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(Hansard)**

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Monday 24 November 2014

Lundi 24 novembre 2014

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 24 November 2014

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 24 novembre 2014

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to welcome Dale Downey, who is in the members' gallery. Dale is a guest of Frank Klees; we all know Frank Klees. Speaker, I know you'll more formally introduce the member, but I want to say that we miss him dearly here in the House, as I'm sure the government does, especially during question period. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): You'll notice I let that one slide just a little.

Introduction of guests?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to welcome David and Barb Glazer to Queen's Park today. They bid on having lunch with me and they dropped a lot of money, so be nice to them.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It's my pleasure this morning to introduce members from REALpac, the Real Property Association of Canada: Michael Brooks, CEO; Brooks Barnett, manager of government relations and policy; Carolyn Lane, VP, membership, marketing and communications; Nancy Anderson, VP, financial reporting, and CFO; Edward Byers, management, professional development and events; and Kailyn Perchalski, marketing and communications coordinator. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'd like to welcome to the House students from the McMaster University PC campus association: Michael Klimuntowski, Jacob Klugsberg and Devin Marshal. Welcome.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to introduce some members from Campaign 2000, child poverty activists who are in the gallery today: Anita Khanna, Laurel Rothman, Valerie Delgado, Lubna Khalid, Sadia Khan and Martha Friendly. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'd like all members of the Legislature to welcome my big sister, Susan Houghton, who is here to watch democracy in action. Welcome, Susan.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Today, page Kelsey Clark is page captain and her family is here to watch her in action. We have with us mother Cheryl Clark, father Matthew Clark, brother Jacob Clark, sister Mackenzie Clark, and Conrad Shank. They're here in the gallery with us today.

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I'd like to welcome Anna Vozza, Julie Green, Krista Del Gatto, Cameron Paine, Phil Dornier and Bill Courtney. They are visiting me today from the Windsor-Essex County Association of Realtors.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Please help me welcome, in the east members' gallery, Leona Alleslev. Leona is a good friend and a constituent of mine, and was recently nominated to be a candidate in the next federal election.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'd like to introduce representatives from Huron Perth Association of Realtors: Michael McIntee, Linda Bowers, Sue Fowler and Gwen Kirkpatrick.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Speaker, please help me welcome Kathleen Webb and Andrew Light to the chamber this morning. They are visiting the Legislature in support of Mineola Public School.

Kathleen Webb and Andrew Light are from CRS Technology, a start-up-business based in Mississauga working collaboratively with OCAD University and the region of Peel to develop a technology platform focused on job creation and employment. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to introduce Michael McIntee, also from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, and Dawn-Lee McKenzie from the Ontario association of realtors. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I want those present to welcome Dr. Patrick Deane, the president of McMaster University, and Mary Williams, for coming in this morning from McMaster University. There's a reception this afternoon.

While I'm on my feet, I just want to say congratulations to the McMaster Marauders, who will play in the Vanier Cup, and to the Hamilton Tiger-Cats, who will be playing in the Grey Cup.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I know that we have a few representatives from the Canadian Diabetes Association in the chamber with us today. I would like to introduce Anne Le Quang, who is senior manager of programs and partnerships for Ontario; as well as Margaret Maheandiran and Soumia Djirar, volunteer advocates.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I ask all members of the House to join me in welcoming members of OREA from my riding of Brampton who are here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As is the tradition of the Speaker, we have with us today in the west members' gallery, from Oak Ridges in the 37th and 38th Parliaments and Newmarket-Aurora in the 39th and 40th Parliaments, Mr. Frank Klees. We're glad you're with us today, Frank.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I ask the member to notice that I did that without editorial.

Also, in the Speaker's gallery today we have a very special guest delegation. It's a parliamentary delegation from the Gauteng Provincial Legislature of the Republic of South Africa. Please welcome our guests from South Africa.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We'll be teaching them about question period.

RESIGNATION OF MEMBER FOR SUDBURY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the membership of the House by reason of the resignation of Joe Cimino as the member for the electoral district of Sudbury, effective the 20th day of November, 2014.

Accordingly, I have issued my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for a by-election.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Minister, when I asked the Premier whether your government was intending on introducing a carbon tax like they have in Quebec, I really didn't get an answer last Thursday. She skated all over the place; she was as slippery as the ice outside.

1040

Let me just tell you what's going on in Quebec. Starting on January 1, 2015, a little over a month from now, drivers in Quebec will pay an extra 1.9 cents on each litre of gasoline for their carbon tax—a brand new tax. That's with carbon currently priced at \$11.39 per tonne. Drivers will pay two and a half cents more per litre of gas if carbon goes up to \$15, six cents more per litre if carbon goes up to \$30 per tonne and 10 cents more per litre if carbon goes up to \$50 per tonne, which it very well could. The carbon tax will also apply to natural gas and oil as well.

Minister, are you planning on doing the same thing to hard-working Ontarians?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The first thing we have to understand is, our planet right now is heading for a four-degrees Celsius mean temperature change in the last half of this century. What that means for my four-year-old grandson: The chance of him growing up, getting to my age and having a functional economy or having a secure food supply is remote.

We're in three years of drought in California, which is going to drive food prices through the roof for working Ontario families. As you may know, as a result of climate change, Tim Hortons just raised its coffee prices 10 cents

a cup. Climate change is making the world a more dangerous and expensive place, and we are still waiting for the opposition to explain what their policy on climate change is.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I suspect this is more of a tax grab than it is a move to save the environment and save the climate.

In fact, in Quebec, the carbon tax that will come in in just over a month will bring in \$500 million in the first year alone—2015. By 2020, it's expected to bring in \$3.5 billion in extra taxes. The \$500 million is exactly what we found out you were short in this year's fall economic statement. Everything points to—including the meetings and the deals that were signed on Friday between Premier Couillard and Premier Wynne—the fact that you're going after a tax grab. Do you really think that two cents a litre on gasoline is going to save the climate? I think what it's going to do is drive jobs out of the economy. It's going to, once again, overtax the people of Ontario, and it's penalizing hard-working Ontario families. That's what it's going to do.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: First of all, the only carbon tax in Canada is in British Columbia. Second of all, Alberta's Conservative Party introduced a credit—a cap-and-trade system—similar to what Quebec and many other jurisdictions have.

I would suggest that the honourable member start to understand the difference between a market mechanism that helps companies pool capital and get rewarded for reducing their carbon emissions and improving their productivity and that of a tax. It's clear very to me that the literacy level about fiscal policy and the environment is about zero.

I spent two days with Resolute Forest Products going from where they cut down the tree to talking about how they're operating in the Quebec system. Some companies like it; some don't. But it's very clear that the opposition has not even a nodding acquaintance with either climate change or the market mechanisms available in some jurisdictions.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Speaker, back to the minister: I'd say to the minister—rather than lecturing us, why don't you look in the mirror and test yourself for honesty? You didn't run on the carbon tax.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask the member to withdraw, please.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: But it's a Liberal virtue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to ask the member from Timmins–James Bay to resist the temptation.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Minister, there was no mention of a carbon tax or a cap-and-trade system in your last election or the Liberal platform. There was none in the throne speech or the budget or the fall economic statement. This thing has come clearly out of left field.

First of all, apologize to the people of Ontario for even thinking of this and, secondly, tell us today that you're not going to do it.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: When government announces policy, we do it through budgets, fall economic statements and legislation in this House. Considering that there is no legislation, as the member described, tells you it isn't coming out of left field; this is craziness coming out of right field.

Again, I've suggested in a few cases that \$700 million in one hour was the cost to GO of a washout in Burlington of eight metres of track.

Do you know how many hundreds of millions of dollars it has cost us to replace the operating rooms not once but twice in the last 24 months at Burlington hospital? Do you want to talk to Mayor Goldring about the impacts of climate change on his storm water system?

Mr. Grant Crack: What about Buffalo?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Would you like to go to Buffalo and try to explain unprecedented water—maybe you would like to talk to the people in Toledo, 400,000—

Mr. John Yakabuski: If you're going to make this stuff up, at least be credible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will come to order.

New question.

