand just how important this resource is, quite frankly a resource that, worldwide, delivers most of the babies born on this planet.

So we are committed. We'll continue to work closely with our midwives. I'm committed to that, and we will continue to grow this important profession.

VIOLENCE AGAINST ABORIGINAL WOMEN

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services and minister responsible

for women's issues. Minister, first of all, I would like to thank you and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, on behalf of my caucus colleagues, for participating in the National Aboriginal Women's Summit last week. I think it is imperative that we as a government stand alongside Ontario's First Nations, Métis, Inuit and urban aboriginal communities.

I would also like to thank the member from Kingston and the Islands for introducing a private member's motion last week supporting the National Aboriginal Organizations' call to the federal government for a national inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls.

I was wondering, Minister, if you could tell us more about your work at the summit, and what work the Ontario Women's Directorate has been doing on this issue.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thanks to the member from Barrie for her question. As we talked about in the House here last week, during the member from Kingston and the Islands' private member's resolution, the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group and the National Aboriginal Women's Summit steering community are leading the development of a socio-economic plan for aboriginal women and girls.

The discussion last week at the summit began the development of this plan. I was very pleased to be there representing our wonderful province, along with my colleague the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. We met with leaders, provincial ministers, and senior officials from Canadian provinces and territories to discuss the approach. Unfortunately, the federal government wasn't there, but we did focus on issues around murdered and missing aboriginal children.

Our budget for this year includes \$2 million over two years to support our Joint Working Group on Violence Against Aboriginal Women. This includes five aboriginal organizations and 10 ministries. It's the only committee of this kind. We look forward to the continuing results of that plan in about 18 months.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you to the minister for her response.

Aboriginal women are 2.5 times more likely to experience spousal violence than non-aboriginal women, according to self-reported data. Between 2001 and 2011, at least 8% of all murdered women aged 15 years and older were aboriginal, double their representation in the Canadian population. The RCMP reports that police recorded incidents of aboriginal female homicides and unresolved missing aboriginal women total 1,181 as of November 2013. So this is very important work, and I'm happy to follow the progress of the Ontario Women's Directorate.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: There is no question.

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

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. David Zimmer: My visit to the National Aboriginal Women's Summit with Minister MacCharles was very productive. The forum provided an excellent opportunity to share expertise and knowledge, and to work on initiatives including the socio-economic action plan and the national round table.

I was very pleased that all parties present agreed that the next round table will take place on February 15 in the Northwest Territories. The issues we talked about affect all aboriginal women, all Ontarians, indeed all Canadians, and we need to get everyone working together to make progress on this issue.

But it is unfortunate—it is inexcusable—that the federal government chose not to send any representation to that summit. The federal government has a role to play. I urge them to contribute to the upcoming meeting in NWT. To the federal government, I say: Come to the next meeting and do your duty.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1139 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe-York.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I beg the indulgence of the House to allow me to introduce belatedly the students of Holy Trinity school from Bradford West Gwillimbury who were able to witness question period this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, and on a reversal—York-Simcoe; Simcoe-York. I do get that wrong from time to time.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SCHOOL TRUSTEES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Mr. Speaker, as the PC critic for education, I want to take this time to remind Ontario that today, when you cast your ballot, remember to vote for your school board trustee. Education is such an important aspect of all of our lives, and I want to stress how important our school board trustees are. I don't want the trustees to be lost in the race. They represent a very significant aspect in our children's lives.

There is a general lack of understanding about what trustees do, given that many decisions on education now come straight from the province. In this election in particular trustees are competing for attention in some very high-profile races. The position sees the lowest voter turnout of all electoral races.

For people who have children in the system, it's important because these are the people who are providing leadership in your schools, helping to focus on school success. They influence how the system responds to

issues and concerns and they are working with individual families trying to solve problems.

I want to remind everyone to get out to vote today, and I want to thank all of the trustees who put their names forward right across our province for these very important positions.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE FUNDING

Mr. Wayne Gates: I spent the entire summer, day in and day out, meeting with every community group in my community that wanted to meet. Sometimes it was at my office; other times it was at places where they serve Niagara's most in need.

I toured Project Share's food banks and Nova House women's shelter. I met with our local social assistance workers in their own offices. I did this because in my riding it's clear that there are people who need help.

Niagara has been hit hard by the economic downturn. People, through no fault of their own, have lost their jobs. Some of them needed, and still continue to need, a helping hand up. However, what I hear from these community groups was exactly the same: Since 2008, the need has gone up but the funding has gone down.

Shelter beds are full; I've seen it. Our local women's shelter is filled with children and women to its capacity. Food banks are running empty. Transit vouchers are being eliminated. When people have their gas or electricity turned off, they have nowhere to go.

The community groups in my riding are unanimous. Niagara is a large region. We don't want special treatment—only the funding that the region deserves based on its size. Hamilton's population is roughly the same as Niagara's, yet Niagara receives around 20% of the funding that Hamilton does.

I hope the Premier and the government will take the social needs of Niagara into consideration when they implement their budget.

WOMEN'S CRISIS SERVICES OF WATERLOO REGION

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: In my riding of Cambridge, we have a unique and positive resource for women who have experienced domestic violence or abuse and are taking positive action to improve their lives by leaving their abuser, most often leaving with their children. Of course, the life-changing resource I'm talking about is Women's Crisis Services of Waterloo Region, an incredible organization that significantly impacts the lives of those who need shelter.

Women's Crisis Services operates two residential shelters: Haven House and Anselma House. In September, Haven House officially launched their rebuild project with an edgy "She Deserves It" campaign, which has great support amongst the many partners in the community.

Speaker, these statistics are surprising: Last year, 92 women and 92 children were housed within Haven

House, for a total of 9,989 days of residential care. Without Haven House, these women wouldn't be able to flee abusive and negative relationships, resulting in possible damage to them and their children—physical, psychological, economic and social—which can be catastrophic.

I have pledged to support this rebuild project because it is, quite literally, saving lives and ensuring a future where otherwise there may be none.

I would be remiss if I didn't think thank the hard-working and dedicated staff of Haven House, including the executive director, Mary Zilney, whose tireless efforts are a testament to the kindness that can be found in our wonderful riding of Cambridge.

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Ontario's construction industry employs over 400,000 workers, roughly 6.5% of Ontario's total workforce. Construction is also the single largest investor in apprenticeship training. Many of these people are from small and medium-sized businesses and firms. The construction industry is unique in how employees get paid, and delinquent payment in construction is a growing concern.

Trade contractors and subcontractors bear a significant financial risk and are commonly made to wait periods of three to four months for payment after work has been completed. Ninety days is typical, and we even see various levels of government not paying in a timely way.

Delinquent payment strains cash flow, especially for small businesses that still have to meet payroll, taxes, WSIB premiums and other costs. Late payments limit employment growth and ultimately mean fewer jobs for Ontario workers and less investment in new machinery, equipment and technology.

Prompt payment legislation requires that payment be made for all work certified as being completed within 30 days. As a small business owner, prompt payment is something that I strongly support. Quite simply, if you do the work, you should get paid.

Already the majority of US states, the UK, Ireland, the EU, Australia and New Zealand have adopted prompt payment legislation. I'm calling on this government to act now to protect small and medium-sized businesses and those they employ by ensuring prompt payment is required in Ontario's construction industry.

KYLEE JEWERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today I want to talk to you about Kylee Jewers. Kylee is five years old. She lives in Lively, in my riding, with her parents, Lee and Josée. Earlier this year, Kylee had a cancerous cyst removed from her back. Then a mass began to develop on her lung. By now she has had four surgeries and has begun chemotherapy.

I'm guessing you know why we call her Super Kylee. All we know is that she has an extremely rare sarcoma that no physician has seen before. Kylee will be receiving

chemotherapy until at least January. She's strong, she's determined, and she's beating this; there's no question about that. It's as simple as that.

The complicated part or the problem, if you wish, is the cost—the cost of travel for treatment from her home in Lively to down here in Toronto, as well as the loss of income as her parents need to take time off work in order to care for Super Kylee. This is an ongoing battle that will be requiring many trips to Toronto for many years to come.

I urge everyone to support this family, and it's as easy as going online. Type www.gofundme.com and click on Super Kylee—or she's "es462s." They're hoping to reach \$20,000, and I'm really proud to say that they're more than halfway there. With your support, they will make it.

BILL DAVIS

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: On Wednesday, October 22, I, together with our Premier, the Honourable Kathleen Wynne, had the pleasure of attending an event organized by Peel-Dufferin Catholic Family Services to honour former Premier Bill Davis and his family.

Bill Davis, Brampton's most famous resident, is now 85, but still full of life, humour and optimism. His life, career and legacy can be summed up in one word, statesmanship:

—a minister who oversaw a tremendous expansion of our public education system, including TVOntario;

—a Premier who cared about all, including the marginalized and less fortunate;

—an executive who could make decisions tempered by deep thought and common sense, and who balanced traditions with modernity;

—an Ontarian who worked for national unity;

—and, most importantly, a man who was a good speaker, but a better listener, and the best doer.

1310

As for myself, I admire Bill's essential decency, humility and, indeed, humanity.

Mr. Davis serves as a role model for the kind of politics that we all need, regardless of one's own political affiliation: the common good of all Ontarians.

GENDER EQUALITY

Ms. Laurie Scott: The United Nations has declared October 11 as the International Day of the Girl Child to recognize girls' rights and the unique challenges girls face around the world.

Gender equality is a basic human right as well as the cornerstone of global development. Research shows that investing in girls can impact not only the lives of young girls but also benefits the economic growth and the health and well-being of our communities.

This day is also an opportunity to advocate for girls around the world who face serious challenges in their daily lives, such as hunger, poverty and limited access to education. Girls throughout the world, including here in

Canada, face higher rates of violence, poverty and discrimination. Girls and young women are nearly twice as likely as boys and young men to suffer certain mental health issues such as depression.

By investing in girls, we invest in our future. Equal opportunity for girls is good for all of us.

This year, the International Day of the Girl Child provided an opportunity to recognize those we are inspired by and their important contributions, like Malala Yousafzai. Against incredible odds, she has shown courage and determination in the face of constant threats of violence. The world has taken notice of the incredible power a girl like Malala can have on her country and on the rights of girls around the world. At 17, she is the youngest winner of this year's Nobel Peace Prize and the sixth person ever to receive honorary Canadian citizenship.

On International Day of the Girl Child, we took the time to celebrate girls and young women in our communities and what that means for our future here and around the world.

TRANSIT INFRASTRUCTURE

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I rise today in the House to celebrate meaningful progress on transit infrastructure in my riding of Burlington. This week, approximately 70 new parking spaces will be made available at the Aldershot GO train station. As a daily GO Transit commuter, I know how hectic the morning rush can be. No one wants to miss their train because they've had to circle the parking lot looking for a spot to leave their car for the day. These 70 additional parking spaces will help to alleviate congestion and make it easier for commuters from Burlington and the surrounding area to get where they need to go when they need to be there. They will also enhance transportation choice, giving daily commuters a wider range of options beyond their car.

Speaker, infrastructure is the backbone of our economy. This government's commitment to building Ontario up by investing in public transit and transportation infrastructure is critical to easing congestion, improving our quality of life and planning for the needs of future generations.

While these new parking spaces are only a small part of the greater Toronto and Hamilton area transit agenda, they're proof that the plan is already in action and that we're benefiting from the results today.

Over the next 10 years, constituents in Burlington and across the GTHA will see improvements in GO Transit rail service and public transit to ease congestion, support economic development and improve mobility throughout the region. Along the way, I look forward to celebrating many more small but important milestones that, together, all add up to a province on the move.

SPORTING EVENTS IN ETOBICOKE CENTRE

Mr. Yvan Baker: Etobicoke Centre is a wonderfully active community, boasting some excellent sporting

facilities and some wonderful organizations that continue to draw some of the world's top athletes to our community.

Just this August, I had the opportunity to join the Etobicoke Lawn Bowling Club at the opening ceremonies of the Canadian National Junior Lawn Bowling Championships. This event, hosted just steps from my constituency office at the Etobicoke Lawn Bowling Club, brought together the best from across Canada and highlighted just one of the fantastic organizations and facilities that we boast within our community.

In September, I joined participants at the annual Terry Fox Run at West Deane Park, where members of the community have applied their love of sport and running to raise money for this fantastic cause, raising over \$1 million towards cancer research to date.

Next summer, Etobicoke will once again welcome the world to our doorstep when the city hosts the 2015 Toronto Pan and Parapan Am Games. During the games, some of the world's top aquatic athletes will prepare for their competitions at the Etobicoke Olympium in the riding of Etobicoke Centre.

One of the best examples of one of those athletes and those swimmers is the Etobicoke Swim Club's Brittany MacLean, the 20-year-old Silverthorn Collegiate Institute graduate who, at the most recent Glasgow games, won two medals and smashed her own Canadian record.

I look forward to welcoming the athletes of the world to Etobicoke Centre next fall, and I congratulate the many organizations and athletes who promote sport, fitness and health within my constituency of Etobicoke Centre.

VISITORS

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

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. It gives me great pleasure to introduce students from Dr. Emily Stowe Public School in my lovely riding of Durham. Welcome.

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

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ART GALLERY OF GUELPH ACT, 2014

Mr. Arnott moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr6, An Act respecting The Macdonald Stewart Community Art Centre.

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): Pursuant to standing order 86, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

1807041 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2014

Mr. Fedeli moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr9, An Act to revive 1807041 Ontario Inc.

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): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

MOTIONS

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding opposition day motion number 1.

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

Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that opposition day motion number 1, requested by the official opposition, scheduled for Tuesday, October 28, 2014, be rescheduled to Wednesday, October 29, 2014.

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

Motion agreed to.

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. I will affix my signature and send it with page Raveen.

1320

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas northern Ontario will suffer a huge loss of service as a result of government cuts to ServiceOntario counters;

“Whereas these cuts will have a negative impact on local businesses and local economies;

“Whereas northerners will now face challenges in accessing their birth certificates, health cards and licences;

“Whereas northern Ontario should not unfairly bear the brunt of decisions to slash operating budgets;

“Whereas regardless of address, all Ontarians should be treated equally by their government;

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

“Review the decision to cut access to ServiceOntario for northerners, and provide northern Ontarians equal access to these services.”

I support this petition and present it to page Faith, from my riding of Algoma–Manitoulin, to bring down to the Clerks.

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 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 and give my petitions to page Morgan.

CHELTENHAM BADLANDS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Heritage Trust”—or the OHT—“holds title to the Cheltenham Badlands, and the Rouge

Trail conservancy” who has managed responsibility “for the site under an agreement with the OHT; and

“Whereas community consultation and engagement is essential” to “the protection of the Cheltenham Badlands and surrounding areas; and

“Whereas local residents should be actively involved in all discussions about the Cheltenham Badlands and related projects in their community;

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

“That the Liberal government fully fund the Cheltenham Badlands management plan, which includes but is not limited to the fencing of the geological feature, viewing platforms, boardwalks, perimeter fencing, trail maintenance and other accessory requirements as part of a complete and approved management plan.”

I affix my name to it and give it to page Jamie.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over northeastern Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ontario government” made PET scanning “a publicly insured health service available to cancer and cardiac patients...; and

“Whereas,” since October 2009, “insured PET scans” are performed “in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with” Health Sciences North, “its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through” Health Sciences North, “thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name and ask page Renée to bring it to the Clerk.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Ms. Daiene Vernile: This petition is celebrating Hispanic heritage in Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario is home to over 400,000 first-, second- and third-generation Hispanic Canadians who originate from the 23 Hispanic countries around the world; and who have made significant contributions to the growth and vibrancy of the province of Ontario;

“Whereas October is a month of great significance for the Hispanic community worldwide; and allows” for “an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about the outstanding achievements of Hispanic peoples to our province’s social, economic and multicultural fabric;

“We, the undersigned, call upon members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support proclaiming October of each year as Hispanic Heritage Month and”

we “support Bill 28 by MPP Cristina Martins from the riding of Davenport.”

I enthusiastically support this petition, along with the thousands of Hispanic people in my riding of Kitchener Centre, and I will give it to Félix.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

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

“Whereas Winchester District Memorial Hospital provides essential health services to the residents of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and was awarded ‘accreditation with exemplary standing’—the highest award by Accreditation Canada earlier this year; and

“Whereas the projected increase in Ontario’s senior population demands that facilities have the resources and capacity required to accommodate increasing demand; and

“Whereas Ontarians cherish access to high-quality local health care; and

“Whereas the recent closure of 14 beds” at the Winchester District Memorial Hospital “and the loss of over nine full-time skilled staff positions at a time when Ontario has experienced unemployment above the national average for over seven consecutive years are the result of ongoing silent funding cuts that are threatening our cherished health care system;

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

“To immediately reinstate adequate funding levels for the Winchester District Memorial Hospital that would allow the reopening of local beds and the rehiring of local qualified front-line health staff.”

I agree with this and will be passing it off to page Raveen.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Whereas there are an estimated 100,000 to 300,000 unpaid internships in Canada each year; and

“Whereas youth unemployment in Ontario is over 15%; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Labour is not adequately enforcing the laws on unpaid internships;

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

“(1) Proactively enforce the law on unpaid internships;

“(2) Engage in an educational campaign to inform students, youth, employers, educational institutions and the general public of the laws surrounding unpaid internships; and

“(3) Undertake a comprehensive review of the current laws surrounding unpaid internships in Ontario.”

I fully support this petition, affix my name to it, and will give it to page Ben to take to the table.

CREDIT UNIONS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I have a petition here addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario support our 1.3 million members across Ontario through loans to small businesses to start up, grow and create jobs, help families to buy homes and assist their communities with charitable investments and volunteering; and

“Whereas Credit Unions of Ontario want a level playing field so they can provide the same service to our members as other financial institutions and promote economic growth without relying on taxpayers’ resources;

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

“Support the strength and growth of credit unions to support the strength and growth of Ontario’s economy and create jobs in three ways:

—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

—show confidence in Ontario credit unions by increasing credit union-funded deposit insurance limits to a minimum of \$250,000;

—allow credit unions to diversify by allowing Ontario credit unions to own 100% of subsidiaries.”

I will affix my name to it and hand it to page Meher to take it up front.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Toby Barrett: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health has eliminated non-hospital physiotherapy service from the Health Insurance Act; and

“Whereas this will drastically reduce the number of allowable treatments to 12 per year for people who are currently eligible for 100 treatments annually; and

“Whereas under the changes scheduled for August 1, the cost of visits under the CCAC (community care access centre) model will rise to \$120 per visit, rather than the current fee of \$12.20 per visit through OHIP physiotherapy providers; and

“Whereas funding for physiotherapy services to seniors in long-term-care homes would be cut by almost 50%, from an estimated \$110 million per year to \$58.5 million per year; and

“Whereas the removal of all non-hospital OHIP coverage for physiotherapy services in the community will contribute to a decline in overall health and independence for seniors....

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“That the delisting of OHIP physiotherapy clinics as of August 1st not proceed and that the provincial government guarantee there will be no reduction in services currently available for seniors, children and youths, people with disabilities and all those who are currently eligible for OHIP-funded physiotherapy.”

I affix my signature.

1330

TENANT PROTECTION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas escalating rental costs are making Ontario less affordable and leaving many tenants financially insecure or falling into poverty;

“Whereas tenants living in residential apartments and condominiums built after 1991 are not protected by rent control guidelines;

“Whereas this has created an unfair, two-tier system of tenant protection in Ontario where some tenants have no protection from large and arbitrary increases;

“Whereas fixing this simple loophole in the law will help protect tenants and help make housing more affordable and secure for thousands of Ontarians;

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

“That the province of Ontario act to protect all tenants in Ontario and immediately move to ensure that all Ontario tenants living in buildings, mobile home parks and land-lease communities are covered by the rent control guidelines in the Building Code Act, 1992, and the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006.”

I couldn’t agree more. I’m going to affix my signature and give it to Lily-Anne to be delivered to the table.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: It gives me great pleasure to bring forward a petition on celebrating Hispanic heritage in Ontario.

“Whereas Ontario is home to over 400,000 first-, second- and third-generation Hispanic Canadians who originate from the 23 Hispanic countries around the world; and who have made significant contributions to the growth and vibrancy of the province of Ontario;

“Whereas October is a month of great significance for the Hispanic community worldwide; and allows an opportunity to remember, celebrate and educate future generations about the outstanding achievements of Hispanic peoples to our province’s social, economic and multicultural fabric;

“We, the undersigned, call upon members of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support proclaiming October of each year as Hispanic Heritage Month and support Bill 28 by” my colleague “MPP Cristina Martins from the riding of Davenport.”

From a personal standpoint, my husband is Hispanic, so it gives me great pleasure to affix my signature.

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 fully support this and will affix my name and send it with page Callum.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from the people of Hanmer, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Liberal government of Ontario is currently reviewing proposals to sell off a significant amount of our shared public assets such as Ontario Power Generation (OPG), Hydro One, and the Liquor Control Board of Ontario (LCBO); and

"Whereas our shared public assets provide more affordable hydro, develop environmentally friendly energy, create thousands of good Ontario jobs, and are accountable to all Ontarians; and

"Whereas our shared public assets put money in the public bank account so we can invest in hospitals, roads and schools; and

"Whereas this Liberal government is more interested in helping out wealthy shareholders and investors than they are in the hardworking Ontarians who are building this province; and

"Whereas Ontario is stronger when there is shared prosperity;

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

"Stop the selling-off of our shared public assets. Keep our public assets in public hands."

I fully support this petition. I will affix my name to it and ask Jagmeet to bring it to the Clerk.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that, pursuant to standing order 47 and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 18, An Act to

amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour, when the bill is next called as a government order, the Speaker shall put every question necessary to dispose of the second reading stage of the bill without further debate or amendment and at such time the bill shall be ordered referred to the Standing Committee on General Government; and

That the Standing Committee on General Government be authorized to meet on Thursday, October 30, 2014, from 9 a.m. until 10:15 a.m. and 2 p.m. until 6 p.m. for the purpose of public hearings on the bill; and

That the Clerk of the Committee, in consultation with the committee Chair, be authorized to arrange the following with regard to Bill 18:

—Notice of public hearings on the Ontario parliamentary channel, the committee's website and Canada NewsWire;

—Witnesses are scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis;

—Each witness will receive up to five minutes for their presentation, followed by nine minutes for questions from committee members;

—The deadline for written submissions is 3 p.m. on the day of public hearings;

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 1 p.m. on Friday, October 31, 2014; and

That the committee be authorized to meet on Monday, November 3, 2014, during its regular meeting times for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

That at 4 p.m. on Monday, November 3, 2014, those amendments which have not yet been moved shall be deemed to have been moved, and the Chair of the Committee shall interrupt the proceedings and shall, without further debate or amendment, put every question necessary to dispose of all remaining sections of the bill and any amendments thereto. The committee shall be authorized to meet beyond the normal hour of adjournment until completion of clause-by-clause consideration. Any division required shall be deferred until all remaining questions have been put and taken in succession, with one 20-minute waiting period allowed, pursuant to standing order 129(a); and

That the committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Tuesday, November 4, 2014. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House; and

That, upon receiving the report of the Standing Committee on General Government, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading; and

That, when the order for third reading of the bill is called, two hours shall be allotted to the third reading stage of the bill, apportioned equally among the recognized parties. At the end of this time, the Speaker shall interrupt the proceedings and shall put every question

necessary to dispose of this stage of the bill without further debate or amendment; and

The vote on third reading may be deferred pursuant to standing order 28(h); and

That, in the case of any division relating to any proceedings on the bill, the division bell shall be limited to five minutes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Naqvi has moved government notice of motion number 5.

I recognize the government House leader to lead off the debate.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me to initiate the debate on this particular motion. I'm very pleased to be able to participate in this important debate, and of course, I look forward to hearing from other members of the Legislature as well.

Last June, the people of this province sent our government back to Queen's Park with a strong mandate. They placed their faith in us and our priorities that were outlined during the election campaign. Ontarians were clear that they wanted this Legislature to move past the games and grandstanding of the previous Parliament and get down to work.

I can speak from my own personal experience: I often heard from my constituents, when meeting them at their homes, how concerned they were about the manner in which the House was conducting its business, and the lack of substantive debate and passage of very important policy bills in the House.

During the campaign, we talked about, and the mandate we have received from Ontarians—the people of Ontario are expecting us to take action on helping to strengthen our economy; investing in our modern infrastructure, particularly our transit and transportation infrastructure; and supporting our essential services, while also creating a dynamic business climate for our businesses to succeed across the province.

Our government understands that. That's why we are committed to having a productive session of Parliament. We have an ambitious legislative agenda because that is what we believe the people of Ontario deserve.

1340

A key part of that agenda is Bill 18, the Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act. I would like to thank the Minister of Labour for all his work in bringing this bill forward. I know that his ministry has worked closely with all of our labour and business partners to develop the proposed legislation. As a former Minister of Labour, I understand just how important the provisions in this bill are and why we need to move forward with this bill now.

Just to provide some context as to how we got here, Bill 18 was originally introduced on December 4, 2013. At that time, it was numbered Bill 146. It went through several hours of debate in second reading as Bill 146, but like so many other important pieces of legislation in the House in the previous Parliament, it was, unfortunately, stalled.

Bill 18 also includes Bill 165 from the previous Parliament, the Fair Minimum Wage Act. That bill was debated, in fact, for 11 hours in second reading. Some 47 members from all three recognized parties in the House participated in that debate. But again, it was stalled, unfortunately, by the opposition parties.

It is clear we need to move forward with this bill. Bill 18 is based on public reports calling on government to act to better protect vulnerable workers, most notably the reports by the Law Commission of Ontario and the United Way.

Bill 18 protects foreign workers from exploitation, including from being charged usurious fees and having their passports taken away by employers. These individuals should not wait any longer than necessary to benefit from the protections that are offered in this bill. Once passed, Bill 18 will provide workers with information they need about their rights, in their own language, at work. Those workers in need require that information now.

Further, as the CBC and the Toronto Star have both highlighted, changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act are necessary to ensure that unpaid co-op students and other unpaid workers are covered under the occupational health and safety rules. Most importantly, this bill provides vulnerable workers with the right to refuse unsafe work.

Bill 18 will also allow workers and employers to plan for regular minimum wage increases based on the cost of living, and that is the Fair Minimum Wage Act part of Bill 18. Businesses and families need to know this bill has finally passed so they can begin their planning as we move towards indexing or pegging minimum wage to the cost of living, something that both businesses that are looking for predictability in their business operations and workers who are looking to have a fair minimum wage in Ontario very much are looking forward to.

We know, Speaker, that this is extremely important because a lengthy consultation process has already been undertaken by the minimum wage panel, which provided the recommendations that very much make up the essence of Bill 18, including hearing directly from 400 individuals and organizations over a few months. The panel made some very sensible recommendations that are being incorporated in this bill.

Speaker, to provide some background on this type of motion that I've introduced today, time allocation was codified in our standing orders in the early 1990s. This change in the standing orders allowed the government to put forward a debatable motion that would limit the length of debate of government bills and motions and help speed up passage of key legislation. A time allocation motion allows for committee time, where the real work happens in terms of hearing from members of the public, and of course debate on specific provisions through the clause-by-clause exercise. As always, the public will have an opportunity to participate through public hearings and written submissions as a result of this motion, and the opposition parties are welcome to put forward amendments to strengthen the bill as well.

Time allocation is one part of the legislative tool kit that is available and has been used by all three parties in Ontario. In fact, my friend the member from Leeds–Grenville will be very happy to know that from 1999 to 2003, the last Conservative government used time allocations for 60% of its bills—60%. That’s pretty extensive use.

Although it is our government’s preference to allow bills to progress through the normal course, these types of motions are sometimes necessary, especially when there are bills from the last Parliament that Ontarians are counting on us to pass, where we received a very clear direction from Ontarians in the last election that these policies are important for the economic growth and the prosperity of Ontarians. These bills, as I mentioned before—for example, Bill 18—have gone through considerable debate in the previous Parliament and now in this legislative session as well.

The voters of Ontario sent a clear message last June. They did not want any more of the stalling of the Legislature by the opposition parties. I urge all members in the House to support this motion and help pass Bill 18 as soon as possible.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: I would agree that the government has done a very thorough job in their motion of trampling on democracy, a thorough job of silencing the opposition and a thorough job of preventing the people of Ontario from having their say on a piece of legislation. Unbelievable.

The government House leader talks about, as I heard him say, “Speaker, it is our preference to let things go through the normal course.” This is the first bill since this election happened. Forget about the budget that was passed in July; this is the first bill that the government has actually been tested on their commitment to how we’ve heard, oh, my God, how many times—I can’t count—from the Premier and every one of her minions over there, “Oh, we want this new Parliament to work. We want to work with the opposition. We want to cooperate to give Ontario the best possible government it can have.” Then, at the very first opportunity on a piece of legislation, they shove it down our throats.

And do they ever like to talk. Do they ever like to talk—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the government members to calm down and allow the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to make his remarks.

The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has the floor.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I find it a bit strange that they were so quiet while their House leader was speaking—as were our members on this side of the House. We listened respectfully to what he had to say, but now it is our turn to disagree with what he had to say.

Time and time again, they’ve talked about working together. They had a little test before this bill. It’s called estimates committee. They want to yammer on about the election. The election is over, and nobody ever brought up this bill during the election, I say to the Minister of Labour who is sitting there, smiling like the Cheshire cat. Hey, nobody ever brought up Bill 18, or whatever its previous incarnation was, during the election; nobody brought it up once.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: You can call it whatever kind of cat you want. My wife calls it the Cheshire cat, and I’m with her on this one.

I’ll tell you, they should be embarrassed that they’re going to try to ram this thing through at this time. But I digress, because this wasn’t the first test. The first test has been going on over the last few weeks. It’s called estimates committee. Oh, yes. We all heard about MaRS. I suppose you’re going to say that the people had their chance to vote on MaRS and that the public is in favour of you people sinking \$308 million into that white elephant. I suppose you have got a mandate on that, too. You people look so embarrassed every time MaRS comes up. You’d like to get up on a spaceship and fly there and get the heck out of here because you’re embarrassed. It’s a joke.

1350

Speaker, the House leader talks about how this is still going to committee. Did he read his own motion? The committee that this is being sent to—that process is a joke. That is a joke. Even if committee doesn’t pass the bill, it will just be deemed to have passed. It comes back to the House—they are basically telling us when it will be voted on, and we know how it will be voted on, because they have the majority.

They like to go back into the past, and they like to talk about what happened in previous governments. But you know what is a funny thing about when somebody gets into government? They believe that everything that was done wrong in a previous government is okay now for them to do because the other guys did it wrong. So we can do it wrong, too, and that makes it right. That’s quite the thinking over there.

You didn’t believe in time allocation—you didn’t believe in it when you were sitting over on this side in opposition—but all of a sudden, now that you’ve got the keys to the liquor cabinet over there, you’re all going to be high on some kind of whisky and thinking you can just run roughshod over the rest of this House. Shame on you. This will come back to haunt you someday down the road.

Let’s get back to the genesis of this. The House leader met with our House leader and said, “We would like four bills to get passage through this House.” My House leader said, “We’re going to take that back to our caucus. We’re going to talk about it.” We came back and said, “You know what? We can work on this.” One of them is—well, they added a fifth. Of course, they are always changing their minds, like they did last Thursday on

private members' business. I haven't had a chance to talk to the whip about that yet.

They wanted Bills 10, 15, 18 and X.

Interjection: X?

Mr. John Yakabuski: They wanted Bill X. They haven't even tabled it yet, but they want it.

We were willing to work with that, because it's a bill that I was actually the critic on in the past Parliament. It was Bill 34 then: the security bill for courts and court security and nuclear plants. We were quite happy to work with that. It was a good bill. We made a lot of amendments. My friend from Scarborough–Agincourt—we were on that committee. We made a lot of good amendments to that bill, and we were happy with it. So we were prepared to put that one through. But, you see, my House leader then speaks to the government House leader—these are in-the-hallway meetings; we're just having chats—and he says, "Well, you know, Yasir, there are a couple of things"—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: They're having a conversation, and he says, "Yasir," and Yasir says, "Yes, Steve?" And Steve says, "Well"—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, the member, having served for some 11 years, is aware that members are referred to by their title, by their riding name or by their ministry, but not by their first name.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member is quite right. The normal convention, of course, is that we try to refer to each other by our riding names or ministerial names, but clearly, he was quoting from a conversation, or at least paraphrasing from a conversation.

Again, I return to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to make his remarks.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, the member from Mississauga probably wasn't going to have a chance to speak to this motion, so he wanted to get his five cents in. Anyway, good for him.

But, anyway—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, this one is a point of order. Standing order 23(h) prohibits the member from making an allegation or imputing motive to another member.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I don't find that there is a point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Perhaps we can get him to zip it—for a few minutes, anyway.

Back to where I was. So they're having a conversation in the hall, and my House leader says, "Look, we're prepared to work on those bills, but on Bill 10 and Bill 15"—

Interjection: Bill 21.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Sorry; Bill 21. We're asking for Bill 15 and Bill 21. We're asking for public hearings elsewhere in the province, because Bill 15, for example, talks about how they meshed the insurance bill with the old towing bill. There are a lot of tow companies in rural Ontario that are very, very concerned about some of the provisions in the bill. You can't force them to come down to Toronto for an afternoon hearing, a few hours of hearings, to get five minutes to make their case. Five minutes—that's less time than it took the House leader to read the stupid motion. Think about it. They want those people to drive down from rural Ontario to Toronto to make their case in five minutes. What would have been wrong with going up to rural Ontario and having those hearings?

They talk about other governments. Well, I'll say this for Dalton McGuinty—can I use his name? Oh, yes, he's not here anymore. I'll say this for Dalton McGuinty: I don't agree with a lot of the things he did, but in the first Parliaments that he had here, they were majorities too, and we travelled on those committees because he at least accepted that the view of people across this province was pertinent and relevant. But now we're in a new era. We're in the Kathleen Wynne regime.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Again, if you could refer to her as the Premier, that would be more appropriate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Sorry, we're in the Wynne regime. Just as they say "the Harris regime, the Davis regime"—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It would still be more appropriate if you would refer to her as the Premier.

Mr. John Yakabuski: This is the Wynne regime and all things have changed. Now, all of a sudden, democracy is out the window. The first opportunity you have over there—we've asked for hearings on two bills. We've made it clear: We are not going to hold these things up unnecessarily. We asked for hearings on two bills—not just the two bills, but think about the gas plants committee, where we've asked for the opportunity to speak to two witnesses—Laura Miller and Peter Faist. Laura Miller and Peter Faist would bring something to the gas plant hearings that no one else can do.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Standing order 23(b)(i) states specifically that the member must address the question at hand, none of which pertains to the subject of his last few remarks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I think the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is talking about the motion, but I would ask him to bring the point that he just made back to the motion as well.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It is about the motion. Also, this motion speaks to the tenor of this Parliament. It speaks to the view of the governing party. It speaks to

how they see opposition working with them. It speaks to how they see themselves working with opposition. The gas plant committee is an illustration of what has brought this on. We should have seen it coming, maybe, because Laura Miller and Peter Faist are two key witnesses in a criminal investigation being conducted by the OPP.

The Premier of Ontario, Premier Kathleen Wynne, had a great opportunity to put that baby to rest, to close the book by saying, “Yes, we’ll bring in those two witnesses.” By the way, Laura Miller and Peter Faist agreed to testify before the committee. They were not going to have to be dragged here in shackles. They were prepared to speak to the committee—two people left.

You also have to remember that when the hearings were going on, after the OPP filed their information to obtain, a whole new series of questions was raised, questions that even Peter Wallace, then the secretary of cabinet—he even voiced concerns about what was revealed in the ITO. Now Peter Wallace is nowhere to be found. All of a sudden, he’s not there anymore. Was he forced out the door or did he retire? Who will ever know? Who silenced Peter Wallace? Who silenced Peter Wallace?

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So this is what we asked. We asked for the government to give us two witnesses: Laura Miller and Peter Faist. We could have closed that committee down forever, allowed it to write its report and put that issue to rest. But without them, Laura Miller and Peter Faist—they are the ones who know about deleting emails. They are the ones who know about the destruction of public documents. They are the ones who know about unauthorized access to the office of the Premier of Ontario. They are the ones who—

Ms. Soo Wong: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Scarborough–Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: Mr. Speaker, can the member opposite speak to the motion before us, Bill 18? Because right now he’s digressing somewhere and talking about the gas plants. I mean, this doesn’t even make sense, Mr. Speaker. He has not spoken about Bill 18, which we’re debating on this discussion, so can he focus on the motion, please?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Again, I find that the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is speaking to the motion, but I would ask him, obviously, to bring it back to the actual text, the wording of the motion.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, absolutely, Speaker. What we have to remind ourselves from time to time is that when you’re speaking to a time allocation motion, you’re not speaking to a bill; you are speaking to the practice of the government. You’re speaking to what they believe is their right to run roughshod, willy-nilly, over the rest of Parliament. That’s what a time allocation is. A time allocation isn’t about free and fair debate; it’s about, “This is the way we’re going to shut down debate. This is the tool we’re going to use to stifle debate and to silence the opposition duly elected in this province.”

So when I speak about Laura Miller and Peter Faist, it isn’t about Bill 18; I freely admit that. It is about the practice of this government and its unwillingness to hear the other side. They forget about the owls and the eagles. They forget about them when they get on that side. That’s when they put on the blinders and the earplugs. Blinders and earplugs are standard issue in the Liberal caucus office. That’s why, if they would simply do those things, they would actually do themselves a favour.

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I hear from the member from Trinity–Spadina. He has awoken from his slumber. That’s the gentleman who said at the estimates committee that he believes that transparency and accountability is very good, but only at the right time.

So my point about Laura Miller and Peter Faist is that if you don’t allow them to testify before the committee, you can never, ever say that the committee’s work was complete. You cannot say the committee’s work was complete.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Mr. Speaker, let’s try this a different way. The member is in fact in contravention of standing order 23(e), which involves the anticipation of any matter already on the Orders and Notices paper for consideration. The member’s resolution is on the Orders and Notices paper for Wednesday afternoon, and the member is in fact not debating either a time allocation or the bill that is itself being time-allocated, but is in fact debating an opposition day motion that has not yet been called.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Once again, I’ll ask the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to confine his remarks to the wording of the motion before the House.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. As I was saying, if a government decides that it is going to operate in this fashion, it denies the people the full story. It denies the people, in fact, access to the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth—cornerstones of what makes this country so great.

In the case of Laura Miller and Peter Faist, if they’re not allowed to testify, it would be like a murder trial being shut down before the two eyewitnesses have come to testify, because they are the principal witnesses in that criminal investigation and this government has decided they will not testify.

I’m moving on now to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I’m going to have to ask you: How does that relate back to the text of the motion?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, an interesting question, and I appreciate the opportunity to answer that, Speaker. It is a very good question. That is, repeated in a different way, the practice of this government. It has the opportunity, in the Laura Miller and Peter Faist case, to show that they truly believe in getting the whole story out.

It's the same idea here: If we were to allow hearings on some of these bills across the province, we would allow the whole story to get out. We would allow the people who are most significantly affected by the legislation that this government is proposing—we would give them the opportunity to speak and offer their disagreement, or their constructive suggestions as to how that legislation might be made better.

I've got a tremendous amount of respect for the other 106 people who sit in this House, but we don't have a monopoly on right. We don't know everything; we don't understand everything. There are smarter people than us out there. Why wouldn't we give them the opportunity to let us know what they feel, how they feel, about a piece of legislation? This is a province of 13 million people—talented, wonderful people. Why not give us, as parliamentarians, the opportunity to hear what they have to say? Why not give us the advantage of being able to extract some of their knowledge, and input that into our legislation to make it better? No. This government and their House leader say, "Well, we need about five minutes of your time, and we'll move on."

You see, they've already decided what they're going to do. This is just the minimum that they could possibly do and get away with legally, under the terms of our standing orders in the House. This is the bare minimum, to get away with it.

Unfortunately, it appears that that's exactly what this government intends to do. For the next four years, we will sit here, doing our best to defend the best interests of the people of Ontario, but at the end of the day, it looks like they'll get away with it. Shame on them.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Before I begin my remarks, it's going to be a tough job being the follow-up for an opening act like that.

I'd like to start with a few things, talking about this time allocation motion here, a few things that I think we could all agree on, Mr. Speaker: All 107 members of this House work hard for our constituents. I believe all of us, in one way or another, were elected because our constituents believed that we could speak for them, that we would speak for them. They believed that. I think we can all agree. Let's start with something we can all agree on, Mr. Speaker.

I've been here for two and a half years, and it's an interesting place. All the people that I've dealt with in this House—I have respect for them all, and they all have the same goal. And up until today, and up until this motion, I believe we did all have the same goal, because we all had the ability to stand here and give the views of our constituents, the views of our stakeholders, whether we agreed or disagreed; we'd give their view. We all had that ability up until this motion. I understand this line has been crossed many times.

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We hear about the election, and yes, the Liberals won more seats than the others, granted, but that doesn't mean

that the other side shouldn't have a right to speak. That's what this time allocation motion is doing: It's giving only certain people a right to speak.

What we find most egregious about this—we're not against this bill. We aren't against this bill. We weren't trying to slow this bill down. One of my colleagues, later, will have remarks specifically to the bill. We weren't trying to slow this bill down. We don't understand why you need the hammer. I understand time allocation. I don't agree with it, but I understand how a government, in extreme situations when the opposition is actually trying to stall—but in this case, this is pure impatience or just lack of regard, and not only lack of regard for the members in this House—because that's not the people I'm really worried about; it's lack of regard for the constituents.

If you take this bill as an example—I believe it's Bill 18. There are portions of this bill that are very good. Some are not so good. It's meant to make stronger workplaces. It's to protect people in precarious jobs. That's a good idea. But you know what's really not good? Not only are you reducing debate here—I remember one time I'd spoken on this bill, and we have privileges here; I can stand up today and I can speak on this bill. My colleagues can't, because you're shutting the time off—but because of this time allocation motion, you're only holding one day of hearings here. If you were serious about protecting people in precarious workplaces, perhaps it would have been a good idea to have a couple of days of hearings in places where those people actually live and work. That's the idea of making government more accessible to people, because in here, it's not accessible to most people. Someone who is involved right now in precarious work or is fighting to get a year's back wages—someone who is fighting for that, if they're somewhere in the reaches of my riding or in Algoma-Manitoulin or anywhere outside of downtown Toronto, how are they going to get to Toronto to tell their story? No thought was given to that. The only thought was given to making it work for the governing party. Good legislation should work for the people. That's a big, big problem.

This bill is also two bills put together, with two different issues. Both are issues, actually, once again, that our caucus doesn't oppose. We don't oppose either. But it's not to say, "Well, we've had all this debate." No, we haven't had that debate on this bill.

If you look closely at this bill, if you look where the minister may order a specified date by which a review under subsection—that's for the minimum wage. So after this time allocation, that will never come to this House again. That's also a problem.

It's very quiet now, everybody, so I guess I'm not having the same impact as my friend Mr. Yakabuski.

Hon. Liz Sandals: That's actually a good thing.

Mr. John Vanthof: It depends, but it is—

Mr. Bob Delaney: John, you're actually talking sense.

Mr. John Vanthof: One of the members of the government party said I was talking sense, and that's because

I disagree with his party, because I really believe—and we really believe—that members should have the ability to speak to a bill. Should members have the ability to block continuously? I don't know if we should have that ability—but to say, “Bang! Six and a half hours. We have heard enough”?

And then, if you look further in the motion, “The committee shall report the bill to the House no later than Tuesday, November 4, 2014. In the event that the committee fails to report the bill on that day, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and shall be deemed to be reported to and received by the House.” Basically, it doesn't really matter. For those people who do come to the committee, it doesn't really matter.