SCHOOL CLOSURES

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Education. Minister, by now, everyone knows you tried to sneak half a billion dollars in cuts to the education system past Ontarians, but what we don't know is which schools you will close to make those cuts. There are over 150 accommodation reviews currently under way. You repeatedly mention 600 schools that are close to empty across the province, most of them in rural and small-town Ontario. You have said, "It's not prudent fiscal management to keep turning on lights and heating for schools that are not operating at capacity." Well, Minister, are you going to turn the lights off and the heating off in those 600 schools?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I caught a whiff of trying to hide things there. First, in response, I want to read you what the Auditor General said—

Interjections.

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

Please finish.

Hon. Liz Sandals: What the Auditor General said last week was that they had "a request by the Standing Committee on Public Accounts"—

Mr. John Yakabuski: There's a stench of trying to hide things over there.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke come to order, second time.

Hon. Liz Sandals: —"to look at whether the government's communication of a \$2-billion savings, associated

with the negotiations with school board employees collective agreements, was reasonable." I'm quoting the auditor: "As you saw in our press release and from our report, we have concluded that the estimate was reasonable."

Quite frankly, everything we did during those negotiations was accurate—what we reported to the public—and totally transparent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Well, I'm not really calling into question the work of the auditor. I'm calling into question the sneakiness of this government by cutting half a billion dollars from school boards, saying in the past that it was always up to school boards to make decisions whether schools stayed open or closed. But you are basically closing up to 600 schools across this province, and you won't be forthright and open about it. You talk about open government.

Now, you know the 600 schools. We want to see the list and we want to know, for the sake of our small towns, our rural Ontario and our cities: Which schools are you going to close? Which schools are you going to force school boards to close, by depriving them of \$500 million because of your fiscal mismanagement for the last 11 years?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm really not sure where it is that you decide something is sneaky when you send a consultation document to all 72 school boards in the province. That's not sneaky; that's open and transparent.

But to respond to the question, Speaker: We have provided \$22.5 billion in operating funding to school boards this year. That's up 56.5% since 2003. That's an increase of over \$4,200 for each and every student in the province of Ontario. We have dramatically increased funding. But it is also true that enrolment is declining, and boards need to manage their assets.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Let me get this straight: You're still saying that boards need to manage their assets, but you're taking \$500 million—half a billion dollars—away from those very school boards. You're talking in this House, and you're talking outside, about low birth rates, close to 600 schools not at full capacity—they're less than 66%. You've talked about a secret list that you have that you won't show us. I would think that the school boards are getting the hint, pretty loud and clear, that they have to close schools.

Now, why don't you fess up to the fact and take the responsibility that you're forcing these schools to close, many of these schools—

Interjection.

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

1050

Mr. Jim Wilson: I thought you would at least say it's something about hubs because you have talked about community hubs, but it sounds like you've even moved away from that.

What schools are you going to close, Minister?

Hon. Liz Sandals: Actually, I have significant funding in my budget to address community hubs. We're currently working with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs to figure out just exactly what we need to do with school hubs and a number of issues.

To go back to the question at hand: Of course we need to talk to boards about appropriate savings. This isn't about cuts; this is making sure, in a context of having a lot of underutilized capacity, that the boards review their assets carefully.

I think it's important to note, Speaker, that we have actually provided additional funding this year for rural and remote schools. In those cases where you've got a rural or remote northern school that clearly has to remain open, we've actually provided additional funding in those circumstances.

CHILD POVERTY

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Acting Premier. On November 24, 1989, the leader of the federal NDP rose in the House of Commons to propose that child poverty be eliminated within 10 years. Today, 25 years later, since that historic NDP motion, a staggering number of children—over half a million—are living in poverty in Ontario. That's more than the population of Hamilton. It's enough to fill the Rogers Centre 10 times over.

To the Acting Premier: After a decade of Liberal government, why are half a million children living in poverty in Ontario right here, right now?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Child poverty is of concern for us all. Mind you, we've made investments; we recognize how important it is. That's why, since we've invested over \$1 billion, we recognize that more needs to be done, and it will be critical for us to do so. But I want to comment on the question—from the third party, no less. The NDP's platform didn't even mention it once. Poverty was non-existent. They voted against the very measures that were progressive in this budget, dealing with poverty. They voted against the increase for families. They voted against investments in housing and benefits for low incomes. They voted against higher minimum wage, and now they have the audacity to stand here and ask us questions about something that they didn't even support.

I'll leave the supplementary to my colleague, who will address the very nature of what we're putting forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: In 2008, the Liberal government promised to reduce child poverty by 25%. The Deputy Premier called it "achievable." But the Liberals failed to keep that promise to the most vulnerable kids in our province. Instead of reducing child poverty, it's actually on the rise: 10,000 more children fell into poverty in just the last two years alone in Toronto.

If the Liberals promised to break the cycle of child poverty, why is it getting worse?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: First, I want to thank Campaign 2000 for their thoughtful report that was recently released. I think we all agree, Speaker, that to address poverty and help everybody reach their full potential, we need to make sure that the right supports are in place. We have recommitted to reducing poverty among children and youth through targeted investments and supports, reducing child poverty by 25% so everyone can get the best start in life and reach success. We'll be investing \$15 billion in funding for children's social services and more than \$1 billion in the Ontario Child Benefit—I may add, with no help from the NDP—and indexing that to inflation, which happened with our budget, as said by the Acting Premier. There is nothing in the NDP platform about poverty. But we are committed to the Poverty Reduction Strategy, focusing on the welfare of children, housing and other important measures.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: In her maiden speech to this House, the Premier said, "I've never known poverty." Speaker, every child in this province and this country should be able to say the exact same thing, but today, one in five kids in our province—half a million—are living in poverty. The Liberal government has failed to reach its poverty reduction target, and child poverty is actually increasing right here in Toronto.

After a decade of Liberal government, why do half a million kids in Ontario still know all too well the pain and suffering of poverty and what it means to live in poverty here in Ontario?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, there's no doubt there is much more work to do on this file, but we need to keep working and investing to break the cycle of poverty.

We have increased the benefit for the Ontario Child Benefit and indexed that to inflation, as I mentioned. This benefit, Speaker, has more than doubled—the child benefit has doubled—since 2008. That's fantastic.

We have other programs, such as our Student Nutrition Program. The Minister of Education and I were out recently supporting initiatives on that to help school-aged children get a good breakfast and start their days successfully. We've invested many more millions of dollars and will continue to do that as part of our five-year plan to expand student nutrition and other programs.

CHILD POVERTY

Ms. Cindy Forster: You can't spin the lived experience of children in the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Who is the question for?

Ms. Cindy Forster: My next question is to the Deputy Premier. To more than half a million children living in poverty, the Liberal promises aren't worth much. The Liberals promised to reduce child poverty by 25% in five years. Those five years came and went; that promise was broken.

Now, the Liberals say they'll keep their word, but there's no target and no time limit. The Liberals have come up with a plastic promise they can't break and which they will never keep.

To the Acting Premier: Why does the Liberal government have no deadline for reducing child poverty and no urgency to get this job done?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I just want to make it perfectly clear that this is a very serious and important issue to our government. There is no doubt about that.

Let's focus on the facts. Our Poverty Reduction Strategy has many components, Speaker. I mentioned about the homelessness focus. We are committing to our original goal to reduce poverty by 25%, using 2008 as the base year; increasing the funding to the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative by \$42 million; allocating \$16 million over three years to create 1,000 new supportive housing spaces; committing—this is very important—to providing health benefits for children and youth in low-income families, such as prescription drugs, vision care and mental health services; and investing \$50 million over five years. The strategy is very important.

The Deputy Premier has spoken before about the challenges we've faced in moving this strategy forward, including the lack of co-operation from the federal government and the realities of a recession we've lived in.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Campaign 2000 says that "austerity has eroded the living conditions of children and their families," but the Liberals are moving full steam ahead with an austerity plan that will only make life harder. It will slash 6% from most ministries in what Bloomberg calls the "biggest ... cuts since Harris." It means that half a million dollars will be cut from our schools, hurting the most vulnerable kids the most.

How can the Liberals say they're committed to addressing child poverty when their cuts are only making the problems worse?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, quite frankly, this is outrageous. The NDP did not even mention the word "poverty" in their platform—did not even mention it. They voted against the most progressive budget in Ontario's history.