So here you've got legislation that's supposed to protect people, and you're not even really trying to make an effort as a government to be open and—we've heard this time and time again—to be transparent. Well, part of the issue about being transparent as a government is to actually open yourself up and go out to the people.

They're going to say, “Oh, but we won the election,” and you did win the election. But they didn't win the election on this bill. If you're serious about people in precarious jobs, people who are fighting for back wages—if you were serious about that, you would have made an attempt to go where those people are, to go—

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: This bill is about minimum wage and precarious employment, and that's really, really an issue.

Time allocation—en français, on dit qu'ils ont imposé le bâillon. That's a gag, and that's what this is. “Time allocation” sounds like it's time management, or it's speeding things up. That's not what it is. Time allocation is picking a few people who can speak, and then basically one side makes the decision and they move on.

I am sure that that is not what the people of Ontario expected, when they heard the Premier talk about transparency, on the first bill of this session. I'm sure they weren't expecting a gag order on the first bill of the session, a bill that at least everyone in our caucus was perfectly willing to work with. We have never said that we didn't support this bill.

So, why? I guess the question that comes from us to the government is, “Why?” When you publicly say you want democracy to work, why don't you let it work? Really, why don't you let it work? It's difficult to understand.

What makes a government believe that only they have the best ideas? We've heard it several times. Several times I've heard it. I heard it today, that this was “the best government we've ever had.” Really?

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: Really? Again, the best governments, if you look through history—I wasn't here when Mr. McGuinty was Premier, but it did sound to me as if he did go out to the people after, and talk to them on individual bills—talk to stakeholders on individual bills.

In this case, talk to people who are fighting for their wages. Talk to people who have to raise a family on

minimum wage. That's what government should be doing, and that's not—that's not—what this government is doing.

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I think we've all learned things from our parents, and I learned a few things from my father. We would go to auctions. I'm a farmer by trade, and we would go to auctions. I was a little boy and my dad was showing me things and he said, “The most powerful people in the room don't show their power.” The people who were bidding like this weren't the people who were controlling the auction; it's the people who bid with a wink. But they don't display their power.

He told me that honest people don't have to tell you they're honest. He told me that if someone has to tell you that they're honest, beware. I think if my dad were still alive today, he would say the same thing about people who keep having to call themselves transparent. A truly transparent government doesn't have to talk about being transparent. A government that truly believes in democracy—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Practises it.

Mr. John Vanthof: —practises it. Thank you. And that's very, very important.

Maybe it hits harder for people who live a long way away from this glorious place we call Queen's Park, but I remember I subscribed in for the committee on social policy, I believe it was. It was the LHINs review. We ended up in a town—Vankleek Hill, I think. It was close to your riding, Steve. I remember those people were a bit shocked that the government was in Vankleek Hill, but it made a big impression on those people that government actually came to their part of the world and let them present. That is how to show that you truly care about people. It's not about, “Here, we're going to debate this for six hours; then we're having this. And whether this committee comes up with anything or not, we don't care.” That's what they are saying: “We don't care. It's going to pass.”

The government has the power to pass this bill, but it also should have the prerogative to actually listen to the people who are impacted by this bill.

Today we had a question to the Minister of Transportation about a road condition in northern Ontario. Again, it's a long way away. Last Thursday, we had a discussion on making a committee to look at roads. I'm going to roads because this is why democracy in a big province like this has to reach out farther. You can't just make the rules here. I'm elected to represent my constituents, but again, if government came closer to my constituents and to other people's constituents, we would make better decisions, better policies.

The reason I'll give, an example of why government cannot be central, as this motion is doing: We talked last Thursday about reducing gridlock around the province. In that session, I spoke about how there is a big sign, like when I come down the 400 onto the 401, it says, “401 express lanes moving slowly”—that sign. We have one outside of my house, six and a half hours from here, and

they changed it, Mr. Speaker; they changed it this week. What that sign says now is, "Give motorcycles ample space." It was snowing when I went to work here.

Once again, that decision was made. Whoever changed that sign did not change it in northern Ontario, because we don't have many motorcycles in northern Ontario right now. We have a few, but not a lot. July has great weather for motorcycles, but not October.

It would be the same as if the signs for Temiskaming Shores were changed, or the signs for Toronto were changed to Temiskaming Shores, because then that sign, when you come off the 400 onto the 401, instead of saying, "401 east, moving slowly," would say, "Watch out for moose."

That's what people have to understand: This province isn't just here. This province is a microcosm of different people, different places, and it's great because of that. But to be truly great, we have to work on governing it like that.

There are huge parts of the province that feel incredibly ignored. Motions like this, that say, "If you want to speak on this bill—we really want public participation, but you have to come to Toronto for your five minutes. By the way"—if you read the motion closely—"we don't care what you say anyway."

Read it closely. That's what it says, and that's a problem.

We are in favour of the bill. We are strongly opposed to this motion.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to be able to speak to this time allocation motion, although I have to admit that I'm a bit surprised. I'm the opposition House leader. I think I'm someone who can get along with the other two parties. I just don't understand why the government requires this motion on Bill 18, but I'll respect the government's right, under our standing order 47, to be able to table it.

I first want to say something about a member's statement that the member for Mississauga–Brampton South made today. She made a very nice statement about former Premier Bill Davis. One of the quotes she said in her member's statement was that Premier Davis was "a good speaker, but a better listener."

I think, from what I see today in this motion and a similar motion that I understand will be debated tomorrow, I can't say the same thing about Premier Wynne. Again, one of the things you have to do as a government, is you can't say one thing and do something else. Over and over again, since we came back to this House, you can look at it completely—in the speech from the throne, the government is saying one thing, in terms of a throne speech, yet their government does something completely different on the floor of this House. I'm going to give you some examples.

The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke did talk about how we handle these bills. I had a meeting last Monday with the government House leader. Essentially,

he gave me four bills he'd like to fast-track, and he was very specific. We'll have a couple of hours of debate; we'll go in and have some public hearings; we'll bring the bills back, have a short debate for third reading and pass them. He gave me a list of four.

On my word, Speaker, I went back to my caucus and tabled that. On Thursday, at our normally scheduled House leaders' meeting, between the government House leader and the House leader for the third party, I reported exactly what I promised to do. I took it to my caucus.

There were two bills that they requested that we have some hearings on. One was in regard to—and Ms. Elliott is here, our critic for health—the blood plasma bill, the two bills that were put together to make Bill 21. There are some questions about the blood supply, how we deal with plasma. There were a lot of questions. I know members have received emails. We wanted to have some hearings so that people in eastern Ontario could be heard and so that people in southwestern and northern Ontario could be heard.

Out of four bills, to have two bills—Bill 21 and also Bill 15—have hearings outside of this place, I thought, as the opposition House leader, was fair. I had no issues with the other two bills. Then, as the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said, there was a fifth bill added to the mix on Thursday.

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To deal with something like Bill 21—that's a very, very substantive issue in the province—I didn't think that asking the people in eastern, southwestern and northern Ontario, in addition to having our regular public hearings in Toronto, was such a big deal. Obviously, I was wrong. I didn't believe that having a bill that had some specific concerns with tow truck operators, which was amalgamated in the insurance bill—that having public hearings was a problem. But you know what? I misunderstood.

The other thing I think I misunderstood, Speaker—and I read the throne speech again today. There were some words in the throne speech: "Your government will lead from the activist centre." They also had a heading in the throne speech called "Building from the Activist Centre."

I think I got that wrong. When the Premier used those words, I thought she was the activist and I thought, because of how we use the terms left, right and centre when we refer to right-wing policy or left-wing policy or centrist policy—I felt that when the Premier used the words "activist centre," they meant that she was going to govern from the centre. But I was wrong. We've got facilities all over this province. We have one that the Toronto Maple Leafs play hockey in, called the Air Canada Centre. I know what the activist centre is. The Legislative Assembly, our building, has been renamed the "activist centre," because we're going to make activists from eastern Ontario, southwestern Ontario, northern Ontario and all across this province come here to the activist centre to give us their feedback. We're not going to go to them; we're going to make them come to us. So I got that wrong, Speaker.

I was wrong when the Premier talked about being an activist. She's not the activist; we're going to haul every-

body in here who has a problem with any government policy and we're going to force them into a one-day hearing. That's the way these guys are going to govern, and I don't think it's right. I don't think it's right. Again, it's saying one thing and doing something completely different when we come to the Legislative Assembly. I just believe, when you read the rhetoric in the throne speech, that it doesn't make any sense.

One of the pages—I'll read you the quote. This is from your own throne speech: "It will not invite your questions only after decisions are taken, but as decisions are made. Your government will put evidence before ideology and choose partnership over partisanship." That's what they say. The government House leader says, "Steve, what do you think? Do you think we can fast-track some of these four bills?" "Sure, we can fast-track a couple. In the spirit of partnership over partisanship, let's have a few hearings for a few bills that Ontarians actually want to talk us to about." Tow truck drivers have an issue with that provision in Bill 15. They want to talk to us. There is a whole host of Ontarians who want to come and be heard on Bill 21. To me, Speaker, when I use the words—and I do use them from time to time, "partnership over partisanship"—that's what I mean. I don't mean that you're going to come here in a four-hour, five-hour or six-hour period, get your five minutes before a committee and we're going to ram a bill down your throat the next sitting day of the Legislature. To me, that's not partnership over partisanship.

I also believe that there are a number of words here where, again, the government says one thing and does something different. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke spoke very passionately about the two witnesses, Peter Faist and Laura Miller, who had agreed on May 8 to appear before the justice committee. The words they used in their throne speech were, "We're going to let the committee write its report." Most Ontarians felt, "Okay, they're going to continue the process and people are going to get to the bottom of it."

This is, just for the record, the subject of an OPP investigation. So you would think that a government that wanted to be open and transparent, that made people believe they were going to be activist, would allow two people who had already agreed to testify to come before the committee.

We've seen, with this motion today—and regardless of what happens on Wednesday, I think we're going to again have the government say one thing and do something different when it comes to voting and when it comes to speaking.

To use in the throne speech words like "your government will implement its plans in the same manner they were developed—openly and transparently"—that, to me, is probably one of the most laughable comments from this government—and to have motions put forward at estimates regarding the MaRS deal and then to have the government members vote against them.

The member for Trinity–Spadina—I heard him very vocally respond to the member. The quote that I have in

front of me says, "I support openness and transparency, but at the right timing." I don't agree with the member from Trinity–Spadina. The right time is right now. This is the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. We have a duty to Ontarians to give them a forum where we can get to the bottom of some of their decisions. That's part of our Westminster system of government, the opposition holding the government to account. That's what we do. But when I have motions—I had to look at these again. I can't believe, for the life of me, that they would say one thing and then do something else.

I'm just going to read a couple of the motions from estimates. One of the motions was simply: "I move that the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure provide the Standing Committee on Estimates within two weeks a copy of the MaRS mortgage agreement." The government voted against it.

Another motion: "Chair, I move that the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure provide the Standing Committee on Estimates within two weeks a copy of the Ernst & Young report on MaRS." The government voted against it.

"I move for the committee to consider the following motion: that the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure provide the Standing Committee on Estimates within two weeks a copy of the MaRS business plan which supported the \$234-million mortgage." The government voted against it.

There's three motions; I've got more. I've got more where, again, the government says it's going to be open and transparent and then the government members do something completely opposite.

It's the same as the words in the throne speech: the "activist centre." They're not being activist. They're not allowing people to be heard.

I believe we're being fair and reasonable. For me to say, out of four, now five, bills, to allow two or three quick passage—at least two—and have some minor hearings, which would take four or five days, to me that's reasonable. That's allowing the government—I'll read their words again—to "invite ... questions," to "put evidence before ideology" and to have "partnership over partisanship." Meeting the government halfway on having committee hearings for two bills and allowing two to pass quickly, to me, is partnership over partisanship.

Allowing bills that we've debated in the House—and the government House leader, I feel, bent the truth a bit. With this bill that's before us to be time-allocated, Bill 18, we've had four—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the member to withdraw his unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Steve Clark: I withdraw. I can continue. Correct?

We had four members of 28 who spoke on Bill 18 before it was time-allocated—four members; one in seven. I believe, from speaking to the government House leader, that at one meeting I indicated we had maybe a couple more speakers that wanted to get things on the record.

We just went through an election, as the government likes to remind us with every question of question period, but we did have people in the small business community—I know in my riding—indicate that they would have liked to have an opportunity to put some things on the record. I already did, before the election. There were a number of letters that I read into the record, comments from my local chamber and a number of other members.

But again, we went through this process. We all had, I would guess, a chamber of commerce all-candidates meeting, so there were some small business people there. This is Small Business Month, so we do get a lot of feedback from the business community. It would have been nice to have a reasonable amount of debate to finish up Bill 18 to be able to have it go in, have some committee time and bring it back.

The government decides that the closed fist of the government is going to be applied to the chin of the opposition party on this bill and the bill tomorrow. And probably, although the government House leader says he doesn't have a plan next week, I'm assuming that there will be more closure motions and more bills—standing order 47 being invoked on the small list that he's given me.

Let's face it; we've all read the media. We know that the 24 or 28 bills, depending on how you're counting them, are going to come back here. I would expect that this government, again, time after time after time, will be putting their fist to the chin of the opposition and the public by using this order and closing debate.

1440

You know what? I want to make sure that I give you another quote from your own throne speech. This is a very important quote, so I hope you're all listening over there, because when the Lieutenant Governor said it, it made me think about times like we're seeing today and tomorrow. It says, "Your government knows that trust is hard-earned, but easily lost. And so it will work each and every day to keep your trust by meeting its commitments to you." I suggest—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: That was June 12.

Mr. Steve Clark: No, no, no, it wasn't June 12. It was July for the throne speech. On days like today, you need to think, Minister, about that statement, and you need to think about those people who, tomorrow, when we debate that bill, will be looking for a vehicle to express their feelings about you amalgamating those two bills so that people in eastern Ontario who wanted their voices to be heard, who wanted to keep their trust in you, will be silenced. Those people in southwestern Ontario who had the trust to support you in June—some of them will lose their trust in you because of motions like this today and losing their opportunity to come in this—

Interjection.

Mr. Steve Clark: You can quote all the polls you want, Minister, with all due respect, but do you know what? Trust is easily lost. You need to make sure that when you carry on a government, you have that balance and you deal with people openly, honestly and with

respect, whether it's here in the chamber or here in a committee hearing or out in the other community.

I agree with the previous speaker from the NDP about going to small communities for hearings. I had a constituent call me over the last couple of weeks and thank me for a local issue I brought up at the social policy committee in Kingston. I drove from Brockville to Kingston for the sole purpose of making sure that one of those local concerns was put on the committee agenda so that the committee and the members of the public who were there knew. I had a very nice thank-you note the other day that—the LHIN took that local issue that I brought up at the social policy committee and made that change. When the chair of the South East LHIN, Donna Segal, met with me in my office, I thanked her. I thanked her for listening to that submission and making sure that item was dealt with. That's the type of thing you get when you listen to people, when you go and actually have standing committees that go into local communities. I didn't ask for a lot, Speaker: having one hearing in eastern Ontario, one in southwestern Ontario, one in northern Ontario and a couple of days in Toronto. Five days for a province our size, I suggest, was fair and reasonable.

Regardless of standing order 47 and the fact that the government can—and regardless of the history that members on the other side want to speak about, this is all about fairness, and this all sets the tone in the first real month of Parliament. We sat for three weeks in the summer. We sat last week. We're now in our fifth week of sitting since the new Parliament was elected. We're dealing with two motions on two consecutive days, one on a bill that I think we all agree could move fairly fast, that being Bill 18, and one tomorrow that we felt, with just a little bit of opportunity for the public to address some concerns, we could get this Parliament working.

As the House leader of the opposition, motions like this, to me, are something that I don't think are necessary. I think a motion like this wasn't warranted, given the amount of co-operation that I pledged to the House leader last Monday and on Thursday. I think this is a dangerous road we're going down that we don't need to. Again, for a government that, numerous times in their document, says that they want to be open and accountable and they want to be transparent—there are so many words in the throne speech that pledge the same thing over and over again, but again, it's one thing to put it in print; it's another thing to put it into practice. This is my concern with this government time after time after time.

Listen to the member for Mississauga–Brampton South when she refers to Bill Davis as a good speaker and a better listener. You folks on that side need to be a better listener. Having these types of bills on the floor of the Legislature this early, when we've already pledged co-operation, is the wrong way to go.

Thank you, Speaker, for allowing me the opportunity.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's an honour to rise in this place to speak on behalf of the people I represent in London

West, although I have to say that I'm a little bit concerned about the circumstances in which I'm joining this debate. I thought we were going to be having a discussion on Bill 18, the Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy Act; as the member from Leeds–Grenville just pointed out, I'm one of those members who actually has something to say about this legislation, and I want to get some of my concerns on the record.

Instead, now today we're talking about time allocation on this bill, and I hope that my remarks will demonstrate the importance of allowing debate, of listening to what members have to say and listening to the people of the province about the concerns that we have heard from our constituents.

As the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane said very clearly, our caucus supports this legislation. There is no doubt that we recognize that strong workplaces are the absolute foundation for a strong economy, and we absolutely need a robust legislative and regulatory framework so that we can protect worker health and safety, so that we can provide fair compensation for employees, and most of all so that we can prevent the exploitation of vulnerable workers, who are often, as we know, young people and immigrants.

Bill 18 is what is known as an omnibus bill, which again makes the need for debate an even greater priority, because it makes changes to many different pieces of existing legislation that are all related to employment and labour. Today I'm going to spend most of the time that I have left addressing what is, to me, one of the most important changes that is proposed in this bill, and that is around the amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act that will protect unpaid workers and students in particular.

As the NDP critic for training, colleges and universities, as MPP for a city that includes two of Canada's finest post-secondary institutions—Western University and Fanshawe College—and as a former school board trustee, I have a special interest in making sure that students who are engaged in work placements as part of their program of study are protected in the workplace.

To give you a sense of the importance of this amendment, I want to take a moment to provide an overview of the legislative protections that are currently in place for these post-secondary and secondary students. At the post-secondary level, students fall into four categories, depending on whether their work placement is paid or unpaid, and whether their work placement is optional or a mandatory requirement for graduation.

Students whose placements are paid and mandatory receive the same protections as most Ontario workers. They're covered by the legislative protections of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, which means that they have the right to refuse unsafe work, the right to participate in resolving health and safety concerns, and the right to know about any hazards to which they may be exposed in the workplace. They are also protected from reprisals if they exercise their rights. These students also receive WSIB coverage from the Ministry of

Training, Colleges and Universities, which means that they are insured if a workplace accident or injury occurs during their work placement.

Students whose placements are paid but optional are also covered by the Occupational Health and Safety Act, but they are not covered by WSIB.

Students whose placements are unpaid and mandatory are not covered by occupational health and safety but are covered by WSIB.

Finally, students whose placements are unpaid and optional are not protected by anything; they are not covered by either occupational health and safety, nor are they covered by WSIB.

At the secondary level, students are not normally paid, so they're not covered by occupational health and safety. However, the Ministry of Education either provides WSIB coverage directly or requires employers to provide WSIB.

1450

You can see from all of these different variations that there's a real patchwork quilt out there of protections for young people who are doing work experience as part of their program of study. There's a real hodgepodge of health and safety protections for students. That's why our party is so supportive of the change proposed in Bill 18 to change the definition of "worker" in the Occupational Health and Safety Act.

Currently, in order to be a worker under the act, you must be paid. Bill 18 amends the act to include people who are performing work but are not being compensated, such as the students I just described, as well as unpaid interns whose internship is not connected to an educational institution. This amendment is long overdue and is obviously critical to protect the safety of young people in our workplaces.

We know that in Ontario, within the last 10 months, three students have died while participating in work experience programs offered through their educational institutions. Just last month, 17-year-old Adam Keunen was tragically killed in an accident while on an unpaid high school co-op placement. Adam was in grade 12 at Beamsville District Secondary School and dreamed of becoming a welder. He had not even finished his first week on co-op placement when he was crushed under a front-end loader. The investigation is still ongoing, so it's not clear whether coverage under the Occupational Health and Safety Act could have prevented Adam's death, but it's telling, however, that the investigation is being led by the Niagara Regional Police Service because the Ministry of Labour does not have jurisdiction over occupational health and safety issues related to unpaid work.

Last December, we learned of the death of Wayne Affleck, a 27-year-old St. Clair College student from Leamington who was studying to be an apprentice electrician. Wayne was found without vital signs in the electrical room of the solar farm he was working at.

Earlier this year, just this past April, we learned of the death of Aaron Murray, a 21-year-old student at Loyalist

College who was working on an unpaid practicum as a security guard at Trent University. Aaron was also juggling a day job as a manager at a local McDonald's and was on his way home from an overnight placement shift when he crashed his car just before dawn.

The circumstances of Aaron's tragic death show the kinds of pressures young people are under to build a life for themselves and gain decent work. He was expected to work for free as part of his program while holding down a part-time job just to get by.

As I said earlier, there's no question that the amendments to the Occupational Health and Safety Act proposed in Bill 18 are critical to protect young people, but what's missing from Bill 18 is any recognition of the absence of WSIB for post-secondary students who are doing optional work placements.

What is also missing is any reference to the basic workplace protections that all Ontarians have a right to expect for secondary school students and post-secondary students, because whether they are paid or unpaid, whether their placement is mandatory or optional, any student who is involved in a college, university or secondary school work placement is completely exempt from any of the protections of the Employment Standards Act. That means they have no entitlement to reasonable hours of work. They have no entitlement to breaks, no entitlement to leaves of absence. New Democrats see this as a glaring omission from this legislation, which is why I introduced my private member's bill, Greater Protection for Interns and Vulnerable Workers, earlier in July. We believe that everyone who is involved in a workplace in Ontario deserves basic protections available under the Employment Standards Act, and that applies in particular to those young people who are being exploited as unpaid interns.

Currently, there are six very specific and narrow conditions under which employers can legitimately claim exemption from their obligations under the Employment Standards Act and bring in trainees without paying them. There is no provision under the act to allow employers to bring in interns to do the work of paid employees and not compensate them. Yet employers continue to openly flout the act and actively recruit for unpaid interns. All it takes is a couple of minutes on Craigslist, Kijiji or any other job search website, and you will find numerous postings for unpaid workers. I have a few that I'd like to share here.

Here's a posting for a digital video intern in Toronto: "This is a great opportunity for students to gain working experience in the ... industry.

"This is an unpaid internship. We will gladly provide a letter of recommendation for candidates that complete their assigned responsibilities professionally and successfully."

Or here's a sales and marketing internship that was posted on Craigslist earlier this month: "This is an unpaid position with ample opportunities to learn and be mentored by the VP of business development."

Here's a posting for a digital host internship. It says, "This is a useful and more importantly, fun opportunity to apply hands-on skills for a music start-up. This internship is unpaid, but is definitely perfect for personal and career development!"

Here's one for an accounting and marketing unpaid internship: "You can learn lots with this start-up and exciting promising operation."

Here's a public relations promotions coordinator. It says, "This position is not paid; however, a stipend to offset the expenses will be provided."

At a time when youth unemployment is double the provincial average and good jobs are few and far between, it's easy to understand why young people agree to take unpaid positions, why they are so desperate for relevant work experience and so anxious to get their foot in the door that they feel they have no other choice than to work for free. New Democrats believe that young people who are doing the work of paid employees deserve to be paid.

When the Minister of Labour spoke to Bill 18 last week, he talked about the employment standards enforcement blitz his ministry had conducted over the spring and early summer. The blitz involved inspections of 57 GTA firms in industries that are known to hire unpaid interns. Of the 31 firms that had interns, 42%—almost half—were found to be in violation of the Employment Standards Act. That is a staggering number of employers. From our perspective, it shows that the existing provisions of the act are not doing the job; they are not protecting young people from being exploited. While it's great that the ministry is finally taking steps to enforce the legal criteria for unpaid internships, enforcement blitzes can only scratch the surface.

Enforcement that is complaint-driven depends on young people being aware of their rights under the Employment Standards Act, but we know that that is usually not the case. Unpaid interns who do understand their rights may be unwilling to lodge a complaint because of fear of repercussions, fear of getting a bad reference or, even worse, fear of being blacklisted from the industry they are trying to enter.

I come to this place from a background as a researcher, and I do appreciate the data that was shared by the ministry as a result of their enforcement blitz, but I'm frustrated by the lack of data about the extent of unpaid internships across Ontario. We have estimates in Canada saying that as many as 300,000 unpaid interns are working in this country, but we have no way of knowing how widespread the practice really is, no way of tracking how many young people are being asked to work in Ontario, often illegally, without compensation.

That's why my private member's bill requires employers not just to post a poster in the workplace, but also to meet with interns before the internship begins to review interns' rights under the Employment Standards Act and to provide written notice to the ministry about conditions of work, length of employment, job description, hours of work and whether the act applies. We believe that a much

more proactive approach on the part of the ministry is needed to educate and raise awareness among both employers and interns about the rights of interns in Ontario workplaces.

What's also missing from Bill 18 is an anonymous reporting mechanism to allow third-party complaints about contraventions of the Employment Standards Act, which is essential if we are truly committed to protecting vulnerable workers and is also included in my private member's bill.

1500

In addition to changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act, in addition to fixing the gap in WSIB coverage, in addition to cracking down on unpaid internships by amending the Employment Standards Act, New Democrats also believe that greater oversight is required for post-secondary programs that involve students in work experiences, which are also known as work-integrated learning programs, and that greater effort is needed to make these experiences paid.

That's why I will be reintroducing the private member's bill I introduced last session, the Learning Through Workplace Experience Act, to increase the number of paid work opportunities for students, to make sure that students have high-quality learning experiences and that they are not simply brought into a workplace in order to displace paid employees.

Before I close, I want to briefly address some of the other provisions included in Bill 18, because there is so much in that legislation that we need to discuss.

The act includes measures to index minimum wage to the rate of inflation and sets up a process for reviewing the minimum wage every five years. This is an important provision because minimum wage rates are one of the tools governments can use to reduce poverty and close some of the wage gaps between women and men, between racialized workers and non-racialized workers.

However, the effectiveness of minimum wage rates as a policy tool in reducing poverty depends on where the rate is set. Simply tying the minimum wage to the cost of living will not, on its own, raise low-waged workers out of poverty if the rate is not set high enough in the first place. That is why New Democrats argued for a \$12-an-hour minimum wage before indexing sets in, instead of the \$11 that has been set by the Liberals. It's why we are concerned that this bill gives the minister alone the authority to review the amount every five years without coming back to the Legislature.

Another important provision of Bill 18 deals with the regulation of temp agencies. We know that temporary work is increasing dramatically in Ontario and across Canada. We also know that temp agency workers earn an average of 40% less than their co-workers who are hired directly by a company. They often receive few or no benefits, have much less access to on-the-job training, and have little protection against employment violations or termination.

Bill 18 creates new record-keeping responsibilities for temp agencies to track and record hours worked by a temp worker and to retain those records for three years.

It also introduces the concept of joint and several liability in the case of temp agency employees, which will make temp agencies and the client company jointly responsible for paying workers' unpaid wages. This makes sense because, from the perspective of the temp worker, what is most important is that they get paid. Who pays is not the issue. In practice, this important law means that employers who use temp agencies will have to make clear arrangements as to who is going to be responsible for compliance with the Employment Standards Act.

Bill 18 also amends the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act to clarify responsibilities for temp workers who are injured during the placement. It will attribute costs to the employer where the injury occurs and will assess wages with reference to the income of the agencies.

While these are important measures and will certainly address some of the injustices experienced by temp workers, who are often taken advantage of because of their precarious work situation, New Democrats believe that these provisions do not go far enough, and we need to have public hearings so that we can hear from people who work with temp workers about some of the other policy solutions that could be put in place to really provide meaningful protection for temp workers.

Another important section of the bill deals with recruitment fees for migrant workers. We know that migrant workers are often forced to pay recruiters tens of thousands of dollars in fees, leaving many with no choice but to borrow money in order to find employment in Ontario. Currently, under the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act, recruitment fees are prohibited for live-in caregivers. Under Bill 18, this prohibition will be extended to all migrant workers.

Certainly, the NDP supports this provision. However, we also believe that stronger action could have been taken. For example, the effectiveness of the proposed ban on recruitment fees will be limited because it relies on employee complaints rather than proactive enforcement.

The final section of the act I'd like to address concerns provisions designed to reduce wage theft. This is an obvious and much-needed improvement. A recent Workers' Action Centre survey found that one in three workers in low-wage precarious jobs experienced wage theft over the last five years. Even interns, even those who are paid, are often vulnerable to wage theft because they do not know their rights under the Employment Standards Act or are fearful of reporting their employer and jeopardizing their future employment. The two main sections in Bill 18 that will help reduce wage theft are the extended damages provisions, new information disclosure requirements for the Employment Standards Act, new rules for employer self-audits under the ESA, and a prohibition on tip-outs.

Overall, as has been stated by other members of my caucus who have spoken to this bill, the New Democrats support this legislation. We want to see it move ahead, but we do have some substantive concerns about gaps in the legislation that could be addressed. We need to hear

from Ontarians. We need to hear from people who are going to be affected by this legislation, so that we can make the provisions of the bill stronger, so that we can better protect vulnerable workers and so that we can strengthen Ontario workplaces.

I look forward to hearing the input that is provided on Thursday, during the public hearings, and to improving the legislation before it comes back to this House for third reading. Thank you very much for your time.

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

Mr. Naqvi has moved government notice of motion number 5. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those who are opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

I wish to inform the House that I have received from the chief government whip a deferral notice asking that the vote be deferred until tomorrow, Tuesday, October 28, at the time of deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

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

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 23, 2014, on the motion for 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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated Bill 15, it's my understanding that the member for Mississauga–Streetsville had the floor. I return to the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: How coincidental. I had a number of calls waiting for me on Friday from some of my constituents who actually wanted to ask about this, to ask what is the state of this thing. It allows me to address my constituents' concerns today and to inform them that I'm going to be sending each and every one a copy of Bill 15 and they can see exactly what's in it.

Just as a quick recap, among the many other things that Bill 15 does, it enables the province to be able to take some very specific action, and, more importantly, to work with the insurance industry to get at some of the systemic causes of fraud, those things that are simply

tacked onto your insurance premiums and, not only that, but are marked up before you pay for them in the form of higher insurance premiums.

This particular act, Bill 15, is one that I hope is going to get speedy passage through the House, get a good look at in committee—because this is the kind of statute that is a bit of a game changer, so that's one that we want committees to take either a first or a second look at—and bring it back to the House, get it debated, get it passed and continue to keep our insurance premiums coming down. They are down about 6% over the last year. I will say, in fairness, I didn't notice mine come down, and I looked very carefully. So I want to see these measures enacted and I want to see my insurance premiums come down the 15%, on average, that the province has pledged.
1510

With that, I am pleased to say that I'd like to wrap up my remarks and take questions and comments.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I appreciate the government whip's, the member for Mississauga–Streetsville, comments. It's interesting that he's going to send a copy of the bill to all of his constituents, but tomorrow morning we'll be debating yet another closure motion by the government to suppress debate by his constituents. They'll only be allowed one day of hearings for that government motion. I understand from our staff that we will be right back here, just like we were a few moments ago on Bill 18, to discuss this Bill 15.

Again, I appreciate the member's very eloquent comments, but there are some Ontarians who would like to have further debate on this bill. Again, Speaker, I speak through you directly to the member in hopes, in his capacity as the chief government whip for this government, that he will use whatever power is at his disposal to try to influence the government not to close debate on this bill.

I think he is in a great position as the government whip to try to listen to Ontarians, especially on the towing provisions of this bill. We've got tow truck operators, people in that business from all across Ontario who want to have debates close to their home. These are small business men and women who can't take a lot of time off to come to Toronto for a one-day hearing. I really hope that he will listen to me and some of my colleagues and allow hearings in the east, in the southwest, in the north, and also here in the city of Toronto.

I look forward to his response and his final two minutes.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to take off from where the member from Leeds–Grenville was. I was actually in the House listening to the comments he had brought to the floor in the debate on the closure motion, which the government has proposed. I say it myself: It's very difficult for people from Algoma–Manitoulin to travel and get to the airport—if they can afford the airport—and get down to Toronto. So closing down debate, making

sure their voices are not being heard, is something very problematic and difficult for me to accept from this government, particularly—on a lot of their campaign promises—they were going to be open and transparent.

I pride myself from where I sit that I've developed my partnerships; I firmly believe in that. I'm going to be continuing to work on developing my partnerships, but what this government has chosen to do today is going against everything that, at least, since I've been here since 2011—it is not the direction that we should be going in.

I would hope that going forward we're going to be seeing some changes. I am not particularly encouraged, as far as from where I sit in the backbenches, as to the demeanour and some of the comments and some of the actions that are coming in from the members opposite. I'm hoping that will change.

I just want to get back to the bill here: Bill 15, Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act. One of the biggest issues that we have with this bill is, if it does go through, there is going to be a reduction. Right now insurance companies are required to pay a 5% interest rate for pain and suffering for individuals. That is an incentive in order to get them to resolve some of the insurance fraud and some of the matters that are before the courts. If that is significantly reduced to what is proposed—I think it's down to the 1.3%—you're removing that incentive in order to get individuals to the table and having those discussions.

I'm looking forward to having a lot of debate on this particular bill and many more to come.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: I did hear the comments from my colleague from Mississauga–Streetsville. I have to reflect on the Streetsville part of his riding, as it's very interesting and historical because that's where, of course, Hazel McCallion, the great mayor of Mississauga, actually started her political career a long time ago as the deputy reeve of Streetsville, and that morphed into Mississauga. We know that the wonderful grand dame of municipal politics will be leaving today, effectively, with the election of a new mayor in Mississauga.

You know, the comments made by my colleague on Bill 15 are right on. I just want to reflect for a moment. Let's talk about Darling Insurance in Peterborough, founded many years ago by Norm Blodgett. Norm was the chair of the IPM in Peterborough in 2006. The company has expanded under his son, Peter, who is the president and CEO. Peter's brother Scott works with the Ministry of Finance here at Queen's Park.

Even though I'm not a customer of Darling Insurance—I deal with Ted Topping in Peterborough—I do know, when I talk to Peter, the kind of quality service that he provides in the auto insurance sector to the great customers in Peterborough and beyond. I do know that to every customer who comes in, he gives the best deal possible. He sits down with them, he looks through their insurance requirements and he gives them the kind of rate

for their auto insurance and their house insurance and their boat insurance and every other insurance that you want from Darling—the right price at the right time with the right coverage for those individuals who are getting that.

That's what this bill is all about: giving the consumers in Ontario a fair shake, Topping Insurance a fair shake and Darling Insurance a fair shake. That's the kind of legislation we need to bring in the province of Ontario. We do know, when you look at your auto renewal notice from Topping Insurance or Darling Insurance, that those companies are responding to the market and giving those deep discounts to the consumers in Peterborough.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: The member from Peterborough is eloquently speaking about Darling Insurance. They're not only in Peterborough; they have many branches in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock. I just thought I'd put that in as a reminder.

Interjections.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Anyway, what we're discussing here is the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act. We're just tidying up that, speaking from the Liberal side of the House. I know that we're going to do an hour leadoff by our very competent member from Nipissing, who—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Fedeli financial services: You can't beat it.

Ms. Laurie Scott: You can't find a person who knows more about finance than the member from Nipissing. You'll be getting the book over there shortly.

I think that the Liberals—this bill, insurance and fraud, we all tie this together. They've had many studies done. I've been in committees where they talked about insurance and fighting fraud. Really, we need some action out there to help the insurance companies lower their rates. Huge fraud rings, mostly around the GTA, just put their roots further, they get more in depth in the communities if you don't nip them in the bud, if I can say it—if you don't get on top of it. So I say we need more tools to fight insurance fraud so all our premiums come down and people can be treated fairly across the province.

I do want to mention, from tow truck drivers, certainly in my area—there are parts of the bill that penalize the good-acting, good tow truck companies that I have in my area. They should not be penalized under this bill. They need an opportunity to voice their concerns. What we just debated was the time allocation motion on another bill that limits debate on this and limits the opportunity for people, especially in rural Ontario—again, not having their voices heard by the Liberal government here in Toronto. That's very unfair. I know the member from Nipissing is going to speak further, but we're asking for that to be stopped.

Thank you. I see the chief whip is going up over there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the questions and comments. I return to the member for Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: My colleague from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock was welcome to go on, but it was just the Speaker stepping in with his heavy hand to just shut down debate with the questions and comments.

To my colleague from Leeds–Grenville, I share his concern about the towing provisions. This is a bill that is finally going to make this a level playing field so that we don't penalize the good actors. I think we're on the right page here.

To my colleague from Algoma–Manitoulin: You've noted the out-of-town deputations. Now, as my colleague knows, out-of-town deputations are frequently done by teleconference or video conference. That's important for people who want to comment on this bill, because we definitely want to hear them. In fact, we have, in my time, sometimes flown upwards of 15 or so members and legislative staff to a location in Ontario where our entire hearing day consisted of just a few deputations. So anyone that wants to make a deputation—if you're in the north, if you're in rural Ontario, if you're in the east or if you're anywhere where a deputation isn't occurring, you can still apply to make a deputation to the committee. You can either make it by teleconference from your home, on your telephone, you can use Skype and you can get yourself connected in, or we'll arrange for you to go to another place where you can sit down in front of a camera and give your deputation.

1520

To my colleague from Peterborough, I really want to thank him for his words of wisdom. He talked about Darlington and Topping Insurance. You know, those are the type of plainspoken folks who would buy you a cup of coffee at the East City Coffee Shop in Peterborough.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Lunch, even.

Mr. Bob Delaney: They'd even buy you lunch? I'll make sure that we tell them that.

I do want to thank my colleagues from the various parties for their contributions to this debate and for their suggestions regarding the remarks that I made over the last two sessions. Thank you, Speaker.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Thank you very much, Speaker.

Interjections.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I want you all to settle down for an hour. This will be an exciting, scintillating hour on insurance for you.

Interjection: Only an hour, Vic?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Only an hour today, I want you to know.

Speaker, thank you for the opportunity to speak to Bill 15 for an hour this afternoon. This bill is a continuation of a century-long drama when it comes to auto insurance in Ontario.

It seems from time to time that auto insurance becomes a trendy concern and we come out with some legislation. That has resulted in lots of bureaucracy and lots of legislation, piled one on top of 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.

That brings to mind some of the other times I've stood in this Legislature and said, "We have the highest." It reminds me that we have the highest payroll taxes in all of this nation, as well as the highest auto insurance rates. We also have the highest energy rates in all of North America, and very sadly, on Saturday, the rates will go up yet again, to over 14 cents. We're now going to have a solid lock on the highest energy rates in all of North America.

But we're here to talk about insurance today, so it's important to note that we've heard from stakeholders, including advocates for accident victims, who have concerns about this bill. There are concerns around the aspects of this legislation related to changes affecting the towing industry. I'm going to speak at length about that at the end, in perhaps the last 10 or 15 minutes. I think it's important to listen to those concerns and see if there are improvements that we can make to this bill in committee to address each and every one of them.

This bill essentially merges Bills 171 and 189 from our 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 Ontario drivers, which we all know has been a failure.

Overall, I will say that this bill is indeed a small step forward. There are, unfortunately, few significant cost savings that will be achieved from the bill, but on the whole it is supported by the insurance industry, because they consider it a step in the right direction. The trial lawyers support most of it, but have issues with amendments to the pre-judgment interest rates. The medical and rehabilitation community is primarily concerned with the additional bureaucracy of the licensing requirements.

Bill 15 will move the entire dispute resolution system to the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Licence Appeal Tribunal. The implications of this move are, first, moving dispute administrative costs from industry-funded FSCO to taxpayer-funded Ministry of the Attorney General. So there's no overall reduction, but less pressure on auto insurance costs. That's only a shell game. We're robbing Peter to pay Paul. We've done that, sadly, in the last 11 years. We've seen that in many other sectors, but in this particular case, taking the costs from one and giving it to another, the costs did not disappear; just who pays for them has changed. So there's no pressure downward on auto insurance rates from that.

Mediation services will still conceivably remain an issue. We recommend having the option for a claimant and insurer to use private mediators. This gives claimants more choice and allows them to avoid long queues in the publicly administered mediation process.

This bill also doesn't address the issue of why so many cases go to dispute in the first place. Our party has recommended using existing medical assessment guidelines to have truly independent third-party assessments. That's what we feel we should be doing, and this would

make injury classifications more black and white, and eliminate the need for mediation in some cases.

There are amendments that we have and that others will have, and let me suggest a proposed amendment right here and now: that we remove the part of the bill that mandates that all cases with a no-fault component be heard before a tribunal only. Doing so will allow claimants with both a no-fault and a tort case to pursue the matter as one, and will not lead to the cost and confusion of having to pursue them separately. This is not magic. This is just a good, solid proposed amendment to this bill.

Let me talk about the prejudgment interest charges. Prejudgment interest refers to the interest charges on the expenses incurred during the period of a dispute. Currently, as you heard earlier, the interest on pain and suffering is fixed at 5%. That is, if a claimant has claimed pain and suffering and gets a favourable court ruling, the insurer has to pay the amount with 5% interest. Bill 171 proposes tying this interest rate to the market rate. Interest rates for out-of-pocket expenses incurred during a court proceeding are already tied to the market rate. This is something that we support. That's the kind of move that we are interested in supporting.

There's also a lot of debate about licences for service providers. Bill 15 proposes issuing licences for health care providers that provide services to auto accident victims. This aspect is meant to deal with fraudulent practices of certain health clinics, particularly in the GTA, that will overbill insurers or will bill for unperformed services.

The issue of health clinics was addressed in the anti-fraud task force's report, which was released in November 2012; we're coming up now to its second anniversary. We supported implementation of the recommendations of this report, but sadly, so far the Liberal government has only addressed four of the 38 recommendations. That's over the past 23 months.

We also have a proposed amendment in this area: Scrap the licensing regime that is currently in the bill and instead require that all health clinics appoint a designated manager—having a designated manager will be a requirement in order to bill insurers through the HCAI system; and, in the event of possible fraudulent billing practices, require FSCO to report to the designated manager of the respective health college.

1530

It sounds a little complicated, but it's a very simple amendment that will be implemented into this licensing regime.

Then we also can talk about the licensing of insurance agents and adjusters. This section of the bill provides some clarity regarding licences for insurance agents and adjusters. This section of the bill can best be described as housekeeping. We support this section.

Fraud remains a key driver of upward cost pressure on auto insurance rates. It's unclear—absolutely unclear, actually—if this legislation, as is, will achieve the government's 15% rate reduction goal, especially given the fact

that the government has failed miserably in meeting its 8% interim reduction target. This government's talk about results is simply that, Speaker: It's only talk. There has been no definitive action on achieving this 8% number.

Our party has advocated a comprehensive plan to bring down auto insurance premiums for everyone, and we will continue to propose amendments, including on this bill, regarding prejudgment interest and dispute resolution, which will improve the legislation. We've said from the very beginning that the NDP demand for a 15% auto insurance premium reduction would have unintended and negative consequences.

I have spoken in this Legislature before. State Farm, a company that held 11% of the auto insurance market in Ontario, has picked up and left Canada, citing the Ontario auto insurance market as the primary reason. This is what we mean by "unintended consequences." For every action, there's an equal and opposite reaction and, in this case, a company with 11% of our province's business is gone from Ontario and, indeed, gone from Canada.

We have a historical example we could have learned. New Jersey promised to cut rates by 15% back in 1998. Numerous companies there left the market at that time, making auto insurance very difficult to obtain. It's the law of unintended consequences. You don't want that to happen, but if you don't plan it through, that's what happens.