This is what they said no to, Speaker: They said no to an increase to families who depend on the Ontario Child Benefit. They said no to investments in housing and benefits for low-income children. They said no to a higher minimum wage, and much, much more.

The PCs didn't help either. They wanted to slash social services.

There's no doubt that this government has moved on poverty reduction in Ontario. We've made investments, Speaker. There's more to do. We are deeply committed. This is a very serious issue. I'm very disappointed to hear the language being used by the NDP. We should be working together to reduce child poverty in Ontario.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: There are more children living in poverty than there are people living in Hamilton or Niagara, and that is a shameful record from a government that has made so many promises. It's a human deficit that will only hurt the province. Worst of all, the deep cutbacks will put more kids in poverty and make life harder for families already struggling to make ends meet.

Will the Acting Premier admit that the Liberals have no targets, no timeline, for reducing child poverty because they know that their cuts will only make the problems worse?

1100

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm not sure what part of my answer wasn't heard. We are recommitting to our original target to reduce child poverty by 25%. We are increasing funding in the community homelessness initiative by \$42 million for nearly a total of \$294 million per year. We're allocating \$16 million over three years to create 1,000 new supportive housing spaces. We're very much focusing on supporting Ontarians living with mental health and addiction issues.

I don't know what else I can say, except that we want to keep going. We want to continue to lift children out of poverty. We will stand behind children and their families to help them reach their full potential. We'll keep making the investments we need. I surely hope the opposition party will be with us and reach that goal with us, together.

POVERTY

Mr. Jim McDonell: To the Acting Premier: Minister, your government has released a new Poverty Reduction Strategy after missing most of the targets in your last one. You keep putting obstacles in front of Ontarians struggling to do better by depriving working parents of affordable, local, trusted child care, by making it more difficult to get training and to enter a trade, and by driving up hydro bills, pushing more Ontarians into poverty.

According to Campaign 2000's latest report card: "Income supports that are directly intended for children continue to be deducted from social assistance incomes, leaving families no further ahead." Minister, when will your cabinet stop giving with one hand and taking away with the other?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'll take the first question. I do appreciate and thank Campaign 2000 for their very thoughtful and constructive report. We all agree that child poverty is an issue. We need to address it. We are recommitting our efforts to doing so. We've put it in the budget. We reinforced it in the fall economic statement.

To have this question now come from the PCs is bizarre. They promote and they campaign on slashing social services to the most vulnerable people in our society. They voted against the Ontario Child Benefit. They voted against minimum wage increase. They voted for tax cuts for low income, and they—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Dufferin-Caledon, come to order. The member from

Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order. The member from Leeds–Grenville, come to order—and I have a few others in my head. Thank you.

Wrap up.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We all want to break that cycle of poverty. We want to ensure that we invest in social housing, which they also voted against.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Back to the Acting Premier: Many agencies and community groups who assist needy Ontarians reached out to me recently, highlighting how their funding had not seen any increases for over five years and that their clients are struggling to access services in rural Ontario, pay their hydro bills, find good affordable housing and get training when they don't qualify for funding.

More Ontarians would be in full-time work, if businesses weren't being driven away. Housing would be more affordable, if Ontarians could afford winter heat. More families would boost their incomes, if they could access affordable local child care. Why does this government insist on making the poor poorer and feeding them with empty promises?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I hope the PCs agree that poverty is a complex issue. We have, of course, limited resources, so we have to make the best investments possible. That's what our reduction strategy is all about: getting the best possible results for people who are in poverty. We want to lift people out of poverty.

But I guess I'm glad that the PCs have asked this question, because after the election this year, I stood and announced the increase to the Ontario Child Benefit; we passed that by regulation. But guess what, Speaker? The indexing to inflation was tied to the budget, and they were nowhere to be found. They were nowhere to be found. Let's look at past records: The PCs slashed social assistance payments by 22% when they were in power, froze ODSP payments for the minimum wage for nine years and ended construction—

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

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

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

Thousands of people were on the front lawn of Queen's Park on Friday to demand an end to the cuts and privatization schemes that are eroding our public health care system under this Liberal government.

Just a day earlier, Health Quality Ontario revealed that when it comes to seeing a physician when we get sick, Ontario has the worst performance of all 10 countries that they compared to, including Britain and the US. Two thirds of patients with mental illness never get their one-week follow-up after a hospitalization, and the most frail seniors in our province wait an average of 111 days for the long-term care they need.

How can the Minister of Health defend his government's cuts and privatization of health care when Ontarians deserve so much better?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'm not exactly sure which question you're asking, member from the third party. It was a pretty broad statement that was made.

I'm going to start with the demonstration on the front lawn of the Legislature on Friday, organized primarily by the Ontario Health Coalition. I was in a joint cabinet meeting with the Quebec cabinet and I had actually looked forward to meeting with the individuals on the front lawn. Unfortunately, when I returned from that cabinet meeting, they were no longer present. But I want to reassure Ontarians that, in fact, as we continue this process of moving certain low-risk procedures into the community closer to home where people want them, we do that in a manner which is safe and accountable and transparent. We only do it into organizations that are not-for-profit entities.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: At the heart of our public health care system is the belief that high-quality care will be there for us when we need it. But too many Ontarians are waiting for months on end for the care they need, and sometimes not getting it at all. And this government's prescription is a freeze on hospital funding, privatizations of our health care services and massive cuts to home care in areas like Windsor. The minister tries to deny the reality, but patients are feeling the pain.

My question is simple: When will the minister get the message and stop the cuts and the privatizations that are undermining patient care in Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: What the member opposite is saying is just not true. We have approximately doubled the funding to our hospitals across this province in the last 10 years.

The member opposite talked about cuts in Windsor. That's simply not true. In fact, we've nearly doubled the funding to our CCAC for home care in Windsor-Essex. In fact, we increased their funding by \$3 million this year compared to last year.

So it's important, Mr. Speaker, that we—all of us—are accountable for what we say and that we speak to the facts and we don't make things up as we go along. The important thing I'd like to leave with Ontarians is that we are investing in health care. We have one of the best health care systems in the world, Mr. Speaker. There is more work to be done, and we're making that work carefully in a calculated manner with our stakeholders in a way which is going to continue to improve the quality.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Climate change is one of the most important issues of our time, and governments, industry, communities and individuals must work together to solve this serious problem. I know that this is a significant issue for my con-

stituents in Halton. In fact, a survey of Halton region shows that close to 83% of residents are concerned about climate change. Halton residents want our government to take the necessary steps to ensure that Ontario reduces its greenhouse gas emissions.

I'm pleased to see that our government continues to take decisive action to address this serious challenge to our environment. It will help fight the severe weather that we've been facing recently. Taking these steps will also ensure that future generations will be able to breathe more easily and lead healthy lives tomorrow.

Can the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change please update the House on what our government is doing with other jurisdictions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: We've done quite a lot. I've often given credit to my friend from St. Catharines. If you think about Ontario today, we have a blue box recycling program as a result of this government and his work. We have no more yellow hazy fogs over Toronto anymore because our coal plants are closed, Mr. Speaker.

Every time we went through those, folks opposite said that these kinds of environmental measures would cost people money and would produce doom and gloom and economic downturn. What we actually know is that Ontarians are very proud.

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We are a party with the courage to make tough decisions. But we're not alone, Mr. Speaker. We're working very closely with Quebec, which has taken some very important initiatives to capture the green economy and lower GHG emissions.

I'll look forward to continuing to answer in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Again, my question is for the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

I'm pleased to hear that our government is working with other provinces to provide leadership on climate change where the federal government is actually failing to take meaningful action.

It's important that Ontarians come together to act on climate change now. It's vital that we recognize the unique opportunity our province has to become a global leader on this issue.

The Toronto Stock Exchange and the TSX Venture Exchange already include more clean technology and renewable companies than any other exchange in the world. I'm proud to say that a number of these forward-thinking environment companies are actually in my own riding. I'm sure my constituents will be happy to know that we're working with partners in other jurisdictions to combat climate change.

Mr. Speaker, through you, could the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change please share with the House what areas of action Ontario and Quebec will be taking on the memorandum of understanding?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: What we're doing with Quebec, California, New York and with the RGGI states,

which the opposition reads as taxes, is actually quite the opposite. What we're actually looking at is this: Will we buy electric, carbon-neutral cars made in Ontario and made in North America, or are we going to buy them solely from China?