While rates in New Jersey did indeed come down 15% over two years, the lack of availability, choice, and competition then led to a 27% spike in premiums two years later. Again, this is the law of unintended consequences. That's what happens when you don't understand all of the consequences that could arise from these various actions that you take.

Further, we've started to hear from various constituency offices that people with a few blemishes on their record are being dropped by their insurance carriers. Insurance carriers cannot drop a client during their policy, but can refuse to renew a policy. More and more drivers are being dropped by their insurance carriers as they try to rid their books of even the most moderate of risks.

If insurance becomes more scarce, it will not only leave people frustrated and without coverage, but it will also lead to major increases in premiums. That's the law of supply and demand. New Jersey was the best example. We just need to look to the past to understand what will happen in the future. A 15% reduction caused companies to leave, caused supply to shrink; demand goes up; prices go up 27% in New Jersey. That is simple economics, Speaker.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I thought Governor Chris Christie would have—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes, you can read, Minister, all about it in the Fedeli Focus on Finance. Look for that plug. Thank you.

Hon. Jeff Leal: I just want to know if it's a bear market or a bull market—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I can consult with you at a later date on the state of Canadian—specifically, on Ontario

markets. But I can tell you, with our highest hydro rates in all of North America, we know what happens to companies in Ontario.

When the Auditor General released, at that time, his annual report in 2011, the independent evidence supported what we are hearing in a scathing report. It seems that we use that language around here an awful lot: “scathing report.” Speaker, it’s because there are a tremendous amount of scathing reports. But in that particular scathing report, the Auditor General noted that not only was the regulator, FSCO, not meeting its legislative customer service standards, but, Speaker, it wasn’t even close.

As set out in the Insurance Act, mediation is supposed to be completed within 60 days—period. That’s set out in the act, Speaker. So if someone gets in an accident and feels their insurance company is shortchanging them, they can initiate a dispute. The first step of that dispute is to take part in a FSCO-administered mediation process. It is the hope of this process that the insurer and the claimant can agree on some type of mutually agreeable settlement in order to avoid going to the courts or to a FSCO-administered arbitration.

This initial process is supposed to be completed within 60 days. That is what is set out in the act. What the Auditor General noted in 2011 is that, due to the substantial demand for mediation services, FSCO had only 5% compliance of that timeline. Some 95% of the cases were not being resolved in the 60 days, the timeline that was set out in the act. In fact, most applications at the time were being dealt with not in 60 days, but within 10 to 12 months after the initial filings.

This had led, Speaker, to a backlog of more than 36,000 cases here in Ontario. That’s just the backlog. That is a real problem that requires practical solutions from our government. But is anybody here talking about that? No, Speaker. Only our party, only the Progressive Conservatives, talk about it and continue to bring this very issue up in the Legislature. Speaker, time after time we continue to talk about the act not being met. The auditor brought it up in 2011, and still we have this ongoing backlog.

Finally, after months of this, the Liberals did agree to review the dispute resolution process. They appointed Justice Cunningham to review the system and provide recommendations. Moving the dispute resolution system out of FSCO’s hands and into the Licence Appeal Tribunal in the Ministry of the Attorney General is per the recommendations of Justice Cunningham and something, quite frankly, Speaker, we really don’t object to.

You’re noticing a bit of a trend here. There are many things in this bill that we do not object to. But, Speaker, there are a tremendous amount of aspects of this bill that will require some serious work, and we are going to continue to provide recommendations when it comes to committee, including amendments.

However, if Bill 15 is aimed at reducing costs so the government can deliver on the premium reductions they’ve promised, we’re nowhere near there yet, Speaker. Quite frankly, we’re not even halfway there.

1540

It’s worth noting that the insurance regulator, FSCO, is industry-financed, so moving any administrative function out of FSCO will reduce that cost to the industry that they have to pay to FSCO. Therefore, it is conceivable that premiums could come down slightly because of that. However, costs are not reduced at all. Again, we’ve robbed Peter to pay Paul. Now, rather than paying for the dispute resolution system through their auto insurance premium, Ontarians will pay for it through new taxes.

If the goal of the bill is to reduce costs, this is nothing more than a shell game. I mentioned that earlier. It doesn’t reduce your costs. It will perhaps slightly reduce your insurance rate, but your taxes will go up to pay for this new administration that’s going to be handled now, for the first time, by the Ministry of the Attorney General. The costs haven’t gone away. That’s why I—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Shifted.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Yes, the costs have been shifted from this pocket over to this pocket. That’s all that has happened here, Speaker.

Another area that I think this bill falls short on is the role of the private mediation services. Back when FSCO was experiencing its highest backlog of mediation cases, they contracted for a private mediation service to help clear the backlog. They’ve done it before to help out, so why isn’t this an alternative? This is a short-term alternative. We’ve previously recommended to open up the system to private mediations. Providing choice and expediting the mediation process has cost-saving implications. Speaker, when something takes 10 to 12 months to do instead of 60 days, that adds costs. There are inherent costs that are built in.

One thing I’m also concerned about is eliminating the option to pursue a dispute in court following a mediation. As it stands now, once a dispute moves through the mediation stage without resolution, even after the 10 or 12 months that it takes, the claimant and the insurer will get together with respective legal counsel and decide whether to take the case to an arbitrator or to the courts. While a number of disputes that arise are strictly no-fault and would be best served by going through an arbitrator, some cases have both a no-fault and a tort component. Removing this option therefore has a number of implications. There are four:

(1) It removes the inherent fairness of allowing a local judge to decide in a dispute—simple.

(2) It removes the right to sue for extracontractual damages, leaving such issues strictly in the purview of a tribunal not authorized to deal with the equities of the situation.

(3) It causes more rather than less costs by forcing insurers and claimants to fight battles on two fronts rather than one front on every case. That adds costs.

(4) Ultimately, it will reduce rather than enhance opportunities to access justice.

So there are flaws with that.

I’m hoping, of course, that our amendments and our recommendations will be listened to. Again, there’s a lot

about this bill we like, but there are certain areas that not only are not going to help reduce costs for the ratepayer, taxpayer, insurance payer, but there are some that will actually increase costs, which defeats the whole purpose of bringing this bill forward in the first place.

Speaker, now I'd like to touch on a previous suggestion that our party has made to improve the auto insurance system in Ontario. The first is to encourage competition and reduce excess bureaucracy. We'd like to adopt a file-and-use rate-setting process. I'm going to take moment or so to explain what I mean by that, Speaker, but this file-and-use rate-setting process will allow companies to lower prices quicker. That's what we're after here.

So we're bringing a suggestion that actually will lower prices quicker. It will ensure greater market competitiveness and encourage a wider range of discount offerings for Ontario drivers. Isn't that what we want this bill to be all about? The file-and-use system would allow technology to enter our marketplace quicker. This file-and-use system would be of great benefit to seniors and also new drivers in our province, whether they be young or new immigrants who have gotten driver licences, so that we can get a true, accurate measure of how they're performing.

Right now, I'll explain the file-and-use system. The current system of filing and waiting for a response from FSCO to go ahead with a rate increase inhibits the ability to use technology at its fullest. Right now, the insurance companies must file and wait for a response from FSCO; we've already heard from the Auditor General a narrative on responses from FSCO, from a 60-day to a 10-month or a 12-month waiting for one of their areas of mediation.

The insurance company, whether they're going to raise or lower their rates, has to create a report. These reports are thousands of pages long. They have to include all of their supporting math and their stats, including the actuarial science that was used to prove why their rate request is a plus or a negative. So they file and wait. They file, they advance all of their supporting documents and they wait. Whether it's a rate increase or a rate reduction, Speaker, this is the method.

Now, when you file and wait, it can somehow take between nine months to a year to get a rate change in this province. Even a rate reduction, when they file, can take that long to go through FSCO. So if you want to be competitive and you want to bring lower rates for your customers, under the current system it can take an insurance company well over a year to actually become competitive and lower their rates. Isn't that what this bill is supposed to be all about? Yet we continue to have these impediments in the way to lower rates.

So what our party is suggesting is that you have a file-and-use system, which would allow industry and auto insurers to compete. We could have seen State Farm remain in the marketplace here. We might even see Progressive come into our marketplace here in Ontario. We watch their commercials every day. We see Flo. We can't have access to that—

Interjection: What about Grey Power?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Some of us would qualify for Grey Power.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Many of us actually would qualify for Grey Power.

Speaker, we would likely have more insurers competing for our marketplace. We all know that "more" means competition, and competition is what brings lower rates in Ontario. That's what we want to see in our province: competition.

1550

So far, the things that we're seeing are hurting competition, sending companies like State Farm away and keeping companies like Progressive out, because we're not up on the latest technology. We don't have a file-and-use rate process while FSCO goes through the math and the actuarial statistics that have been presented. We want to see more competition. That's how you lower rates in Ontario. It's time-proven and time-tested, and that's what we want to see here.

I'll shift over to the dispute resolution process. In the event of a claims dispute, our party wants to allow people to opt for private mediations. This will reduce wait-times and costs associated with waiting for the government-appointed mediator. It will happen quicker, and when it happens quicker, the costs are lower. When the costs are lower, your rates will come down. There are some fundamental, core principles and values that can be brought into this insurance sector to reduce costs. I've outlined several of them, and I'm truly hoping, as we bring forward these recommendations, many in the form of amendments, that what we've talked about today for the last half hour at least will actually be listened to, because these are the very items that will actually help the government achieve this 15% reduction that they're looking for—not in an artificial way, not in a shell-game way, not in a way that is going to hurt the companies and cause them to leave, but in a way that will actually, truly reduce their costs. When their costs are lowered, rates can come down. This isn't just forcing the rates down arbitrarily, as in New Jersey, and watching them spring up again by 27% in two years, as happened in the past.

I'm speaking, again, about the dispute resolution process. People will either come to an agreement sooner, or it will be off to the courts or off to an arbitrator quicker, so that they can get somebody to get their agreement in place with the insurers sooner. The sooner it can be treated, the sooner they'll get healthier and the sooner they'll get back to work and get back to their normal lives. So this doesn't just have cost consequences; this has human consequences as well. By getting to these mediators quicker than waiting eight, 10 or 12 months, this will help them in their lives. This transcends costs.

Unfortunately, some disputes last so long that a temporary injury, because they're not getting the necessary treatment, can become a permanent injury, and then that adds even further costs to the system. It's harmful to them, and it's costly to the system. So we are proposing some simple changes that will fix a lot of what ails not

only our troubled industry, but the people who have been involved in an accident.

We also want to establish a truly independent peer-reviewed medical assessment system. We want standardized assessment procedures that require multiple assessments performed by medical professionals. By doing so, this is another use of FSCO.

We have talked, as a party, for quite some years now about combatting fraud. The government has indicated movement on a special fraud unit. Despite previously discounting our idea, the government has decided that they've realized, probably for the first time, that we really do need to deal with fraud. This is a big, big, big segment of our insurance.

I want to congratulate our member from—one moment, Speaker, as I think about what his full riding name is—Elgin–Middlesex–London. I want to thank him. I want to thank our member Jeff Yurek for his spectacular work over the last several years as our critic. He has been right since day one, and I am pleased to see that the Liberal government is finally addressing this issue of fraud.

We believe that we need to establish a special unit of the crown attorney office to investigate and prosecute fraud, period. So, government, now we agree with you on the fraud unit. There's no hesitation there. Thank you, by the way.

Speaker, on this segment, before I get into the lengthy segment on the towing industry, we need increased accountability. This is my last chapter on this. We need a fair, well-functioning marketplace for auto insurance. I think we agree on that. We want to make sure the senior insurer executives are personally and financially liable for the conduct of the company.

I think what has happened over the years is, there's no trust anymore between the companies and the people paying the premiums. There is some way that we need to re-establish that trust, and one of these ways is to make the senior executives accountable.

I'd like to touch now on the towing aspects of this legislation. I'm going to talk a little bit about that, and then I'm going to spend a considerable amount of time on very specific amendments for the towing chapter.

By and large, towing companies, garages and storage yards provide efficient, reputable, top-notch service to the people of Ontario. However, a minority have been reported to have been taking advantage of consumers.

I think that happens in every sector. I think it's inappropriate to punish the good guys in the towing industry with unnecessary warrantless entry and suffocating overregulation—that this bill will provide—accreditation, licensing and training, to tackle fraud and organized crime in the tow truck, storage and auto repair industry.

The safety of motorists, tow truck operators and other roadside assistance workers is a concern and a focus of our member from Simcoe North, Garfield Dunlop, whose “slow down, move over” legislation was introduced three years ago. It was a wonderful focus, and I'm so pleased that our member has brought that forward.

Consumer Protection Act changes for the towing and storage providers section of the act deal with several issues. There are nine of them:

- disclosure of information to consumers;
- requirements that tow and storage services provided to consumers be authorized;
- deviating from estimated payment amounts;
- the provision of itemized invoices;
- insurance requirements;
- publication of rates;
- a tow and storage consumers bill of rights;
- requirements that consumers be allowed to remove personal property from towed or stowed vehicles; and, the ninth section,
- the establishment of qualifications for tow and storage providers.

There are approximately 1,200 tow truck and vehicle storage operators in Ontario and approximately 3,000 tow truck drivers. Most of them provide excellent service to their customers and contribute to keeping our roads free and clear by removing vehicles, including those involved in collisions. They do that quickly and efficiently. Anybody who has been involved in an accident would know that these men and women are experts in their fields.

1600

However, some in the business do not meet the standards that are indeed expected of them. Some tow truck drivers charge exorbitant rates, leaving vulnerable accident victims feeling surprised and distressed at a time when they already are deeply distressed. Customers have reported having their vehicles towed to far-off storage facilities to increase mileage, thus raising prices. That's part of the fraud that we speak of. People report going to pick up their vehicle from vehicle storage lots, only to find they've been asked to pay unexpectedly large amounts before their vehicles are released. That's the unscrupulous aspect that we spoke of, Speaker, which also adds to the costs.

Again, this is why we believe addressing fraud is one of the major areas we can address to reduce rates. Some towing operators are involved in fraud rings that infiltrate auto insurance claims by steering claimants to a particular auto body storage and repair shop, or health care clinic, or legal service provider. This is what is happening, on a limited scale, but it's causing your insurance rates to continue to rise.

The Highway Traffic Act would be amended to remove the current exemption for tow trucks under MTO's commercial vehicle operator's registration system, the CVOR system. The proposed legislation would allow the ministry to set qualifications and standards governing the operation and use of tow trucks, including driver certification and training requirements, and prescribe penalties to the violators.

On March 2, 2011, Garfield Dunlop, our MPP from Simcoe North, introduced his private member's bill, the Highway Traffic Amendment Act, commonly called the Roadside Assistance Vehicles Act of 2011. Including tow

truck operators in the “slow down, move over” legislation will recognize the dangers these men and women face, and will help prevent crashes on Ontario highways. It will reduce injuries and save lives.

Speaker, I want to talk about the storage and lien reforms. This part of the act requires body shops and tow truck operators to give notice of vehicles in their possession to the owner of the vehicle in a reasonable time-frame, particularly when the storer has reason to believe that the vehicle in their possession was received from a person other than the owner of the said vehicle. Again, all of this is meant to cut down on fraud and treat consumers more fairly when it comes to storage rates. We support this amendment.

I'd like to take some time now to actually go through the commentary that we received from the various towing organizations and associations throughout Ontario. There are three different months here where they have provided commentary, and you can see a little bit of a shift over the last three months. I've got some discussion from August of this year, from September and again this month. You'll see a little bit of a shift and perhaps a little bit more concern from the sector and, as we've heard earlier, some serious concern at the thought of perhaps having this time-allocated, with only one day of hearings here in Toronto when we've got so many issues in rural and northern Ontario, where it will be difficult for their members to come here, to Toronto, for that one day of discussion. At least let me give a flavour of where they are and what their thinking is. You'll see, again, a little bit of a shift in their original thoughts and where they are today.

Back in August, we heard this from the groups: “Bill 15 is considered by the two towing associations to be a positive step towards correcting some of the problems the towing industry currently faces.” So when we look at schedule 1 of the Consumer Protection Act, specifically under 65.2, what they're saying—and this part applies to consumer transactions involving tow and storage services. What the industry is saying is, to eliminate any confusion on the description of the services provided by the industry, they feel there should be a distinct reference between towing and recovery, as they are two different and separate functions provided for at many collision scenes.

We see, in the same act, under 65.3: “No tow or storage provider shall charge a consumer or a prescribed person acting on behalf of a consumer for any tow or storage charges unless the consumer or prescribed person has first been given the prescribed information in prescribed manner and within the prescribed time.” There's a lot of prescriptions going on here. You'd think that Jeff Yurek would have written this as a pharmacist rather than as a critic in this sector. But the towing industry has said that the consumer or the prescribed person is not always present at a collision, and that “prescribed information” actually needs to be more defined.

Under “Exceeding estimated amount”: “Subject to the regulations ... no tow and storage provider shall charge

for services an amount that exceeds by more than 10% the authorized estimated amount or the amount computed in the authorized manner.”

What the towing organizations have said is, there are many recovery services involving collisions that are difficult or impossible to estimate reasonably accurately due to unknown circumstances. This is particularly true when it involves heavy transport trucks. In many cases, the use of outside resources, such as cranes, loaders and tipping fees, may be required, and providing an estimate will seriously delay the removal and cleanup of the scene. Further to this, the collision scene, in many cases, will be attended by employees of the tow company with no knowledge in estimating a recovery job.

I can tell you, Speaker, I drove here to Toronto from Morrisburg a week or so ago and there was, indeed, a major accident on the 401. When I was driving to Morrisburg, there was a large transport trailer that was in the ditch in between the east- and westbound lanes. I noticed it around 2 in the afternoon. There were crews working to remove all of the goods. Twenty-four hours later, I'm driving back and was stopped there for 45 minutes because there were cranes. They were off-loading what appeared to be a bread truck. The bread had all been removed, but the huge racks had to be moved, and there were cranes now on the site—this is 24 hours later—to help move the vehicle off-site.

Could you imagine how somebody could have shown up on that site the day before and given an estimate, not understanding the full breadth and scope of this particular accident? So, here we are, 24 hours later, the 401 was closed for 45 minutes while the crane was there removing—who could have imagined all of that would have been necessary?

Under 65.9, “A tow and storage provider shall not charge an amount for tow and storage services that is greater than the amount usually charged by that provider for the same services merely because the cost is to be paid” by an insurance agent. Right? You need to have clarifications in this that discuss what the rates are and what these limitations are. Some of these are just very reasonable amendments that at least we need an opportunity to discuss. In a time-allocated motion and one day of hearings, we're not going to have the opportunity to discuss even the bare bones of these amendments that the towing industry—and this is only on their small section of this act.

Under 65.10, “A tow and storage provider who ... has an interest in a location or facility to which a vehicle may be towed for repair” etc.—they're commenting, “We feel it would be more appropriate that this should read ‘shall disclose to the consumer whose vehicle is being towed the nature and extent of the interest in the location if the location is not owned or operated by the tow operator.’” Again, these are reasonable points that bear discussion at committee and bear hearing from the industry.

1610

On 65.10(2): “If a tow and storage provider fails to make the disclosure required under subsection (1), the

provider shall not demand or receive payment from a consumer....” Again, that won’t be necessary if it is reworded in the way we had discussed earlier.

Under 65.11(1): “A tow and storage provider shall provide a consumer with a copy of the Tow and Storage Consumers Bill of Rights in the manner required by the regulations made under subsection (2).”

They’re suggesting this would be difficult at the scene of a collision as, many times, the consumer is not present. This, however, could and should be posted in their place of business.

There’s a debate here on the contents of the vehicle: “Unless the regulations provide otherwise”—etc., etc.—“every tow and storage provider that provides tow and storage services ... shall provide the consumer or a person acting”—they want them to have “access to the vehicle that is the subject of the tow....”

What the industry is suggesting is, this does not happen when payment is reasonably assured and only happens when the tow call is a law enforcement call. It is a normal situation for the professionals in the industry to release prescribed drugs, baby seats and other paraphernalia—groceries, important documents, eyeglasses etc. However, when a vehicle is deemed to be abandoned, or has abandoned tools etc., those would be retained to persuade payment of services. The industry continues to believe that when providing law enforcement tows, they’re working for the government, and payment should be guaranteed.

They also talk about an opportunity where a lien exists on the vehicle, which includes the articles within the vehicle, and the tow operator could be held responsible if the articles are either stolen or damaged when not stored properly. If these articles must be released, does this mean there’s no lien on these articles in the first place? Interesting point. It bears debating. It bears discussion at a committee, not a time-allocated discussion where you can’t bring up these salient points and have a good debate on them.

If this is the case, they go on to say, then the storer should be absolved of any responsibility for the contents of the vehicle. Again, they make an interesting point. You have to have the opportunity to debate these points.

Their third comment is, does the release of articles include cargo etc., from transport trucks when, in some cases, the only security available from a transport collision is indeed that cargo? This is very important when dealing with US or out-of-province transport trucks. They make a good point. It would be a good debate to have and a good discussion to have at the committee level. But if you limit the debate, if you limit the time to discuss these, how can you have that debate?

They get to the “no charge to consumer” section: “A tow and storage provider shall not charge a fee for permitting access in accordance with subsection (1) unless the regulations provide otherwise.”

They’re suggesting that many consumers want access to their vehicles after normal business hours. Sending an employee in to release contents costs the tow operator

time and money, and a charge for the service would normally apply. Is that reasonable? It could be. Again, we should be discussing this in committee.

They’re talking about the failure to comply, so their comment is that it is considered extremely unfair that the government expects the towing industry to clear the highway of vehicles and debris and not be paid for their services.

Again, I bring your attention to when I was driving to Morrisburg a couple of weeks ago. I saw that a major transport trailer was on its side in the ditch. The contents—the bread—were strewn everywhere. The highway was closed intermittently for more than 12 hours, but when I got there, it was closed for 45 solid minutes while the crane came in.