If we do not have the partnerships with Quebec, California, New York and Michigan to create that green supply chain, to put the market mechanisms in place, to change our fiscal policies that companies like those in your constituency that want to innovate and go from a high-carbon, low-productivity economy to a low-carbon, high-productivity economy, we need to change the way we manage trade and fiscal policies and those kinds of outcomes.

Mr. Speaker, John Kerry, the Secretary of State, identified that while the tech boom was a \$1-trillion expansion of our economy, the low-carbon economy over the next 20 years will be a \$6-trillion expansion of the economy. We in Ontario are committed to lead that—

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

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, last week, motorists along the QEW got a glimpse of your vision for winter maintenance as they attempted to manoeuvre through slippery, snow-covered roads and multi-vehicle accidents. I'm sure many of them wondered where their government was to ensure road safety, and how it was that the Minister of Transportation was unprepared for a snowstorm everyone else saw coming.

I don't know if you get briefed on the weather, Minister, but given the direct relationship between foul weather and poor driving conditions, you may want to check into the new weather app at the BlackBerry store.

Minister, given that you were caught flat-footed last week, will you commit to the House today to keeping yourself apprised of the five-day weather forecast going forward?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the member for that question. Of course, as I've said many, many times in this Legislature, road safety and highway safety is one of the most important responsibilities that I have.

With respect specifically to winter maintenance, the fact that road safety is such a priority for us is one of the reasons that we have dedicated more resources this year to make sure that, right across the province of Ontario, we are in a position to respond to the weather as it occurs.

In fact, not that many weeks ago, as we have discussed here in the House, I was in a position to announce that we have added 50 new pieces of machinery to southern Ontario which, of course, complement the additional 55 pieces of equipment that we put on the roads, mostly in northern Ontario, last year.

We will continue to work very hard over the course of this winter season to make sure that we are equipped to

deal, and that we do deal, with winter maintenance conditions.

I look forward to the supplementary so that I can respond with more information.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: Back to the minister: Minister, we heard from you last week all about this review as to what happened last week. I don't know if that review is in yet, but I can tell you what it might look like. It will say three things:

(1) We live in Ontario, Canada, where it snows.

(2) It snowed.

(3) You failed to ensure you were prepared to clear that snow.

A couple of weeks ago, you boasted about \$15 million for winter maintenance. The thing is, only just over half of that went to the actual equipment, and the rest to bureaucrats and communication campaigns.

If last week proved anything, it's that we need plows and salters on our roads, not more bureaucracy. Of the \$8 million that was spent on equipment, Minister, can you tell us if those plows are actually operational today?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to thank the member for the follow-up question. I said in my initial response that road safety is so important for us. It is why we have brought more resources to bear: to make sure we are equipped to deal with winter conditions.

There's one thing that I can suggest that the people of Ontario and that certainly the people of the Kitchener-Waterloo region don't want, which is that that member use sarcasm to try and make the point in this Legislature when we're dealing with an issue that's so important.

It's so important to make sure we are in a position to deal with winter conditions. It's why we're investing more resources—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I do have a right to hear the answer.

Please finish.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: It's one of the reasons that we have provided additional briefings for members of all three caucuses: to make sure that everyone is very well apprised of what we're doing this year to deal with the conditions. It's why we've added more equipment. It's why we've added more inspectors. I know that over the coming weeks and months, we will continue to do—from the ministry's perspective—the best we can to make sure our roads and highways remain, as they have been for the last 13 years, amongst the safest in North America.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Wayne Gates: My question is to the Minister of Labour. A report to be released this afternoon shows that the WSIB is handing out huge safety rebates to companies that have been convicted of health and safety violations. Some of these violations have even resulted in workplace deaths. In many cases, the companies were fined for their violations, but the fines were nothing com-

pared to the generous WSIB rebates. The government has known about the problem with this program for many years, yet millions of dollars are still being sent to employers guilty of serious violations.

Will the government scrap the destructive experience rating program now?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I want to thank the member for this important question. It is a very important question. I want to start by saying that this is a conversation that's included in this report. At the foundation of this report is that people were killed on the job. We can't lose sight of that.

I want to thank Mr. Ryan, and I want to thank Ms. Hardwick of the OFL for the courtesy of some advanced knowledge of this report. It's something I take very, very seriously.

All three parties have used an experience rating. It was brought in in the 1980s. But what is important is that we do right by these families, by the families and survivors of people who have died on the job. There obviously are some existing problems with the current system, and that includes the experience rating system.

The WSIB has been acting already to improve the system. It made one change in 2008 that was implemented in 2009. We're in a period of consultation on this issue, and I urge the member to make sure he's involved in that consultation.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Mr. Speaker, with due respect, there is nothing more to study. The respected Arthurs report, which was delivered to the government in early 2012, said that the government should scrap the program unless it could be proven that it was doing more good than harm. This is a program where a company like Triple M Metal, where a worker was killed in 2009 after he was trapped inside a metal shredder, was given more than \$926,000 in safety rebates in 2011-12. It's time to stop studying and start acting.

Will this government commit to ending this outrageous program now?

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I do want to thank the member for the supplementary. As I said, this is a very important issue, and we take it very, very seriously.

Under the policy that is in place now, if a company is responsible for a traumatic workplace fatality, it can't get a rebate in the year that that fatality occurred. Since 2009, \$11 million in rebates to employers have been cancelled as a result of that.

The WSIB knows there's more to do. It's in the process of making changes. Earlier this year, we released a report on the framework for the costs as we move ahead. It's focused on potential reforms to employer classifications, to rate-setting and to experience rating.

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We've completed one round of consultation—or the WSIB has. We'll be taking out further proposals for change. I look forward to seeing the results of that consultation. I want to hear from the OFL, I want to hear from employers in this regard and I want to hear from the opposition parties in this regard.

ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, in my constituency of Barrie there is a great representation from the members of the aboriginal community.

The Ministry of Community and Social Services is responsible for providing culturally appropriate programs and services to aboriginal peoples. As you know, First Nations and Métis people seek services according to the needs of their community and delivered in their own communities. Minister, can you tell us what support the government and your ministry are providing to aboriginal peoples in need?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you to the member from Barrie for that question. Supporting First Nations and Métis people in their communities is a very important priority for our government and for my ministry.

Last week I was in the great city of Thunder Bay celebrating the 20th anniversary of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy, known as AHWS. In the early 1990s, we came together—government, First Nations, Métis and aboriginal leaders—to recognize and work together to address the concerns of aboriginal communities. With the partnership of the AHWS in 1994, we began funding organizations to address the high levels of family violence and poor health among Ontario's aboriginal people and communities.

Partnership and collaboration has led to the wide network of culturally appropriate programs and services that exist today. It has also created 650 jobs to deliver healing, health and wellness programs in 250 aboriginal communities and has established 460 community-based projects across Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Minister. This government has made building supports for aboriginal peoples a priority. However, as we all know, there are many examples of First Nation communities facing crises of mental illness, addiction and suicide. Also, aboriginal women and girls are disproportionately victims of violence and poverty in Canada. This very important issue has been compounded by the fact that the federal government has been neglecting its responsibility to support this vulnerable population.

Last week we received disappointing news from Ottawa. It was reported that Status of Women Canada, the federal agency that is supposed to promote the equality and advancement of women, has funded 210 projects since the fall of 2011, and only 31 of them have had focus on aboriginal groups. That's just 14.8% of the agency's entire programming targeting this hugely vulnerable group. Minister, what is our government doing to assist these women and girls?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Certainly, aboriginal peoples and communities do face unique challenges. There are high rates of violence against aboriginal women, substance abuse and youth suicides. That is why our govern-

ment, as announced last week, is investing more than \$10 million to help reduce family violence and violence against aboriginal women and children and to improve healing, health and wellness in aboriginal communities across Ontario.

A large part of the money, some \$8.6 million, will expand the reach of AHWS services to the growing aboriginal population and to hard-to-reach communities. Specifically, this will fund Talk4Healing, a phone help line for aboriginal women and girls in the north who have limited access to services.