Should the towing companies and the companies that are there, that are cleaning the debris, be paid for the service of cleaning the debris off the highway or just to pick up the truck and tow it away and leave the bread and the racks there? Interesting. We should be having that kind of debate.

There’s a chapter here on payment options. In the act, 65.15 says, “A tow and storage provider shall accept payment for tow and storage services by credit card, cash or any other prescribed payment method at the consumer’s choice.” Interesting. This reads like: Any payment method the consumer wants to use is acceptable, and that is exactly how I would read this as well. So the towing sector believes that at least two major cards—and they go on to quote them: Visa and MasterCard—should be acceptable, because it’s not normal business practice to accept a cheque or a purchase order from someone who is distant, out of the country or out of the province. You may never see or hear from them again. Again, is that reasonable? We should be discussing this in committee.

On that section again, they’re talking about how you calculate the price. They are suggesting that to standardize a pricing matrix is an acceptable improvement.

So they’re agreeing with some things here, as well, because it will eliminate any confusion with invoicing. However, the setting of prices will cause problems and some consumers will suffer. It’s possible.

Under 65.20, they say, “While we realize there is much to do regarding the drafting of the regulations to provide for qualifications and training,” they want to ensure consideration for the two provincial towing associations to provide such training, including temporary certificates for newcomers to the industry. “The towing industry is facing a critical shortage of drivers and other personnel, and training and temporary permits must be readily available.”

They make a good case. It’s unfortunate that it sounds like we’re not going to have a chance to hear any of these amendments from them because of this time allocation possibility. That’s why I’m bringing these today: We have an opportunity right now for you to hear some of the things, to understand that these aren’t quick solutions. This is going to take some debate to actually talk about

each one of their points. They make some very, very, very salient points here, and I think they deserve, and all of us deserve, the opportunity to debate these.

Actually, under “Failure to meet qualifications,” they sum it all up. Their comment is, “Before any of these items can be implemented, the towing industry must have substantial input.” I would agree with that. I would hope that you would agree with that.

They go on at considerable length talking about the Highway Traffic Act, that it will not solve chasing problems or truck maintenance issues and will add unnecessary financial burden to professional towing companies. It diminishes their consumer service.

This list from them goes on and on. There’s not going to be enough time for me to discuss the next eight, nine, 10 further amendments and clarifications that they have. There’s just not enough time here, and that’s why we’re hoping that we’ll get this into committee and have a wholesome and a fulsome debate at committee, so that we can hear from the association, and not just the association but many of the operators who are located.

As I go through the update from their minutes of September 29, they have made further changes: three, six, eight, 16, 22 more changes here that there just sadly is not enough time for me to go over. But I can tell you that in their summation, what they are saying here—I’ll quote it; it’s only a couple of sentences. It’s one long sentence: “While there are some very encouraging aspects of Bill 15, we feel it will not address the needs of the consumer nor the industry, and will definitely increase the cost of doing business, making it even harder to hire employees; interfere with customer service; and increase the cost of doing business for many towing companies.”

This is a definitive answer from them. You saw what they brought in August. You hear some of the tone of where they are in September.

“We believe some of the initiatives will result in the loss of even more operators. Thus, consumer service will once again suffer.” These are exactly the laws of unintended consequences that we spoke of earlier.

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“We also believe”—this is from the towing industry—“that Bill 15 as written will not address the main issue facing the consumer, being accident chasing, nor does it address the shortcomings of an incident management system that includes this industry and will increase the cost of doing business for the professionals in the industry, and especially if municipal licensing continues. The towing associations firmly believe the most effective and efficient path to consumer protection is through an administrative authority. We must protect the consumer and manage the industry with minimal additional expense.” Speaker, that’s how you help lower costs.

So here we are now in August, and what they’re saying is, “The towing association is concerned with the legislation in the following areas.” They’ve gone on to list all their areas, and they end with the sentence, Speaker, and so will I, “ ... propose the amendments in com-

mittee to clarify and adjust these principles.” They plan to bring these amendments, and I congratulate the sector.

Thank you, Speaker, for this hour opportunity to talk a little bit about insurance rates.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it’s an honour to be able to stand in this House and comment on Bill 15, about bringing down auto insurance, and to follow the member from Nipissing. His remarks are always well researched. I don’t agree with all of them, but he brings up some very good points.

I’d like to bring it back down to some of the people who depend on insurance after they get into an accident.

Mr. Walter Rancourt came into our office because he heard we were talking about insurance, about changing insurance, and he wanted to make sure that I understood what happens when you get involved from the victim’s side, from the accident side.

Mr. Rancourt and his wife were involved in a tragic accident in Hagar in my riding, where three teenagers were tragically killed. He relayed his story and how it was the fault of the road. To the OPP’s credit and to the MTO’s credit, the OPP kept up the investigation until they found the exact time of day where you basically didn’t see the corner. When that was proven, MTO stepped up and they changed the road. But three people died because of a bad design.

Mr. Rancourt and his wife had some injuries as well, quite grave injuries. One of the bad things about it if this bill is time-allocated and once again there’s no committee going out into the country is that Mr. Rancourt will never be able to tell you what actually happens when you get involved with the insurance sector. What he really wanted to be able to tell us—he wanted to tell his whole story, but he really wanted to be able to tell us, “Please don’t try to make insurance rates go down on the backs of the victims of accidents.” We’re afraid that that’s one of the things this bill is trying to do.

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

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: J’ai le plaisir maintenant de parler aussi de soutenir le projet de loi 15, Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act, 2014.

Speaker, as you’ll appreciate, there are many, many moving parts. I appreciate the studied remarks of the honourable member from Nipissing—perhaps one of the future leaders of the Conservative Party. Who knows?

He did speak a number of times about the time allocation. Well, I can tell you, Speaker, speaking to my own community of Etobicoke North, for them the time is now. We need to move forward on this issue of reducing insurance rates. There are a number of areas, particularly in the GTHA, that are affected, as you know, more than others, particularly Etobicoke North and others.

The other thing I would say is that some have faulted the government for not immediately achieving the proposed 15% reduction. I would say that, as I’ve mentioned, there are lots of moving parts. It’s a bit of an

intense beast to wrestle to the ground, meaning the insurance industry. We are on path to reduce by 15% insurance rates. We are targeting August 2015. As our numbers are telling us, we have seen an approximate 6% across-the-board reduction. Is that for everyone in the province of Ontario? No. Is it an average? Yes, and obviously there are some mathematics that are attached to it.

I do appreciate what the MPP for Nipissing mentioned about some of the issues. One of the things that strikes us, as some of my colleagues reminded me, was being able to choose your own autobody shop.

There does, unfortunately, seem to be a lot of, let's say, prefigured manipulation in the system, which leads to the \$1.6 billion of annualized fraud in this industry, and that is of course something that we must address through FSCO and other means to reduce overall costs for Ontarians.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: The member for Nipissing has given us an excellent summary of Bill 15. I'm particularly interested in the related insurance costs coming from the towing industry: storage yards, garages, health clinics.

By and large, these companies, these garages provide an efficient, reputable service, but there is a minority that are taking advantage of consumers and their insurance coverage—another reason to move this to committee.

Many of us, of course, have had experiences with the towing industry. By and large, mine have been very positive, with companies down in Haldimand–Norfolk—which is understandable, given the age of some of the vehicles I drive. They're there to help out, and their reputation is evident. The same goes for CAA. I'm a long-standing member, and I value their service. Not all companies meet the expected standards: That's an understatement.

Part of the tow truck business is a tangled web of connections—in some cases, fraud and organized crime. We think of bikers, in many instances. We recall the incident down in Shedden, near London, a few years ago—an eight-person massacre. Three of the eight victims were tow truck drivers. I think there was at least one tow truck at the scene. A number of the people involved were members or affiliates of a well-known motorcycle gang, but I will not mention their name.

We have the dark side of the towing industry: the fraud rings, the inflation of insurance claims in particular, as was mentioned, with autobody storage, kickbacks from garages, kickbacks from repair shops and the connection with health care clinics and legal service providers, as well.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I was listening very attentively to the comments and the very good speech that was given by the member from Nipissing. I always enjoy being in the House when he speaks. He brings a different perspec-

tive. He brings a perspective from northern Ontario, something that we, as northern members, should be doing a little bit more of each and every time we stand in the House and speak to particular bills.

The member from Etobicoke North: You did make a note that we should be acting now. You're absolutely right: That's what we should be doing. Unfortunately, the acting that is happening, particularly across my riding—the action we have taken has had a reverse impact on insurance rates across northern Ontario—or I'll just speak for Algoma–Manitoulin, because those are the areas I'm particularly looking at.

When you bring it back to a lot of the points we raised, we certainly don't want to leave here today, or the future discussions that we're going to have on this particular bill, painting the towing and garage industry with the same paintbrush: that all of them are looking out for their own pockets. There are a lot of good people out there who are working 24 hours a day to help all of us deal with our crises when we're dealing with accidents. So I certainly don't want to leave our listeners thinking that's what we're talking about. But we do want to recognize that it is a problem and that fraudulent incidents are happening out there.

I want to bring it back to what I had spoken to earlier, and it's some of the incentives that are already in the system now that this bill is going to remove. I hope that I will have the opportunity to speak to this a little bit later on behalf of people from Algoma–Manitoulin.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's it for questions and comments. We return to the member from Nipissing for his reply.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I want to thank the members from Timiskaming–Cochrane, Etobicoke North, Haldimand–Norfolk and Algoma–Manitoulin for their thoughtful commentary on this bill as well.

In summary, the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party has, specifically through our member for Elgin–Middlesex–London, who has done the hard work to come up with a thoughtful approach on insurance—I want to thank him for the past three years' work on this file. With some of the changes that we're recommending, and by listening to stakeholders, we can guarantee a better product for all of Ontario.

I think that through a competitive marketplace, rates will go down through competition. We shouldn't have to be doing this, Speaker, every two years. I'm hoping that all the parties will get together, support the areas of this bill that actually address the rate reduction, and not implement the law of unintended consequences or just rob Peter to pay Paul. I want to see the members here support the rest of our ideas, to create a system that provides better outcomes for everyone in Ontario.

I'm so pleased that we've heard from stakeholders, including advocates for accident victims, who have concerns about this bill. There are concerns about every aspect of it, especially the towing sector, and I think it's

important that we listen to those concerns and we have some good, healthy debate on this issue.

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

Mr. Joe Cimino: I look forward to speaking for a little while on this bill. We take a look at the title, and the title is, Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act. When we take a look at that title, some people look at it and expect exactly what the title says, that this bill is going to correct all fraud within the industry and that insurance rates will go down immediately. I learned a while back that you can't always judge a book by its cover.

The member from Nipissing spent quite a bit of time discussing industry comments, discussing more of the economic—his background is in business—approach to the bill. I will as well, but I'm also going to take a look at the users of the insurance industry, the people who are paying the premiums, and the victims, wherever possible. It was New Democrats, for years, who have been fighting for lower auto insurance, and we are pleased that finally the government, in 2013, saw the light and agreed to reduce insurance rates by 15%. I'll talk about that a little bit later.

When I campaigned in my riding for this position, I can tell you that I heard affordability as one of the major issues. In northern Ontario, in Sudbury, when we talked about hydro rates, people were very anxious to see what could be done to reduce hydro rates, and we see that the rates are going up again this Saturday. Gasoline prices in Sudbury are 12 to 13 cents higher than anywhere else, even a 15- or 20-minute drive down the road, and natural gas as well.

But when we talked about insurance rates, people were saying, "We are paying the highest." Some people did the research and some people listened to this House, and they realized, "We're paying the highest insurance in Canada. If I get an extra \$200 left in my pocket at the end of the year, that's money I can set aside for my children's education." One person who was talking about hydro said that some of the savings could go towards going on a family trip that they hadn't gone on in a long time. So insurance rates are a factor in this province that needs to be dealt with. Again, the bill title, Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act, is almost like a beacon, and people are saying, "Wow, this may be it." But there are some issues with the bill which I will discuss.

In no way, as was stated by other members, are we painting the entire industry with the same paintbrush. The insurance industry itself employs tens of thousands of people in this province and across the country. They provide a service which is necessary, whether it's auto, home, business or what have you. The industry is a welcomed partner in this province. We appreciate their input on this bill and on other issues. We're very glad that they themselves are getting together and forming the Canadian National Insurance Crime Services.

The industry itself sees that fraud is an issue that not only the government has to tackle, but also the industry

themselves, spending millions of dollars individually in their own businesses and their own companies to fight fraud. Hopefully the savings that they find, the savings that we find with initiatives that are taken through the government—those savings are passed on to the user.

The first issue with the bill that I have is the entire dispute resolution that's being recommended. Not being a lawyer, I asked a lot of questions as I read this bill. I spoke to a lot of people. I tried to get clarification. It's a very complicated topic. When we talk about a litigious type of setting, a lot of laws are in place. You ask several lawyers the same question, and you might get different answers from each and every one of them. So it's a very complicated topic, and I understand that.

That just makes me wonder what type of education is going to follow whatever bill comes out of this House, in terms of the end-user understanding that, if this bill gets passed, as is, a lot of things that they're used to are going to be taken away, a lot of the mechanisms in place for them to appeal a denial are going to be taken away. The education piece is going to be huge because some people believe in a democratic system. For example, they have the right to go to court, and all of a sudden, that might be taken away. So it's going to be a very hard sell. I'll speak to that in a second.

One of the major issues, as I continue, is dispute resolution, thinking again to the end-user—the user of the insurance, the victim, the person who got into an accident. How does revamping the dispute resolution mechanism benefit them in the pocketbook? How does it benefit them having more money at the end of the day? Are there savings in revamping the dispute mechanism? What are those savings? What are the results going to be in lowering insurance rates, if any? What effect does it have on reducing fraud—changing this dispute resolution section—in the industry?

Currently, accident victims have the right to go to court or arbitration to dispute a wrongful denial. But under the proposed legislation the right to sue will be taken away entirely and require a claimant to advance claims to the Licence Appeal Tribunal in the Ministry of the Attorney General. This is denial of access to justice for Ontarians when they are most vulnerable. I'm going to talk about that.

Again, a person might have just gotten into an accident. They might be physically impeded and might be off work because of it. They may be drained, emotionally and psychologically. And, all of a sudden, something that they've been raised with, the notion that another part of the government—the judiciary—that they have access to, has been taken away. I think that's wrong.

We have been fortunate in Ontario with open courts and with the right of citizens to seek redress through the courts for wrongs committed by others and denial of benefits by insurance companies. For the sake of efficiency, expediency and cost savings to the insurance industry, the government is proposing to wipe out recourse to the independent judiciary system that safeguards a fundamental right of citizens and to replace the courts with a tribunal.

It is false to suggest that this would provide cost savings to the insurance industry and reduce insurance premiums. If the government on their side—and if we have the ability to speak further on this in committee or in this House—if the figures can come forward saying that changing or removing this appeal process, people being able to go to the court system, if this is saving money somehow for the industry and those savings are getting passed on to the user and by how much, well let's hear those numbers. But those numbers will come out only through discussion and co-operation, which our party—this is obviously a policy lowering auto insurance, which was central to our platform. We want to contribute. We want to contribute. We want to contribute ideas.

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So how will this new dispute resolution system work? Under the legislation, an accident victim will take their case to a new arbitration system. While the new system may be appropriate to handle many of the disputes in the system, it certainly is not appropriate to handle all of them. One of the significant disadvantages of the new system is that if the accident victim is successful in proving that the insurance company should have paid the denied claim, the insurance company is fined a tiny fraction of the legal costs. They would have been, under the court system, responsible for a higher cost or a higher portion.

Again, you have the victim, who possibly was in an accident, possibly out of work, possibly under strain psychologically, emotionally—and then they're happy: "I went to arbitration, and I won." Then they get the bill from a lawyer or from another legal professional, and they have to pay mostly the entire amount. But if it was under a court system, they possibly could have had that entire amount paid. The victim is being victimized again by a new system.

This was brought up by another member—I thought I was the only one who caught this—and I think it was the member from Nipissing: What will the cost be for the government, for the taxpayers of this province, for this expanded tribunal system under the Attorney General, or for a new tribunal system itself? We would suspect, and I would suggest, that there has to be a movement of personnel; there has to be movement of HR into an expanded tribunal system. Bodies; HR: That means money. In addition, there must be support staff, you would assume. You would assume that there's a need for more office space—I won't get into the fact that this government has a whole bunch of office space across the street that they just purchased. But office space costs money. So what is the cost?

There is a shift from, now, the court system—expenses by the insurance company; if they're doing arbitration or mediation, FSCO; of the courts—and it's being shifted to the Attorney General's office into this new tribunal system. So what is the cost to the taxpayer at a time when all parties agree that we need to get the deficit down? I look forward, in discussion, whether at committee or in this House, to having that answered.

If the accident victim is injured and it was 100% someone else's fault, the victim now has to pay a lawyer to bring two entirely different cases in two entirely different systems: one to court, against the person who injured them, and then one to the new arbitration system, against the insurance company that denied the benefits. The accident victim now has huge extra legal costs and two different legal proceedings: one in the court system, and one in the arbitration system. Again, looking at this whole issue in terms of the victim, this new arbitration system, or tribunal system, is actually penalizing a person who got into an accident and it wasn't their fault. In fact, they do eventually earn the monies owed to them from the insurance company, yet through spending more money.

Bill 15 also takes away the right of an accident benefit claimant to bring the claim before the civil courts. Currently, a claimant may bring an accident benefits claim before the civil courts as long as he or she participates in FSCO mediation with the insurance company. This may be useful to a claimant with both a tort and an accident benefits claim. The new bill seeks to limit the claimant's choice in this regard by mandating that the claimant can never—that word is kind of contradictory to our democratic system, I think—bring an accident benefits claim to the civil courts.

Again, raised in this democratic system, with a degree in political science from wonderful Laurentian University in Sudbury—we always were taught that the judiciary was another branch of the government that the people have a right to approach. This is going to be taken away, in terms of insurance claims.

What makes more sense is to allow an accident victim the right that they currently have: to bring the two claims together in court and to vastly reduce the costs that they have to incur.

None of these changes has anything to do with fighting fraud or nothing to do with making it easier for us to buy auto insurance. But what it is about, it seems, is to have insurance companies wrongfully deny benefits, delay settlements and make it harder for someone to collect what is rightfully owed to them.

Our auto insurance system here in Ontario is extremely complicated to begin with. People's access to benefits that they are reasonably entitled to is sometimes difficult to receive. What this new process is going to result in is people putting up their hands and being extremely frustrated. We see that happen. Months and months and months of trying to really receive the money that's owed to them even once it's been deemed, "Yes, you're owed it"—the next thing you know, they just put up their hands and say, "I've had it. I've had it. I'm not pushing through anymore, with any more."

The second problem I have is, what is this prejudgment interest, and the idea that if somebody is even owed the money—it's deemed that yes, your denial is overturned and you're owed money for pain and suffering—then insurance companies today have to pay 5% interest on that money. If it takes a year for an insurance com-

pany, for example, to pay a \$100,000 claim, the person who is owed that money is now entitled to \$105,000, after that year. It doesn't seem like a lot, but expand that to millions, tens of millions and hundreds of millions of claims that come out of this industry in Ontario and in Canada, and it's a lot of money.

This proposed legislation is now saying that we're going to reduce that to 1.3%. Now, on that same claim, the insurance company is only going to have to pay \$1,300 in interest. The problem with that is, it reduces the motivation for insurance companies to pay quicker. Why? Well, because insurance companies make a lot of money by investing money. Premiums are part of their profit; a lot of it is investment. About 4% is what I read that an insurance company will usually get on a return on their investment. For that same \$100,000, now they only pay \$1,300 in interest. They earn \$4,000 in interest from their investments, and they've netted \$2,700.

Are all insurance companies doing this? No. Is it possible? Yes. That's an issue we have. Why reduce that 5%? Why not leave it at a rate which will motivate the payment of what's owed a victim?

We talked about fraud. In 2012, the report from the Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force said that fraud costs us about \$770 million to \$1.6 billion a year. I would like to have a longer discussion in terms of what the government's plans are to tackle fraud, the big fraud cases which I'll talk about in a second. It's very important.

Last week, my colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton, on October 22, did a really good description of fraud and what it entails. He broke down fraud into three major components: organized fraud; fraud that might come from a medical provider, a health provider; and then individual fraud, the incidentals: "My car was stolen and I had a laptop in there"—when there wasn't one. We learned that, in 2010, because the insurance companies were not making the profits they expected, the government reduced the amount that could be claimed for injury from \$100,000 to, in some cases, \$3,500; and in some cases, \$50,000; and of course the catastrophic injuries were still at \$1 million.

But a lot of the frauds, say, from the health field or from the incidentals, the individuals, were reduced because the amount of injury claims allowable went down. Is it still there? Possibly; that's work that has to be done. But the big one that costs a lot is organized crime.

Last week, we heard examples from the Conservative caucus of accidents that are orchestrated; accidents caused by somebody who takes advantage of somebody who's victimized, and then the claim begins. The tow trucks come in and go to various autobodies etc. I can't say personally that I've seen that in Sudbury or anywhere else, but apparently it happens. I remember watching one of these CSI shows; I tried to find it. I couldn't find where or when, but it was years back where in one episode—and I hope I don't give anybody ideas. One episode was, they disconnected the brake lights on vehicles, and there was an influx of rear-enders. Finally, the CSI guys, these investigators, realized it was

organized crime. They would go in front of a vehicle, slam on the brakes—no brake lights—cause an accident and start the insurance process.

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Again, a lot of work has to be done. We hear that the government is going to tackle fraud and these organized types of fraud incidents. I look forward to hearing more about that, but we need to have that discussion. We need to have that discussion.

Some of the things in the bill that would benefit the victim—we do have to hear from our stakeholders more—are the licensing of insurance agents and adjusters. The ones I know are very reputable. Again, we can't paint any industry with a brush because of a few negative folks who do things wrong.

My question is, by licensing these adjusters, how is that going to affect the rates? What are the numbers? How are our rates going to go down because of it? The same with licensing health clinics: How is it going to reduce the rates?