I had the privilege of seeing the work being done there first-hand last week while in Thunder Bay. These investments affirm Ontario's ongoing commitment and support to the work of the Aboriginal Healing and Wellness Strategy.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Todd Smith: My question this morning is for the Minister of Education. Minister, your party's policy on student transportation is failing. It is failing to lower costs for school boards. The Ottawa student transportation alliance was whacked with a 17% increase in transportation costs this year by one of the consortiums approved by your RFP process. Independent operators received only a 2% increase.

Minister, the courts have ruled in favour of small, independent operators, like Montgomery, Richmond's, Foley and Boldrick in my riding, six times already, but you continue to drag out this process. Will you commit to suspending an RFP process that's only accomplishing two things: driving small businesses out of business and driving up costs for the local school boards?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think, first of all, that we do need to understand that the funding for transportation has increased quite significantly since 2003. We've actually increased the transportation funding by 40%, by over \$880 million. We do make allowances for things like increases in the cost of gasoline on a regular basis; that's part of my annual funding adjustment. The idea that somehow we have not increased the funding for transportation is just simply not accurate. We will continue doing that.

It is a requirement that every board, in procuring any service—whether it be busing or any other service—follow the broader public sector procurement guidelines.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Todd Smith: Minister, you missed the premise of the entire question. You need to spend more on transportation because you're ending competition in the school bus sector right now. That's why you have to increase spending on transportation. We have small businesses that are going out of business in the province of Ontario because of your flawed RFP process. The courts have proven this six times, yet you continue to drag them through the mud and they continue to surround your office any time you appear with big yellow school buses.

For too long the RFP process has been costing jobs at small operators and now we find it's wreaking havoc

with the school boards as well. School boards that were part of the pilot RFP in 2010 in northern Ontario are now experiencing deficits and labour problems as they drive up the transportation costs there. Small operators who had been in business as a family, for generations, are out of business.

Minister, the process has proven to be a disaster. Will you commit to suspending the RFP while an independent, third party review is done—one that's not stacked against the independent school bus operators?

Hon. Liz Sandals: In fact, we did make a commitment during the campaign that we would conduct an independent review of competitive procurement. We have, in fact, set up the panel to do that. It is led by Mr. Justice Colin Campbell. I think any of you who know Mr. Campbell's reputation as an Ontario judge would agree that that is a third party, independent review when it's being led by Mr. Justice Colin Campbell. He has begun his work. He will be reporting back to me after consulting with the various stakeholders, the various bus operators—there's more than one association—the school boards, the consortiums. I look forward to receiving Mr. Justice Campbell's report.

HOUSING SECURITY FOR IMMIGRANTS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, the most recent Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. report on housing trends lists my community of London as the second-hardest community for immigrants to find housing security in the country, second only to Toronto, even though Toronto's population is 90% larger than London's.

Much of this trend is due to the lack of affordability. However, we know the real issue at play is access for newcomers. Newly arrived individuals and families are finding it difficult to secure housing because of lease restrictions.

Immigrants are vital to the economic well-being and growth of our communities, especially in my riding of London. What is this government doing to ensure that newcomers in my community have the housing security they need?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I appreciate the question. There's no doubt at all that those immigrating to this province and this country have built this great province and this great country into what it is today, and that we need to do everything we can to assist everybody in Ontario to be adequately housed.

As the member may be interested in learning, I'm doing a building bridges tour. I'm touring and speaking to a number of groups concerned about housing options. We were up in Ottawa last week to talk to the Ottawa Non-Profit Housing Corp. We have a couple of housing groups coming in today. I'm meeting with groups concerned about immigrant housing and other housing. We hope to renew our long-term housing strategy in ways that will more effectively deal with the very kinds of concerns the honourable member has raised.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, especially in western Ontario, we need a diverse workforce in order to kick-start the economic engine. But it's not just in my community of London; immigrants in Toronto have it worse. Over 36% are unable to secure affordable housing. Right across the province, it's the same, in Windsor and Hamilton.

Speaker, what assurances will this government give us, the people of Ontario, that it will not just take this study that identifies a problem—it won't just be ignored. And what is this government going to do to find solutions for the housing insecurity that is faced by immigrants in Ontario?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Well, we're going to do anything and everything we can to address the housing challenges that we have in the province, Mr. Speaker. We have, actually. We have been meeting with groups. We're looking particularly at partnering with the private sector, which we think brings a lot of expertise to the table. We need to find some creative entrepreneurial ways of doing that. The investment in affordable housing program, which we're jointly engaged in with the feds, is helpful. There's an \$800-million allocation there. That's handled through municipal service partners, by the way, so that local municipalities can determine for themselves the best approach. We've also reinvested in the CHPI program, which, again, is managed by municipalities so as to reflect the local needs.

DIABETES

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: My question is for Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. November is Diabetes Month in Canada. The Canadian Diabetes Association is a remarkable advocate for people with diabetes. I know we have many representatives here today in the gallery. Thank you to the volunteers and staff for all that you do.

As a nurse, I know that diabetes is a chronic disease that can cause serious complications if not managed properly. I provided care in and out of the hospital for many diabetics over my career. It's estimated there are nearly 1.4 million people in Ontario who have been diagnosed with diabetes. That's nearly 10% of the population. By 2020, it's estimated that the number of people living with diabetes will reach almost two million, with an estimated cost of \$7 billion to the health care system. Speaker, it concerns many of my former patients in Cambridge.

What is our government doing to help those with diabetes, Minister?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to thank the member for Cambridge raising this very important question.

We've come a long way in diabetes prevention, treatment and management. I remember when my sister was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes when she was in her teens, more than 40 years ago, and just the changes that have taken place in this province and around the world. It's something we can all be proud of.

Our government is committed to providing Ontarians who have diabetes with the information and supports that they need to manage their health effectively. I'm proud that, in fact, under our government, every single Ontarian with diabetes who wants a family doctor has one.

The best way to fight diabetes is to prevent it. That's why our government is moving forward to put in place recommendations from our Healthy Kids Panel to help us undertake the challenge of reducing childhood obesity, which contributes to chronic diseases like diabetes.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: There are no known ways to prevent type 1 diabetes, but research shows that type 2 diabetes can be delayed or prevented through healthy eating, weight management and exercise.

Both types of diabetes can be managed to result in better health outcomes. One way is through the use of insulin pumps. A nursing colleague of mine was pleased that Ontario was the first province to fully fund insulin pumps for children and adults with type 1 diabetes. This saved her up to \$18,300 in the first five years, as her son was an insulin-dependent diabetic. So far, the program has provided more than 15,000 Ontarians—many my constituents, including seniors—with funding for the purchase of insulin pumps and related supplies.

Minister, what is Ontario doing to help those with complex needs?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We know that the health needs of Ontarians with diabetes are often very complex and require multidisciplinary care, which is why we've established six different centres for complex diabetes care. These centres have provided care to more than 6,000 new patients.

We've increased the number of diabetes education teams to more than 300 around the province to help people manage their diabetes and their related complications. We've also invested in self-management, providing workshops to more than 14,000 individuals.

On the insulin pump, which is now provided, I'm proud to say that the member—

Interjection.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: He just reminded me—from Thunder Bay–Superior North introduced not one, but two private members' bills specifically speaking to that issue of the importance of providing those insulin pumps. It's a beautiful example of how technology has evolved, and the government, as a part of our responsibility to diabetes treatment and management, has responded as well.

AGRICULTURAL COLLEGE

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Minister, in July, I gave you a personal invitation to tour Kemptville college. Although you didn't have the courtesy to include me in your tour recently, at least you showed up and saw the facilities at that college—the facilities that I think are state-of-art for our agriculture students and also provide a

wonderful venue to host a number of community events. These events bring in critical revenue and let everyone know that Kemptville college is open for business, so you can appreciate my surprise when I found out last week that the University of Guelph has stopped allowing private bookings at the campus, effective November 30.

Minister, so many people, including your provincial facilitator, are working on a sustainable future for the college. Why are you allowing the University of Guelph to undermine those efforts?

Hon. Reza Moridi: I would like to begin by thanking the member for that question.

Mr. Speaker, I had the pleasure of meeting the officials of Kemptville college and also the leaders of the community, along with my colleague Minister Jeff Leal. We extended, actually, an invitation to the member to join us, but unfortunately his schedule didn't allow it.