In terms of the towing and storage components and the repair and storage liens, I welcome consumer protection in this area. I also appreciate that the industry itself—the vast majority—I'd say close to 100% are very reputable. I'd like to hear more about how they want to improve this consumer protection charter, if you will.

Having authorization by an owner to take the car, or at least know where the car is going, I think, is important. Making rates public, I think, is important. Allowing someone the flexibility to use a credit card, I think, is important. Allowing people access to a vehicle for their personal items, I think, is important. Providing qualifications and standards for the industry: I think they'd welcome that, as long as they have input on what they are.

I'm quickly running out of time. I think that the province of Ontario mandates auto insurance. Therefore, we have the right, I think, to protect the victims and business and the companies and come up with a solution that betters everybody. That's why we're here, hoping that there's discussion for that.

I'd like to know what the profits of the companies are. Why are we paying so much insurance? The government promised, in 2013, a 15% reduction in auto insurance. We're here to hold you to account. We appreciate that you accepted the NDP's numbers and pushed for that. You're saying the first year was 6%. Let's get to 15%. We're far from it. This bill needs to be worked on to get there.

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

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's always a pleasure to talk about this particular bill in relation to insurance. I had the opportunity to speak last week, I believe it was, on a response for two minutes.

We try to put measures in place to deal with premiums for auto insurance, but a lot of it—we determine what that premium is going to be. I had some challenges with insurance in the past—I'm not afraid to admit it—but I

deserved it. I deserved it; I have to be honest. But I think my driving habits have improved considerably, so my premiums have been reduced considerably.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Good. Who's your insurance broker, Lou?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: That's a good question. The thing is, I always try to deal locally, with people you know, because you know they're going to work for you.

My good friend Gary Newman, from Campbellford, and his family own Newman Oliver & McCarten. They have offices in Belleville, Colborne and, of course, Campbellford. I've known Gary since way, way back in my municipal days. You can actually sit down and kind of tailor-make what's best for you. So I always encourage dealing with an independent broker, because they're really there working for you. They do take the time to make sure.

Yes, the pieces of this particular legislation will help, but I encourage folks that, really, they have some control over what their premium is going to be, what their coverage is going to be.

I think we need to pass this legislation. Let's move on to other things the government is supposed to do.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to rise again to provide a couple of moments of comment to the speaker, in this case the member for Sudbury.

Again, I, like the previous speaker from Northumberland–Quinte West, have a number of people in the insurance business who are amazing business people. They have given me lots of feedback on insurance issues, right from the day I was elected to this place in 2010.

But again, I want to put some comments back on the record regarding the towing provisions in this particular bill. Since our leadoff speaker from our party, Mr. Fedeli, spoke, I've been here reading notes about a number of the towing associations and organized groups and some of their concerns to the bill. Again, I think there is a way that we can co-operate to move this bill forward.

This was one of the bills that the government House leader gave to me that they wish to have fast-tracked through the Legislature. I think it's not unreasonable, when you deal with this amount of bills, to help schedule some things. I know the member from Sudbury would love to have a hearing on this bill up in his municipality so that the people of northern Ontario can be given a chance to discuss the intricacies of the bill. I know there have been a number of members who have brought up suggestions to improve the bill. I know in previous incarnations, we had a great discussion, a very robust discussion. Part of what we do in this place is we allow our constituents to have a forum outside of the city of Toronto where they can put in a few comments. I hope that the member will support me on having hearings in northern Ontario. I hope, in return, he'd maybe support one in eastern Ontario to assist my constituents.

Thank you very much for giving me the chance to provide my comments, Speaker.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: Once again, it's a pleasure and a privilege to stand and speak on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin. I want to commend my colleague here, the MPP for Sudbury. He did talk about one of the cornerstones of our platform, which was affordability. In a lot of our communities across northern Ontario, small rural communities, we don't have transportation readily available. We don't have buses. We don't have subways. What we do have are our vehicles in our driveways. That's the challenge that we have. So we have to have an operating vehicle in good condition, with good snow tires in the wintertime, but also we need to pay that insurance. Why? Because that's the only means of transportation that we have to get to and from work, to get to and from school, to get to and from hospitals, to bring our kids to a hockey game, to a ballet class, and so on and so forth. This is the reality of living in northern Ontario.

When we hear titles on bills such as this one, which is very enticing to everybody—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—that is something that is very attractive. But what exactly is it going to do, which was what my colleague was raising during his comments. What will it do? How will it impact and what are going to be the actual cost savings? Will there be a rate reduction? Who will be saving? Are we taking money out of Paul's pocket to pay Peter? These are some of the questions that we're going to be raising through this process and making sure that we have the opportunity to actually have those discussions so that we could hear—like the member from Sudbury making sure that his constituents' voices and concerns are heard.

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

Hon. Bill Mauro: I want to first thank the member from Sudbury for his comments on this particular piece of legislation, Bill 15.

As the member from Northumberland–Quinte West did, I'll give a shout-out to my local broker in Thunder Bay, Brucie MacDonald from Lifestyle Insurance. Brucie is always taking care of me, and I'll say a quick thank you to Bruce.

I would also thank the minister responsible for the legislation. It's one thing to set a target of 15% reductions across the board, on average, in the province of Ontario for auto insurance premiums. But it's another thing, I would say, to really get in there and do the work and get your fingernails dirty, so to speak, and have to try and find the means and the mechanisms and the ways to achieve the goal. I know that the minister has been doing that, and staff have been doing that, for a while. They're working very closely on a variety of policy initiatives that are going to help us to achieve that goal. We're at 6% now; the target was 8%. We're getting close to that, and over the term of two years we're looking at the 15%.

1700

The member from Sudbury, in his 20-minute remarks, referenced the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. What I would say, though, is that as a newer member, he may not be aware that it was that member who, two or three years ago, introduced a private member's bill, which is fine, representing his constituency, as he should. But the point of that private member's bill was auto insurance reform. The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton, in that specific private member's bill, would have achieved reductions for his constituency. But at the same time, for those of us in northern Ontario, his bill, had it become law, would have seen insurance rates in northern Ontario increase by anywhere from 30% to 40%, depending on who you talk to.

I know the member may not have been aware of that. Again, the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton was just representing the interests of his constituency, but I think it's worth noting and reminding the member, as a new member in the Legislative Assembly, that that would have been the effect for people in northern Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Sudbury for his two-minute response.

Mr. Joe Cimino: To the members from Northumberland–Quinte West, Leeds–Grenville and Algoma–Manitoulin, and the Minister of Natural Resources, thank you for your comments. As a new member, I still look forward to debating in the House and in committee.

I think our goal is the same: It's to get the best possible bill out for the benefit of the victim, the insurance premium payer, as well as for the industry. The industry itself is a huge partner in the economic development of this province, providing an essential service. The towing and storage companies are, again, very important components to the entire system, and we appreciate their hard work. What this is about, though, is making sure that the bill does what the title says, and that's to fight fraud and reduce auto insurance rates for those folks here in Ontario.

I think there are issues with the dispute resolution piece. There are issues with the reduction of the interest rate that companies pay for pain and suffering. We need more discussion on fraud fighting, and we need more numbers in terms of what components of the bill will result in reductions in auto insurance.

Again, one of the most important components of this is going to committee. At that venue, we can discuss it further, and we can also hear from stakeholders. I think the ones at the front line are the ones with the ideas. As a city councillor, if I had an issue with trash collection, I went to the front-line worker. I think it's the same with any bill. So I look forward to further debate and discussing this bill.

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

Mr. Arthur Potts: It is a great pleasure to speak to this bill, the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act. This is my first opportunity to speak

at length to a bill since having been elected to this House in June. I appreciate very much that the member from Sudbury, who also is a rookie, got up and spoke very eloquently in this House. He should be commended for his remarks.

When I rose the first time in what we will call my inaugural speech, I thought I was speaking to a bill and that I would have a chance to do a full inaugural speech and you would have learned more about who I was, where I came from. But unfortunately, as it turned out, we were speaking to a motion that day, and it was ruled out of order for me to do my inaugural speech. I felt terrible; I never had a chance to give those remarks. Then I thought, "Well, the next time I get up to speak, I can do an inaugural speech, because I haven't done one." I was reminded by the Clerk that in fact I had done an inaugural, but it was to a motion, so, sadly, I couldn't go through the great history of my family. It's okay, because we'll have other opportunities; I can drop little nuggets maybe once in a while, and you'll get to know better who I am.

But it does give me pleasure—

Interjection: They must have insurance, so tell us about that.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Yes. I could tell you about my parents' insurance, right?

But it gives me pleasure. Just before I had a chance to come back to my seat, it was occupied. My colleague the Minister of Agriculture was sitting in my seat, so I feel particularly inspired at this opportunity to speak. As the PA to agriculture, I'm—

Interjection.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I know, but as the PA to agriculture, food and rural affairs, I'm learning so much from my colleague about the folksy nature that you want to bring into the House and—

Hon. Jeff Leal: Get on my good side.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Yes, get on his good side.

What I'd first like to do, Mr. Speaker, is to maybe debate or discuss at some length this concept of an ominous bill. I mean, seriously, we are putting two acts together here, two acts that specifically reference the same subject matter, which is to do with reducing fraud and reducing insurance rates. This is not an ominous bill, as we've come to know them in the past. We are not—

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: Omnibus.

Mr. Arthur Potts: —omnibus bill, as we've come to know them in the past. The reality is that the members of the official opposition—their cousins in Ottawa know how to do an omnibus bill. They put in legislation that comes from everything, from child care to finance. Those are the experts.

Mr. Steve Clark: Point of order, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): A point of order: The member for Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Steve Clark: I really believe that the member should stick to his debate on Bill 15.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I appreciate you pointing that out, because yes, of course, the

convention in the House is that members' remarks are relevant to the bill at hand. Of course, we're debating Bill 15, so I would ask the member to bring back his comments to Bill 15.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Fair enough, Mr. Speaker. Thank you very much. I'm sure that's fair game for the times I've risen in the House to make the same complaint of the member.

But here we are talking about the Fighting Fraud and Reducing Automobile Insurance Rates Act. Let's understand: This was an election promise that we fought on very hard during the campaign, and it predated the election. In fact, we've introduced legislation in the past.

We are promising a 15% reduction in auto insurance rates, and we're getting there. We're on target. We were projected to try to get to 8% by August of this year, and sadly we've not made that target. Let's be clear: We would have had a much better opportunity to be further along in that agenda had we not in fact intervened the process, and had we adopted the measures that we're proposing here from the Minister of Finance back when they were first—they were suspended by the election.

Now, I'm not complaining, because as you know and as the member from Sudbury knows, in the absence of that election, we wouldn't be here to address the House and have this opportunity to speak to the bill. But what I would like to say is, I think what we are doing with this bill is we are doing it the right way, because we understand very much the business of insurance and the underwriters of insurance. They are the ones who are telling insurance companies, who relay back to the brokers—these fine brokers that we're hearing about from various communities in Peterborough, Northumberland and Campbellford—what the rates must be. The rates must be at a certain level in order to accommodate the costs associated with providing those rates.

So we're doing it the right way because we're respecting what underwriters have to say about the cost of insurance. It's not some idealized vision, where we can just say, "These are big insurance companies. We're the government. Tell them to lower rates"—no. We need to go into the systemic problems associated with what is costing the insurance companies the money in order to get the rates down, and that, of course, does relate to fraud. It relates to fraud and mismanagement in some of the insurance—we are not talking about all companies in the business acting fraudulently. There are those, however—like so many bills, we have to bring in the rules and regulations to protect against fraud, against those narrow few who abuse the process. That's what we're doing. I think the fraud has been estimated at somewhere in the order of \$1.6 billion that we could get to—\$750 million to \$1.6 billion. So there are ample opportunities to get at the fraud in the system by putting the right rules and regulations in place.

As a new member, I know that we are getting tremendous resources placed in front of us. I'd like to bring members back to Provincial Affairs: An Overview for Ontario Legislators. I want to talk about some of the

material in this book, because it has been an excellent primer to a new member. The member for Sudbury, I encourage you to read the sections on insurance rates.

What makes me particularly happy about talking to this particular section, auto insurance, is that it was authored by a very good friend of mine, Andrew McNaught. Andrew McNaught has been a member of legislative library services going back some 20 years. We went to high school together, we played hockey together, and I know him to be a knowledgeable and thorough researcher. I would encourage all members, when they have an opportunity to put together bills, to seek out the help of the legislative library assistants because they're very good at what they do.

1710

What he says, and I found it very instructive, is that it is a constant challenge facing policymakers how to balance three competing interests: maintaining a financially viable insurance industry; ensuring adequate and timely compensation for accident victims; and keeping driver premiums affordable. This is exactly the balance which I think we're trying to strike in the act in front of us. We are respecting the financial acumen of underwriters. We want to make sure that we put systems in place so that dispute resolutions can happen quickly and so that people can get the fair compensation that they, legitimate accident victims, deserve.

I'm particularly interested in some of the comments we've heard from the members of the third party regarding prejudgment interest rates. I did have a chance earlier to speak on a two-minute rebuttal, and I talked at some length. Let's be clear: Prejudgment interest is not there as a stick to force people to settle early. Believe me, the costs of litigation within the system are sufficiently high to act as that stick, and the cost of a prejudgment interest rate is minuscule in that whole process. We are not settling disputes faster because of accumulating 5% associated interest penalties; we're settling them because of the cost of litigation and the cost of the settlement. It's the cost of lawyers that you start to save in the process by streamlining it—no disrespect to lawyers, because my father was a lawyer, and had I had a chance to do my inaugural speech, you would have heard about my father the lawyer who went on to become a Supreme Court of Ontario judge. We spent a lot of time talking about the law and insurance law because Dad, in his work in commercial work, spent a lot of time helping companies reduce their insurance costs.

It's very important to understand that we need to bring the interest rate associated with insurance prejudgment rates down to a level commensurate with inflation so that people aren't losing ground during the lengthy time it has taken them to come to a settlement, that they're kept and made whole by the interest rates so that they haven't lost money to the levels of inflation that are currently in place. The one point—I think it's 8% that's being proposed in the legislation—is fair because it helps maintain that balance.

When this issue came up, I had the pleasure of meeting with a constituent of mine who owns a number

of taxicabs. He was complaining to me about the cost of insurance in the taxicab industry. I know that the 6%—only relates to residential auto rates and doesn't speak to the costs associated with commercial rates. He was somewhat concerned about that because he's seen his insurance rates for running his cab business increasing dramatically over the years, and he's looking for ways that we as a government can help resolve his concerns in the commercial industry.

I'm proud to say that a good friend of mine, Edward Doyle, who's associated with a great insurance risk management company called Doyle Risk Services—he's a constituent, down in the lovely Beaches area. Ed was able to sit down with me and explain how the initiatives we have taken in the past in addressing issues of fraud have set in motion a whole series of cost savings for residential-rate auto payers that will have accruing benefits to those in the commercial industry as well. Attacking the fraud issues, attacking issues with long periods before you get resolution, and the resulting increases in cost of settlements, can be addressed through those processes.

Though we may only be at 6% and short of the 8% target at this point, we are well on target of a 15% reduction, primarily because those initiatives that we put in place before have yet to bear their full fruit. You understand that when someone gets into an accident, it takes a period of time with adjusters, and then you have your accident victim claims. You go through the process with the tribunals and the arbitrations. There is a number of years' delay before the new rules will show all the benefits that we hope that they will bear.

We are now just a year and a bit into our 2013 changes, and already we're seeing reductions in interest rates, associated with anticipated reductions in claims, by those initiatives.

With the measures we're proposing today, we know that we will once again put in the pipeline significant opportunities for saving down the road by having these opportunities to get at fraud, to get at mismanagement and to get at lengthy delays.

When I met with my taxi driver friend and my friend Mr. Doyle, we also talked about other important issues that touch on the insurance industry around new technology services. In the taxi industry, primarily, we talked about a company called Uber. I'm sure you've all heard about Uber. It's an online opportunity for getting a cab to your house and back again.

Although it's an incredibly positive service—I use it with my step-kids because it allows me, with a credit card on file, to get them home safely late at night, if that's the case. But as was pointed out to me, the dispatchers of Uber aren't licensed as dispatchers, as other members in the taxi industry are, and it's something that we need to address, particularly because they're not licensed and insured as dispatchers, as is required by the members of the taxi industry.

There's another program that Uber is doing called UberX. UberX is another great cause for concern because

UberX is now directing passengers to private vehicles for taxi-like services. So now it's not just the dispatcher who is not licensed, who hasn't got insurance. It's now the drivers of the vehicles, who are picking up passengers, who haven't got insurance or licensing, opening up an incredible possibility of liability to all concerned.

Imagine the situation if an UberX driver is carrying a passenger and gets into an accident. The private insurer of that car, my guess is, will be reluctant to act on the insurance claims because they were doing something that they technically were not supposed to be doing, i.e., charging a fare to use their private car.

There's an area of a moving target here again, where I think we're going to have to step in and ensure that the rules around UberX are fair and that it's a level playing field with the taxi industry, but that they don't result in unintended consequences, with liabilities associated with drivers who will be driving around effectively uninsured, because they're doing something they're not supposed to be doing.

Most of us, I'm sure, have experienced opportunities for fraud associated with driving a vehicle, or you all have friends who have had the same experience. I had an experience driving my mother's car. My mother, who's now 86—a wonderful woman, who raised a family of seven. Dad was busy, so it was mostly on her own. My mother, at 84—this was two years ago—was driving her car to go to an uncle's funeral up in the beautiful area of Thornbury, north of here. Snowy conditions, end of January—we were driving slowly. We had a good car with good snow tires, probably doing 50 or 60 kilometres on the highway.

A car in front of us went out of control and spun around. I was able to avoid him. Went to another car—came across—lost control in the melee. The next thing I know, we were T-boned. There were no injuries, I'm happy to assert. The car was a write-off. We were going slow enough. It was just a huge inconvenience, but the car was written off.

In the third car that was involved in that collision, a young lady was on her way to pick up her daughter. She just had a little bump on her bumper—nothing of any consequence. We stood at the side of the highway as we watched tow trucks pick up other cars in the neighbourhood, rushing to the scene to clear the 401. We chatted with her for the better part of 45 minutes, until the tow trucks had cleared. She then refused the tow for her car, because it was in good-enough shape. She said she'd report to the accident collision centre later. Instead, she drove off to pick up her daughter at the day care, which was great.

Imagine our surprise a year and a half later when we get a lawyer's letter saying that my mother, 85 and a half now, and I are being sued—me, because she says I was careless and caused her injuries—which were extensive, if you read the report—and my mother, for having been foolish enough, at 85 and a half, to suggest that her 56-year-old son—55 at the time—should be driving the car.

We were shocked, because we knew there was absolutely nothing wrong with this person. At some point

along the line, some kind of litigious lawyer got involved who said, "Let's just put in a claim," because the timelines to get out there and the costs associated with an insurance company defending against that kind of thing are astronomical. The insurance companies are put on a spot where they have to defend us, themselves, to protect the dollars going out to settlement, and it was to no avail.

1720

My mother, to her credit, is now saying to them, "I'm glad you're managing this. Let's go to trial. I want to be there, because I know that that woman wasn't hurt. I will be the most fierce advocate against what they have done here." Who knows? In the course of time, that may happen or not. But we've all experienced that, and it's time that we stop doing it.

I'm very interested in some of the issues surrounding the business of storage and the towing industry. I appreciate very much some of the comments we've had, particularly from the members of the loyal opposition, relating to going out on a tour to talk to the towing industry.

I'm reminded of our whip's comments and the fact that there are opportunities for people to call in and do their deputations to the committees by phone, or by other technological means, and I think we should encourage them to do that. The reality is, as we move forward on these various bills that we're trying to get passed, it isn't about the length of the debate that matters; it has to be about the quality of the debate. I've been very impressed by the quality of the debate that we've seen from the members for Nipissing and Sudbury and so many others, because what it's showing is that those very important views of constituents and operators in the field are being heard in the House, and we will have a chance at committee to make some of these adjustments.

We don't have to be taking a whole dog-and-pony show all over the province in order to hear from people when they can call in, or they can send a letter. Already, clearly, they're communicating with the members in the House.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: How can you call public participation a dog-and-pony show? I think that's an insult to—

Interjection: Keep going.

Mr. Arthur Potts: There will be times where it will be absolutely necessary, and I fully respect the needs of all Ontario—east, north, south and west—to participate in debates, but when you talk about a bill that has so much near-unanimous approval, and we can't get this one right by shortening it in order to go forward with other bills, which may be far more controversial—well, I'm surprised by that. We need to move forward quickly with a whole series of legislation. Our agenda is full. We received a very healthy mandate, not just in terms of numbers of the members on this side of the House to form a majority, Mr. Speaker, but we—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Just because your constituents can drive here—

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm delighted you brought that up, because I meant to mention that. It was somewhere

buried in my notes here. My constituents, who live 15 to 20 minutes away from here, don't come down here, Mr. Speaker. They don't come down here in order to make a deputation when they know that I, as their member, can bring their issues forward on their behalf, or they will send notes and letters in. So I don't think that in this particular instance a bill that is so close to approval needs the kind of timeline in a travelling show at committee that others no doubt will need in the future. I'm looking forward, Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I'm looking forward, Mr. Speaker, to having the kind of reasoned discussion around very important—

Interjections.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It's okay. I can shout over them. I've only got 10 seconds to go.

I'm really looking forward to having a reasoned debate around some of the amendments that have been put forward. Share them with us earlier so we can have a chance to evaluate them and move forward later.

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

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm proud to stand up again and say a few words regarding this bill.

I do have to make a comment, though, that this member here made comment about Uber and UberX. Really, if you leave the city of Toronto, I don't think anybody in Ontario knows what the heck Uber or UberX is, because it's just not available out there. So for a government to actually focus on an industry that is only in one city in the whole province—I kind of question that when, in fact, you should be looking at the whole product as a whole to ensure savings, not only for the people in Toronto and the GTA, but actually across the province of Ontario.