It's very important for our government to make sure that our young people in eastern Ontario have access to quality agricultural education in this wonderful facility. We are working with the community leaders, as well as the institution itself, to make sure that Kemptville college will continue to provide educational services to young people in the eastern part of the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Minister, it's obvious that you don't know what's going on at that campus. I tried to send a booking for a meeting at that campus, and I know there are other groups that have tried to book meetings or events on that campus, and the university has said no. It's a pattern that began with the University of Guelph when they announced the closure in March. They timed it to ensure that we wouldn't get a new intake of students.

Minister, I believe Kemptville college has a bright future. If you agree, you'll get on the phone and tell the university to stop blocking the community from providing revenue at that facility. Guelph has done enough damage to this community. Will you join me in stepping in and stopping this right now?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, it's very important for this government to make sure that our young people in eastern Ontario have access to a quality education in agriculture. Actually, when this issue came up, our government, through the ministry of agri-food, committed to a \$2-million investment to maintain the program continuing in Kemptville college.

As I said earlier, again, we had the honour and pleasure of meeting the officials of the college and also the leaders of the community last October to make sure that the college and those in the community find a solution to the issue that the college is facing in the local community. They're working very hard to make sure that this college will continue its operations with the assistance of the community leaders on the site.

Since we came to office, we have invested heavily in post-secondary education. Actually, we have increased funding by 83% for our young people to be able to study at our—

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

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Acting Premier.

Any real plan to address child poverty must address the problem of precarious work. When the federal government pledged to eradicate child poverty in 1989, 13% of the country had precarious employment. By 2007, the figure had ballooned to almost 21%. Currently in the GTA, precarious work has increased by almost 50% over the past two decades. Most of that growth has occurred under this government. This government must take precarious employment, particularly temporary work through temporary help agencies, seriously. Families are struggling to make ends meet. Children are living in poverty as a result of precarious employment.

Will this government commit to a real plan to address precarious employment? Will this government address this issue so that children will not live in poverty?

Hon. Charles Sousa: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I appreciate the question. I think it's something that concerns us all in the province of Ontario. I think we all know that the world of work has changed in this province. The Ministry of Labour works really hard to ensure that Ontarians are treated with the dignity and the respect they deserve at work.

We've just passed Bill 18, which speaks to an awful lot of the issues that the member has raised. The Employment Standards Act sets out payment of wages, minimum wage, overtime pay—all those things that treat employees the way that we would like to be treated as employees ourselves.

If the member has any issues or if he has any specific examples of where he feels the Employment Standards Act is being abridged, please call our office—urge his constituents to call our office—and we will act upon those concerns.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry on a point of order.

Mr. Jim McDonell: During my question today, the member from Beaches–East York commented that they should have elected a Liberal. Will he—

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

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Ms. Cindy Forster: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to correct my record. In my second question, I said, “half a million” in cuts; I really meant half a billion in cuts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That is a point of order. Any member can correct their record at any time.

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

The House recessed from 1142 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Michael Mantha: I want to introduce a whole bunch of guests. But I had the privilege of being in the lobby this afternoon, and there are so many wonderful kids who are there who are bringing their talents to Queen's Park, and I just wanted to remind all members to take advantage of the opportunity of going out there and listening to these kids. They're wonderful. They're delightful angels, and they sing fantastically. So enjoy it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup. I will cheat a little bit and tell you that from here on until the break, we will be having a wonderful opportunity every noon hour to enjoy the work of many schools and individuals around the province. Thanks to the staff for coordinating that. I appreciate it. So get out and support it. That's my statement for the day.

Member from Dav—

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Davenport.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Davenport. I did say it. I had it.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: You did. Fantastic.

Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to welcome Ms. Morton's grade 5 class from Fairbank Memorial school, located in my riding of Davenport. I just had an opportunity to meet with them at the grand staircase. I know they're making their way up here, so I wanted to welcome them.

Miss Monique Taylor: Mr. Speaker, with the lack of introductions today, I thought I would steal just a quick moment to congratulate our Hamilton Tiger-Cats for winning the eastern final. We know they're going to do us so proud when we go to the Grey Cup on Sunday. Thanks for the moment.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further discussion between the two members from Hamilton?

I, too, have an introduction. In the Speaker's gallery today we have some very special guests, and we're appreciative that they're here: Ms. Avis Gray, president, Association of Former Manitoba MLAs; Dr. Linda Asper, past president, Association of Former Manitoba MLAs; Mr. Clif Evans, secretary, Association of Former Manitoba MLAs; M^{me} Rita Dionne–Marsolais, chair, parliamentary democracy, former members from Quebec; and M^{me} Manon Voyer, secretary for the same association.

Also with us: Reverend Canon Derwyn Shea, present chair of the OAFP, former parliamentarians of Ontario; and Mr. Gilles Morin, vice-chair.

We're glad you're here. Welcome.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): They have plenty of wisdom to offer.

It is now time for members' statements.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HOWARD ROTHMAN

Mrs. Gila Martow: I rise today to recognize Howard Rothman. Last week when terrorists stormed Jerusalem's Kehilat Bnei Torah synagogue, Toronto native Howard Rothman was deep in prayer. The horrific attack Tuesday morning left five people dead and at least another five injured. Howard is currently in a medically induced coma after receiving multiple blows to his neck, skull and arms. He has already undergone three surgeries and lost one eye.

Howard did not deserve this fate. I want to echo the sentiments of Canada's foreign affairs minister when he said, "Attacks on innocent worshippers, in what is supposed to be a place of peace and tranquility, are cowardly and must never be tolerated."

The Jewish community across the GTA and across the province has once again come together in solidarity in response to this most vicious attack. The UJA Federation of Greater Toronto has generously agreed to set up a fund for Howard, his wife, Risa, and their family.

Last night, I had the privilege of attending the Jewish National Fund Negev dinner. Proceeds from the 2014 Negev campaign will go directly towards building a new facility for the Herzog Hospital in Israel to treat post-traumatic stress disorders and mental health issues. These issues are all too prevalent in Israel as a result of living under constant threats of terrorism and barbarism, as displayed in attacks such as last Tuesday's.

I offer my deepest, heartfelt condolences to the families of all of the victims, and my prayers are with Howard and his family during this most difficult time.

STUDENT WORK EXPERIENCE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: On Friday, I was pleased to attend the launch of an exciting new smartphone app, Smart APPetite. The app was designed in London to encourage people to buy local, eat smart, and get healthy, improving community well-being and boosting southwestern Ontario's local food economy.

The app was developed under the leadership of Western University professor and London West constituent Dr. Jason Gilliland, working in collaboration with students, researchers and community partners. This is just the latest in an amazing lineup of community university research projects that Dr. Gilliland has led over the years, in the process providing paid employment for approximately 300 students, many of whom are undergrads.

Not only do Dr. Gilliland's students gain hands-on experience in data collection, data analysis and report-writing, but they also develop enduring relationships with vital community organizations, giving these talented young people a direct stake in the well-being of our community and the connections that will hopefully keep them in London when they graduate.

These are exactly the kinds of opportunities that would be expanded by my private member's bill, the Learning Through Workplace Experience Act.

I congratulate Dr. Gilliland on his commitment to enhancing his students' learning experience by providing valuable opportunities for paid employment on projects that address community needs.

HAZEL McCALLION CAMPUS,
SHERIDAN COLLEGE

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to share with this House that recently I had the opportunity to attend the phase 2 ground-breaking ceremony for the expansion of the Hazel McCallion Sheridan campus in Mississauga.

It was only in May 2009 that I had the privilege, on behalf of our government, to announce that there would be a new Sheridan campus in Mississauga. In September 2011, the campus became a reality. During the summer of 2011, again I had the privilege to announce that our government would invest an additional \$67.7 million for the phase 2 expansion of the campus, to be completed in the summer of 2016.

This expansion of Sheridan campus will mean greater access to post-secondary education, investment in our youth and enormous benefit to our community. Our government is making progress on the promises it made by investing in people's skills and talents. We stood by our commitment—promise made, promise kept.

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CALVIN NIGH

Mr. Tim Hudak: Winston Churchill once said that we make a living by what we get, but we make a life out of what we give. Calvin Nigh, teacher, football coach, in his far too short 48 years gave a lot. And what a life he lived. I grew up with Calvin. We had a one-year age difference. I played basketball against him, a guy you didn't mess with in the paint. He grabbed every rebound that was out there.

But he was a great football player, a linebacker you didn't mess with. He went on to be a defensive end and an all-star at the University of Guelph. The funny thing was, he went to Ridgeway high school but he played for the Fort Erie Falcons because Ridgeway hadn't had a team for about 30 years, since the mid-1970s. After he graduated and came back to Ridgeway high school, Calvin decided to bring football back to Ridgeway. He used that same defensive end tenacity to raise \$33,000 from donors and bring a team back to Ridgeway-Crystal Beach High School.

The night he died, he actually had the team in for a bit of a pep rally as the big game came up against the Beamsville Bucs. Sadly, he passed away of a heart attack at 48. His team rallied the next day, beat the Beamsville Bucs and then went on a tear. They knocked off the South Lincoln Bears in the semi-final and then won the

championship over the tough Thorold Golden Eagles to win that title, the first title for Ridgeway since 1970.

I'm proud of Calvin. I'm proud of the Blue Devils and what they did. The coach, by the way, in 1970, of an undefeated Ridgeway Blue Devils team was Pat Hudak, my dad. I'm proud of that, too.

Calvin Nigh, a man who lived a great life, gave back to his community. He is sadly missed. A tragic story but a Hollywood ending. We're real proud of him.

INJURED WORKERS

Mr. Michael Mantha: I would like to take this opportunity to welcome and recognize the many people who have travelled to Queen's Park today to raise the plight of injured workers. New Democrats continue to raise alarm bells over the internal changes to WSIB benefits under this Liberal government. This is an all-out assault under the Liberal government on injured workers, and quite frankly, it's alarming. These are some of our province's most vulnerable citizens, and we need to support them. People are outraged to see continuous government mismanagement and scandals, and money flowing into the pockets of corporate CEOs, while injured workers continue to suffer.

I have met several times with members of the Manitoulin and North Shore Injured Workers Group—many times, Mr. Speaker. They wished to be here today, but unfortunately, due to financial constraints, it's very difficult for some of them to get here.

New Democrats continue to raise concerns. Sadly, our efforts continue to fall on deaf ears. Since 2009, when David Marshall became the head of WSIB, we have seen a drastic reduction of benefits for injured workers. While Marshall receives a 20% bonus on his \$400,000 salary, WSIB claims denial rates have shot up by 50%. This government needs to ensure that injured workers are not harmed further by these reckless policy changes, and New Democrats will continue to stand up for the rights of injured workers.

CANADIAN RED CROSS, BURLINGTON BRANCH

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I'm honoured to stand here today to recognize a significant milestone for the Burlington branch of the Canadian Red Cross. This past weekend, my colleague the member for Halton and I were able to celebrate 75 years of service with this outstanding organization. Not only do they provide a range of services to our local community of Burlington, but they also look outwards in international efforts for emergency relief operations.

Now, if we lived in a perfect world, we wouldn't need the support of an organization like the Red Cross. If we lived in a perfect world, families would not be without homes from floods or fires; seniors would not be isolated and confined to their homes. But the truth is, we live in the real world where it is inevitable that natural disasters,

accidents and conflicts do happen. This is a world where a CPR course or an abuse prevention program can help save lives, a world where transportation to a medical appointment or the delivery of a hot meal can change the day of a local senior for the better.

After witnessing the devastating impacts of the flood in Burlington this past August, it gives me great pride to reflect on the impactful work of the Burlington branch of the Canadian Red Cross. Mr. Speaker, as a result of the flood, people's lives were suddenly on their front lawns, and the Red Cross was there, going door to door, talking to victims of the flood, helping them with their concerns and measuring the flood's impact.

So it gives me great pleasure to thank and congratulate, for 75 years of service in making Burlington a wonderful place, all of the volunteers and staff.

WINTER DRIVING

Mr. John Yakubuski: My statement today is a request to the Minister of Transportation to assume my private member's bill, a bill I introduced last week, that would amend the Highway Traffic Act to prohibit driving a motor vehicle on a highway with a dangerous accumulation of snow or ice. I introduced this bill in the last Parliament, and as the Parliament expired and died, the bill died on the order paper as well.

As winter approaches, I want to remind people: For anybody who drove on the highways last winter, it would be rare if you didn't see at some point ice or snow flying off the roof of another vehicle on the highway. It was that kind of winter. We have no idea what kind of winter we're going to have ahead of us this year, but the same thing could happen.

What happened to a constituent in my riding, Mr. Gord Stickles, was alarming. A 53-foot-long sheet of ice up to five inches thick came off, in one motion, the roof of a tractor-trailer. He escaped injury and possibly death, but his vehicle was completely demolished.

We found out then that Ontario has no provision to provide for this in legislation. So we're asking for that. It will bring it in line with other jurisdictions such as Quebec, New Brunswick, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York and Pennsylvania, all jurisdictions that, like us, have winter.

I'd ask the Minister of Transportation to take a look at this and bring this forth as a government bill. I'm sure that every member in this House would support it.

JEFF DORFMAN

Mr. Mike Colle: I rise today to pay tribute to Jeff Dorfman. Jeff Dorfman was the proprietor of Katz's Deli and Corned Beef Emporium. Jeff was an incredible volunteer who served in the Canadian militia with the Governor General's Horse Guards. He served there for 51 years. He was an honorary lieutenant-colonel. He helped guide the Royal Canadian Military Institute, just down the street. In fact, the Canadian military institute,

because of Jeff's work, is going to be made into a legacy project, ensuring the institute stays for another 100 years.

Jeff was an incredible businessman. He was a generous community volunteer. He loved Canada and that's why he served for 51 years with the militia and was always there to help everybody in the community. He will be missed by all. He was, as they say in Yiddish, a real mensch, a real man's man who was a man of his word and really typified what's great about a young Canadian who worked his whole life, never took anything from the government and always gave back.

We pay tribute to Lieutenant-Colonel Jeff Dorfman. We're all going to miss Jeff, and so will his wife, Faye, his daughters, Ruth and Kate, and his son, Aubrey. To Jeff Dorfman: We're going to miss you, Jeff. You were a real friend and mensch for all of us.

AFRO-CARIBE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF KINGSTON

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: Recently I was blessed to attend an inspirational event in my community, namely the Afro-Caribe Community Foundation of Kingston's annual awards and dinner-dance.

Each year the board, headed up by the irrepressible Judi Brown, raises funds to support two scholarships to Queen's University and to provide yearly awards to high school students who have shown academic excellence and who are also in financial need.

The outstanding student awards went to Maverick Blair of Frontenac Secondary School and to Anthony Donnet and Evrold Watts of QECVI—three wonderful young men that I had the pleasure of chatting with over dinner.

The scholarships are worthy of further note. The Robert Sutherland bursary commemorates Queen's University's first student of colour, who came to Queen's from Jamaica in 1849. His extraordinary academic achievements deserve more time, but amongst other things he is celebrated as Canada's first lawyer. He left his entire estate to Queen's, the largest donation they had ever received, at a time when Queen's was in poverty and about to be annexed by the University of Toronto.

Organizations such as this, of which there are many in my riding, take considerable pride in contributing to the multicultural vibrancy and quality of life in our community. I never cease to draw inspiration from the hard work of organizations and volunteers.

VISITORS

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

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As previously mentioned earlier, it gives me great pleasure to introduce and welcome Ms. Morton's grade 5 students from Fairbank Memorial public school in my riding of Davenport.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): While that's not a point of order, it's always nice to see the people you actually introduce. So we're glad that they're here.

I'm going to take that advantage as well, before we move to the next routine proceeding: Two more former parliamentarians have showed up in the Speaker's gallery: Mr. David Warner, who was also a Speaker, and Mr. Steve Gilchrist. We're glad you're here with us this afternoon.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MAKING HEALTHIER CHOICES ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 POUR DES CHOIX PLUS SAINS

Ms. Damerla moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 45, An Act to enhance public health by enacting the Healthy Menu Choices Act, 2014 and the Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2014 and by amending the Smoke-Free Ontario Act / Projet de loi 45, Loi visant à améliorer la santé publique par l'édiction de la Loi de 2014 pour des choix santé dans les menus et de la Loi de 2014 sur les cigarettes électroniques et la modification de la Loi favorisant un Ontario sans fumée.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Dipika Damerla: The bill I am moving today includes three pieces of proposed legislation:

First, this legislation would, if passed, require food service premises with 20 or more locations in Ontario to include information about calories on their menu.