Just as a note, as I was checking out Twitter here to check out what the heck Uber is, UberX is actually offering free rides to the municipal elections throughout Toronto and such, so I think if you haven't made it to the polls yet, you can probably look up UberX, whatever that might be at the end of the day, and get to the polls. However, if you live in rural Ontario, I'm sure there are possible ways for you to get to the polls, possibly through your car. However, with the cost of auto insurance due to this government's mismanagement of the file over the last 10 years, it's highly doubtful that they're able to get in the car and get in to vote, so they're probably out walking today.

Mr. Speaker, we've put through tons and tons of alternative solutions into insurance going forward. We had a four-point plan that this government didn't really listen to, although they did listen to my call on going after that fraud.

This government created this task force, and they spent a year deciding what they should go after. They came up with 38 recommendations on how to fix fraud. The Minister of Finance got this report and put it in his cupboard, right beside the Drummond report, and walked

away. They've implemented four recommendations in two years. This bill may implement two more. If the government is really serious about going after fraud, they might actually open up the report and implement all the aspects of the fraud commission's report, which, in fact, will lower rates across the province.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to speak, on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming–Cochrane, in response to the member from Beaches–East York. I'm hoping to be able to work with the member. He's the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture.

I can assure you that one thing that won't go over well in rural Ontario—no one in rural Ontario knows what Uber and UberX are; I fully agree with Mr. Yurek. And no member in rural Ontario presumes to know all the opinions of his constituents. Rural members—and, I hope, urban members, as well—value everyone's opinion.

Not everyone in my riding agrees with what I say. On issues that are really important to people in my riding, like auto insurance, they would love to have the chance to actually express their own views. I don't presume to know what everyone in my riding is thinking. I can't believe that a member would actually express that opinion.

This is about democracy. It's not about, "I'm the smartest person in the room." I'm not the smartest person—certainly not in my riding. I have the faith of the majority of the people in my riding to represent them, but I certainly don't presume to know everything about my riding. I do know that the people in my riding need to have the ability to speak to this government in their area, at their level.

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

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate and to pass some comments on the remarks of my colleague the member from Beaches–East York.

I think when you have a province the size of Ontario, you'll find that people in the province use a variety of means of transporting themselves around, whether it's for work or for pleasure. I know that we've seen increased transit. People are into cycling. Still, at the end of the day, there's a reliance on the automobile as the main mode of transportation in the province.

What we've decided to do, as a province, is to ensure that we're protecting each other; that we've brought in a system where it's mandatory to have insurance. Obviously, the insurance we have is through private companies, co-operatives, that type of thing. Other jurisdictions have brought in public auto insurance over the years and have had mixed results. We've looked at that, as a province, from time to time.

Today I think what the member from Beaches–East York did was concentrate on the more practical aspects of this bill. When we're asking, as a government—when we're ensuring that everybody in the province has

coverage, we want to make sure, when the people come back to us and tell us what they're seeing in terms of fraud, increasing costs and a claims resolution process that's long and cumbersome—they want to see a government that takes action on that in a very practical way.

So while the debate may be raging over whether we're doing the right consultation or a variety of other things—whether we're the smartest person in our riding or not—I think what the debate really should be about is the practical aspects of this bill. By passing this bill, are you going to make auto insurance in this province easier for people to manage?

I think, on balance, Speaker, with the consultation we've done, with the improvements that are built into the proposals in Bill 15, that what we should be doing is sending it off to committee, passing it through second reading, allowing the people of the province of Ontario to come forward to pass their opinions and suggestions on to us—and then move forward, because they'd like to see this implemented.

1730

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One last question or comment? The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. It's absolutely a pleasure.

I just want to reach out to the Minister of Labour. He made a comment that there's a variety of means of transport in rural Ontario. I'd like to remind the government that before we went to the election, I had tabled a resolution on rural and northern transportation, had all-party support, and it's still sitting nowhere in Neverland. It is a big issue out in rural Ontario, so we do want to bring that back, and I hope you'll be one of those people who will push that at your cabinet meeting.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: They're going to promote Uber.

Mr. Bill Walker: They're going to promote Uber, yes.

It's a pleasure to stand. Again, my colleague Jeff Yurek from Elgin–Middlesex–London did an awful lot of work in this critic portfolio. I think he has just touched on it—they had a report. The task force was developed and they brought back 38 recommendations. Those recommendations should have been about safety; they should have been about lowering rates and affordable rates. Again, it has been alluded to, particularly in my riding in rural Ontario. I have a 17-year old who is just buying his first car. The affordable insurance rates are astounding. They're not affordable. There's absolutely no way that he can even think of putting that car on the road. That's one of the things we need to do.

A lot of that is being driven by the fraud. We have abilities to change that. We have abilities, with the power of the government across the aisle, to come back and listen to those 38, rather than, as he said: The finance minister took that and filed it, like they did the Don Drummond report after spending millions and millions of dollars, and didn't wish to implement any of it. Well,

why are we doing all this? That's what I get asked by my constituents. "Why do you do all these reports and then at the end of the day, the government takes them and says, 'Yes, thanks, but we don't really need to listen. We're going to do this?'"

Mr. Speaker, we need to be accountable. It's not a dog-and-pony show, whoever referred to that, when you're out talking to constituents, to the people of Ontario, the great people of Ontario, who actually, by the way, pay all the freight for this great government that we should have for Ontario.

We need lower rates, we need it to be economical and we need to get rid of the fraud, and my critic from Elgin–Middlesex–London has done a great job of bringing that to this House. We'll continue to do that until we can get lower insurance rates.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Beaches–East York to reply.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thanks to the members from Elgin–Middlesex–London, Timiskaming–Cochrane, Oakville and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Great fishing.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Great fishing up there—salmon fishing. I was up for the derby. I appreciate it very much.

Let's be very clear, to the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane: Check the Hansard record. At no point did I say I'm representing all the opinions, but I did say that I consult with my constituents on a regular basis. If they do have opinions about this, I do bring them back and will bring them back to the House as necessary.

Interjection: That's your job.

Mr. Arthur Potts: That's what my job is.

As for the Auto Insurance Anti-Fraud Task Force recommendations, over half of them were implemented before these measures came into place, and now we're moving forward with new recommendations, recommendations around transforming the dispute resolution system, regulating the towing industry, modernizing FSCO's enforcement authority and addressing vehicle storage issues. So we are taking those recommendations.

I would add that according to this excellent report on auto insurance written by my friend Andrew McNaught in Provincial Affairs, 41st Parliament: An Overview for Ontario Legislators, it says right here very clearly that according to FSCO, the 2010 reforms that we've already put in place have saved auto insurance \$2 billion in accident benefits payouts in 2011 alone. If it did it in 2011, it probably did it in 2012 and in 2013. So there we have it. We are taking those recommendations because fraud is a serious concern that we take seriously.

I appreciate that some of the reforms we're doing with the tow truck industry—I look forward to their further comments on it. We know there's widespread support in the industry for what we're trying to do. There are some small checks and balances we need to put in, but the reality when it comes to the business of storage, telling them what they have to have to do business as usual seems to be the right thing to do. We want to make sure that people don't have conflicts of interest when they

pick up your car and take it to someone else at an auto-body shop.

Those kinds of measures are in place to reduce the cost to consumers and bring premiums down. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and one half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader or a cabinet minister specifies otherwise.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: No further debate, Mr. Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

CHILD CARE MODERNIZATION ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 SUR LA MODERNISATION DES SERVICES DE GARDE D'ENFANTS

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 23, 2014, on the motion for second reading of Bill 10, An Act to enact the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, to repeal the Day Nurseries Act, to amend the Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007, the Education Act and the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities Act and to make consequential and related amendments to other Acts /
Projet de loi 10, Loi édictant la Loi de 2014 sur la garde d'enfants et la petite enfance, abrogeant la Loi sur les garderies, modifiant la Loi de 2007 sur les éducatrices et les éducateurs de la petite enfance, la Loi sur l'éducation et la Loi sur le ministère de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités et apportant des modifications corrélatives et connexes à d'autres lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm advised that when we last debated this item of business, we had completed questions and comments on the speech from the members for Simcoe North and Nepean–Carleton, who had shared their time.

Further debate.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to be able to offer a few minutes looking at Bill 10, the Child Care Modernization Act.

One of the things that I think needs to be understood at the very outset of this is whether this is actually not one step forward and two steps back, because when we look at the details of the "modernization act," it seems to me that it has thrown many thousands of people into deep concern over the direction this act takes the government. It seems in their minds that, in fact, this is an insistence by this government on making life more difficult for Ontario families and a fundamental removal of choice when it comes to child care. It's in that context, then, that I look at this particular piece of legislation.

The bill purports to update child care in the province. I think it's also important to understand the nature of the legislation that governs the categories of child care that is provided in this province. Today, we have three different categories: private in-home day cares, which have five or

fewer children; if there's more than one location, the centre becomes a private home day care agency that must be licensed under current legislation; and, finally, day nurseries, which have more than five children and must be licensed as well. Those would be the ones that most of us recognize as either for-profit or not-for-profit. They're stand-alone or they're part of schools, leisure centres or something like that.

The important thing is that 80% of children are in unlicensed private home day cares. It's important to understand that there is a demand for these facilities, the vast majority of which, of course, provide safe care for infants and toddlers. Thousands of families are happy with the care they receive and oftentimes save money by not sending their children to potentially more expensive licensed care.

Unlicensed home day cares play an important role in our province. I know several people who have opted for this type of care. Sometimes it's the only care available to families with young infants, as many licensed centres will only take children 18 months or older. Unlicensed homes can fill that gap between 12 and 18 months when families are desperate for care as parents go back to work after a 12-month maternity leave. So it's really important to understand that they have a very specific role and that they cover about 80% of the people who are seeking day care.

On October 20, the Minister of Education, in question period, implied that unlicensed child care centres are illegal. There seems to be some confusion about the difference between being unlicensed and actually illegal. From the Ministry of Education's own website: "In Ontario, individuals may look after five or fewer children under 10 years of age without a licence—in addition to their own children—if in their own home." I think we must make it clear for the public that "unlicensed" doesn't mean "illegal."

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There's also something that we need to understand, and that is the fact that, particularly on the heels of the publication of the Ombudsman's report, there is very clearly a history of poor administration on the part of the government.

It's important to understand that even before this piece of legislation, there was already a complaint system in effect for daycare. If someone suspects wrongdoing or danger, an inspector is supposed to investigate the child care facility in a timely manner.

But the Ombudsman's report released last week tells a very different story: a story of failure on the part of the government. Careless About Child Care is the title, and I think it speaks for itself. His report on child care consists of 113 recommendations.

The details of the kinds of problems that the Ombudsman reports demonstrate that the government has not been following its own rules. Surely we recognize that there are standards in place. There is already legislation, but we have to follow the legislation and guidelines that exist, as opposed to creating a whole new system to deal with potential problems.

The Ombudsman identifies this in his report:

- sloppy, inconsistent complaint intake practices, and an inadequate complaint tracking system;
- ministry guidelines not followed;
- inspections delayed or never done;
- staff untrained in conducting investigations or on legislation they enforce;
- poor inspection practices;
- careless evidence-gathering; and
- failure to involve or educate parents about daycare standards and facilities that are not in compliance with them.

These are some of the details that the Ombudsman's report deals with, and he refers to it as "a legacy of dysfunction" by this government.

For all of us, the disturbing information that government officials ignored numerous complaints shows that this government was failing to protect children. As I said, there is already a system in place. It was not being used. I suggest that we first look at the legislation that is in place and look at what we should be doing.

The government is unfairly attempting to change the rules for families with young children. Bill 10 will, in effect, destroy the child care system that is currently in place and make it difficult for these centres to continue to operate. It also threatens the livelihood of thousands of people and causes unnecessary chaos for families needing to find care.

But Bill 10 does not provide any solutions to the chaos that will ensue when thousands of daycare spaces close, as there will be a vast shortage of licensed centres. Where will children go when their unlicensed centres close? Where is the government's plan for the 80% of Ontario's children who will be forced out? Of course, in turn, will families find themselves having to look at giving up a job in order to look after their children?

Increasing government regulation, according to this proposed piece of legislation, and oversight in existing centres will also mean that child care costs will inevitably soar in order to fund the growing bureaucracy, licensing costs and increased inspections. There are currently thousands of children in unlicensed care. Who will be able to perform those inspections? What infrastructure is in place? Or will we need to create a new system from scratch?

We know that even with the current system, it can take time to have an inspection done. It seems that having more inspectors, at a greater cost, would be the only way to make Bill 10 work. If that's the case, then we're going to be spending more on child care while actually providing less child care. We're spending more on inspectors and the whole infrastructure of a child care bureaucracy, without actually increasing the number of spaces. If there is extra money in the child care fund, then we should be reducing the cost for families.

Ontario families are already struggling to have a two-income household and provide adequate child care for their children. Ontario has the highest child care costs in Canada. According to a 2013 Globe and Mail report, a study by the Organization for Economic Co-operation

and Development indicates that the average monthly costs for infants in Ontario is \$1,100. That's an annual cost of \$13,000. You can think of this as a second mortgage. Child care costs are already extremely high, especially compared with other provinces. Manitoba's, for instance, is \$631. Creating more red tape, more regulations and increasing operating costs for centres in Ontario will only make it more difficult on the pocketbooks of families and business.

Mr. Speaker, in the last five years, I've spoken with hundreds of small businesses, and have heard the horror stories about regulations and red tape. Some businesses have said that they can't keep up with the regulations and costs that it takes to be a small business in Ontario. Some businesses, depending on the industry, must deal with a plethora of agencies, boards and commissions, and meet requirements from all of them. Sometimes the requirements for one are in competition with another.

I used this example the other day when discussing Bill 18, but I think it's a great example. In 2012, the Ontario Home Builders' Association said there were 28 ABCs—agencies, boards and commissions—that home builders have to deal with. How much time do businesses have to deal with all of these ABCs and all the different rules they make? Why is the government making it so difficult for businesses in Ontario to succeed?

If Bill 10 passes, pretty soon a whole new industry—child care centres—will learn how hard it is to deal with more and more government bureaucracy. Who knows how many of these centres will be closed due to the increased red tape, regulations and associated costs?

Not only is business hit with red tape, they also have to worry about payroll taxes, which Bill 10 is sure to add to child care centres, if passed. The Ontario Retirement Pension Plan is the most recent payroll tax that the government will be introducing. According to businesses and associations that I have spoken to, the ORPP will inevitably add more expense and reduce profits, and jobs will be lost. Between red tape, regulations and payroll taxes, the government seems to be on the lookout for ways to make running a business in this province more difficult, and I'm struggling to understand why this is.

Bill 10 is going to create another bloated bureaucracy. The problem is that this is looking after something that could have been looked after by the regulations that already exist. Even in the College of Trades, the kind of bureaucracy that has been created and the kind of oversight that has been—is part of that bill. So it looks like another industry, child care centres, is the next in increasing costs for businesses and families.

One of the most important things that I think is a potential fallout from the changes that are being contemplated is what this will do for people who can't meet the requirements, who see having fewer children as something they can't manage. They're going to be looking at doing it on the q.t. Parents are going to be looking for spaces for their children. People are going to be able to offer this, and I think it will only encourage them, when there are such vast numbers of people who are affected, to operate underground.

In fact, once you've produced that level of frustration, that level of inability to pay fees and incur the costs, then the effect of the bill is actually to decrease oversight as more and more seek to provide the service in an underground economy.

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My colleague from Simcoe North has called on the minister to consult with daycare providers and families on Bill 10 before rushing to pass it. He has suggested that the bill travel during the winter recess so that we can have a better understanding of its impacts. We have received letters already about how the bill will negatively affect daycare providers and families with young children, but it seems that it would be good for the minister to hear these stories first-hand from the people who have to live with the effects of the bill every day. Families and child care providers should be consulted on this bill so that we ensure that any new legislation will help, not hurt, families and children.

I add my voice to that request because one of the things that is such a dramatic influence on the way in which this bill would be rolled out is whether you are in an urban area or a rural area. In much of the rural areas, there aren't stand-alone daycare centres; there isn't that kind of opportunity for people. People do look to neighbours and friends and people in the community to provide daycare. That unlicensed daycare is an option for people. When it's made more and more difficult for anyone to provide that kind of service, it just reduces the opportunity for people to find that neighbour or that friend; the person who has been doing it in the community for years is no longer able to do so. I think that, apart from the varied voices that come with the process of public hearings, one of the most important voices left out is the small town, where people may not be able to access bigger-scale centres.

The other thing about this legislation is the question of timing. Obviously, thousands and thousands of people are involved, and they need to have time to make adjustments. The people in the business need to know whether or not they can survive, whether there's a business case for them to be able to survive. Families need time to make those adjustments as well. I think that the timing of this legislation is critical for any kind of implementation planning.

As I mentioned a moment ago, the question of the underground economy is one that I think should be viewed very, very carefully because of the fact that when people need to make those kinds of choices and are unable to, they feel that they are ready to take maybe a bigger risk than they otherwise would, but they also feel somewhat desperate. I think there's a lot of good reasons why we need to have the bill travel and hear different points of view.

I think also we need to recognize that no piece of legislation should force families into choices that they would not otherwise make. When it comes to child care, people deserve a choice. There is no one size that fits all. Some prefer an intimate home setting which might not work for others. We must continue to offer families

options so that they can feel comfortable leaving their children in the care of others.

As I said earlier, 80% of children in Ontario today are in those home settings. I think that it's extremely important, when we're looking at this bill, to look at the goals of this bill. They should be clear: a safe, stimulating and affordable experience for our most valuable resource, our babies, and their futures. Instead, this bill throws out to us the spectre of declining spaces and consequent shortages, the increased costs with inspection and bureaucracy and restricted choice for parents. I think that is the danger of this bill, and I certainly want to indicate that we feel that this takes away from the family's ability to choose what type of daycare best suits their lifestyle.

As the Ombudsman's report outlines, the child care system in Ontario must be fixed, but Bill 10 is not the solution.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I adjourn the House, I'll ask if there are any questions and comments.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I wanted to comment on some of the remarks made by the member for York-Simcoe. The term "illegal child care" was actually introduced by the Auditor General. It refers to the situation where an unlicensed child care is contravening the rules that are set out in the Day Nurseries Act, or in the future, hopefully, in Bill 10. It was actually the Auditor General who coined the phrase "illegal child care."

Certainly, the vast majority of providers of unlicensed child care are not behaving in an illegal manner, and they're a valued part of the child care system. In fact, I've frequently used that myself with my own children.

But I do think it's important to point out that the auditor made a number of recommendations, and in fact, Bill 10 addresses those recommendations that the auditor made. What Bill 10 is doing is very, very consistent with what the auditor said. For example, the auditor said, "The Ministry of Education should change its licensing policies to reflect that, absent extenuating or compelling circumstances, individuals who have a history of violating the Day Nurseries Act"—the current legislation—"or successor legislation"—that's Bill 10—"should not be granted a licence to operate under the act."

Well, under Bill 10, if passed, it would prevent an individual from providing child care based on their past conduct, including conviction for an offence under the act. In addition, in the proposed legislation, a director can refuse to issue or renew or revoke a license based on past conduct. So that's an example of something that people have complained about—"You're getting too mean." In fact, we're doing exactly what the auditor, or what the Ombudsman—sorry, I want to correct my record: I kept saying "Auditor General"; I should have been saying "Ombudsman."

We're doing exactly what the Ombudsman said.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Any further questions and comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to provide a few comments regarding Bill 10. I wasn't going to, but then when the minister stood up—I think I have to. I appreciate what the member for York-Simcoe has said about Bill 10. I, as well, as House leader, have received a letter from our critic, Mr. Dunlop, asking me to ask the government House leader and the third party House leader to have hearings on this bill throughout the province.

There were some significant protests this weekend to Bill 10, and I just can't believe that the minister would stand up and not address what the member for York-Simcoe talked about. It's becoming evident to the members on this side that this bill needs to have some public comment. I know I did an interview this week with one of my smallest weekly newspapers because there is concern out there.

Again, I used this comment last week and I'll use it again today: I think we need to help educate people and not just legislate. We do have tools that are used at our disposal to be able to go out to all corners of the province and engage constituents on this type of legislation. Again, we've seen this government close down debate today on one bill. They're closing down debate on another bill tomorrow. This bill cannot have debate closed. We need to have a discussion with people, and I'm asking again, through you to the minister, to talk to your House leader, listen to what the people are saying, and let's have some hearings on Bill 10.

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

I'll return to the member for York-Simcoe for her reply.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Thank you to the Minister of Education and the member for Leeds-Grenville in providing further comment. I tried to make clear in my comments that obviously there are steps that are necessary to take in terms of people who have done something in contravention of the Day Nurseries Act or any of those things, and making sure that what we have at the end of the day is something that is safe and workable.

My concern is more a question of the nature of the member from Leeds-Grenville's, the one-size-fits-all problem, because of the fact that the independent providers that I've met would face a fairly steep cost and measures to take to become part of an agency or something like that. They don't see that as very practical for what they're doing. And as I say, the other problem, with reducing their numbers, is that it reduces choice for families. Since 80% of children are in that kind of a setting, I think it's important to monitor, as the minister said, but I also think it's important to recognize the viability and the need to maintain that kind of service opportunity or choice for families in Ontario.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It's 6 o'clock. This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1802.

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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 Affairs 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

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cindy Forster
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Han Dong
Cindy Forster, Michael Harris
Randy Hillier, Sophie Kiwala
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Soo Wong
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Monte McNaughton
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Eleanor McMahan, Lisa M. Thompson
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: John Fraser
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Wayne Gates, Marie-France Lalonde
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
Jim McDonnell, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Joe Cimino
Bob Delaney, Jack MacLaren
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qadri
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Toby Barrett
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
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: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
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 / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Robert Bailey, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioe Lim

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

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: France Gélinas
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Christine Elliott, France Gélinas
Marie-France Lalonde, Amrit Mangat
Gila Martow, Kathryn McGarry
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioe Lim

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