The second part of this proposed legislation would, if passed, prohibit flavoured tobacco products from being sold in Ontario.

These first two pieces are very similar to proposed legislation brought forward by the government in the previous session.

Finally, the bill proposes to regulate electronic cigarettes in Ontario, similar to tobacco cigarettes.

I will be pleased to make further comments on this proposed legislation in a minister's statement tomorrow afternoon.

HIGHWAY TRAFFIC AMENDMENT ACT (OFF-ROAD VEHICLES), 2014

LOI DE 2014 MODIFIANT LE CODE DE LA ROUTE (VÉHICULES TOUT TERRAIN)

Mr. Vanthof moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 46, An Act to amend the Highway Traffic Act in respect of off-road vehicles / Projet de loi 46, Loi modifiant le Code de la route en ce qui concerne les véhicules tout terrain.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: The bill amends the Highway Traffic Act. Currently, the regulations under the act restrict the operation of off-road vehicles on highways to vehicles that are designed to carry only a driver and no passengers. The bill amends the act to prevent regulations made under the act from restricting permission to operate off-road vehicles on highways to vehicles that are designed to carry only a driver and no passengers. Basically what this bill does is give UTVs the same rights as ATVs.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

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

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98 (g), notice for ballot items number 19, 22 and 23 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Gravelle moves that notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice of ballot items number 19, 22, and 23 be waived. Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

COMMITTEE SITTINGS

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

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

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I move that, notwithstanding the order of the House dated November 18, 2014, the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet for up to eight days between January 19 and January 30, 2015, in order to conduct the 2015 pre-budget consultations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Gravelle moves that, notwithstanding the order of the House dated November 18, 2014, the Standing Committee on Finance

and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet for up to eight days between January 19 and January 30, 2015, in order to conduct the 2015 pre-budget consultations.

Do we agree? Agreed. 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 fully support this petition, will affix my name and send it with page Moiz.

STUDENT WORK EXPERIENCE

Ms. Peggy Sattler: "Whereas youth unemployment in Ontario is over 15%; and

"Whereas research suggests that work experience is a crucial factor in ensuring positive labour market outcomes for post-secondary students; and

"Whereas many post-secondary students are unable to gain relevant work experience, or participate in work experiences that do not effectively integrate with their academic program of study; and

"Whereas a 2013 report by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives recommended that Ontario make much greater use of innovative work-integrated learning programs to combat youth unemployment;

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

"(1) bring together students, post-secondary institutions and employers in a provincial advisory council on work-integrated learning, mandated to make recommendations to the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities on various issues including:

“(a) how to engage more employers in providing paid work-integrated learning (WIL), and to improve regulation of unpaid WIL;

“(b) how to support post-secondary institutions in delivering quality WIL experiences for students;

“(c) how to ensure that all qualified students who are interested in participating in WIL are able to participate across different faculties and fields of study.”

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

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Soo Wong: I have a petition 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

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“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.”

Mr. Speaker, I support the petition. I will give my petition to Jenny. Thank you.

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Harris: I’ve got a good one here. It’s to the Legislative Assembly.

“Whereas the Liberal government has proposed a 148% increase in the province’s aviation fuel tax over the next four years; and

“Whereas the tax increase will mean the average family can pay an estimated extra \$50 to \$200 for a flight on top of their tickets; and

“Whereas the massive tax increase: (1) punishes consumers and communities; (2) makes Ontario a less attractive destination to invest and expand into; and (3) compounds an already large competitiveness gap with neighbouring US airports; and

“Whereas the flight tax increase flies in the face of a Liberal election promise of no tax increases on the middle class; and

“Whereas the proposed tax increase will drive away over 400,000 air travellers out of Ontario when three million Ontarians are already crossing the border annually to fly from US airports; and

“Whereas this tax increase will impact many industries across Ontario including manufacturers, freight and tourism, including hotels, restaurants, travel agents and tour operators, among others who support the tourism industry; and

“Whereas British Columbia, New Brunswick, Alberta, Quebec and Saskatchewan have eliminated international flight fuel taxes, while Ontario’s rate is set to become one of the highest fuel taxes in the world; and

“Whereas Dr. Fred Lazar of the Schulich School of Business indicates in his study that this tax increase will cost the province up to 2,907 full-time jobs and decrease provincial GDP by up to \$97 million annually;

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

“Ground the flight tax increases pending meaningful consultation and a full study of their adverse economic impacts before it’s too late to reverse the damage to Ontario’s economy.”

Speaker, I wholeheartedly agree with this petition. I’m going to sign it and send it down with page Kelsey.

CORRECTIONAL FACILITIES

Miss Monique Taylor: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

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

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

“Whereas unlike in similar OPS facilities, there is no provincial mandate for youth corrections community agencies to provide WSIB coverage, meaning many agencies have inadequate private insurance coverage; and

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

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

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

I fully support this. I will affix my signature to it and give it to Haniah to bring to the Clerk’s desk.

LEGAL AID

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It’s been sent to me by a number of folks from Erin Mills, and I’d like to read it. It read as follows:

“Whereas Mississauga Community Legal Services provides free legal services to legal aid clients within a community of nearly 800,000 population; and

“Whereas legal services in communities like Toronto and Hamilton serve, per capita, fewer people living in poverty, are better staffed and better funded; and

“Whereas Mississauga and Brampton have made progress in having Ontario provide funding for human services on a fair and equitable, population-based model;

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

“That the Ministry of the Attorney General revise the current distribution of allocated funds ... and adopt a population-based model, factoring in population growth rates to ensure Ontario funds are allocated in an efficient, fair and effective manner.”

Speaker, I’m pleased to sign and support this petition and to send it along with page Claudia.

CHELTENHAM BADLANDS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Heritage Trust (OHT) holds title to the Cheltenham Badlands, and the Bruce Trail Conservancy (BTC) has management responsibilities for the site under an agreement with the OHT; and

“Whereas community consultation and engagement is essential for successful development 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(s); trail maintenance and other accessory requirements as part of a complete and approved management plan.”

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

HYDRO RATES

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

“Whereas we, the customers of Algoma Power, are being charged astronomical costs referred to as ‘delivery fees’;

“Whereas we, the customers of Algoma Power, would like the ‘delivery fees’ looked into and regulated so as to protect the consumer from big businesses gouging the consumer;

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

“Stop Algoma Power’s influx of fees for delivery and stop the onset of increasing these fees another 40% within four years.”

I agree with this petition and present it to page Albany to bring it to the table.

ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

Miss Monique Taylor: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I fully support this. I’m going to affix my name to it, and I’m going to give it to page Vida to bring to the Clerk.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

“Whereas collecting and restoring old vehicles honours Ontario’s automotive heritage while contributing to the economy through the purchase of goods and services, tourism, and support for special events; and

“Whereas the stringent application of emissions regulations for older cars equipped with newer engines can result in fines and additional expenses that discourage car collectors and restorers from pursuing their hobby; and

“Whereas newer engines installed by hobbyists in vehicles over 20 years old provide cleaner emissions than the original equipment; and

“Whereas car collectors typically use their vehicles only on an occasional basis, during four to five months of the year;

“Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians who collect and restore old vehicles by

amending the appropriate laws and regulations to ensure vehicles over 20 years old and exempt from Drive Clean testing shall also be exempt from additional emissions requirements enforced by the Ministry of the Environment and governing the installation of newer engines into old cars and trucks.”

I'm pleased to affix my signature in support, and I'll send it to the table with page Kate.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Michael Mantha: These petitions keep coming in; they don't stop. These are many petitions from the Marathon area.

“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;

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“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 agree with this petition, affix my signature and present it to page Ethan to bring it down to the Clerk.

TAXATION

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

“Whereas the Liberal government has proposed a 148% increase in the province's aviation fuel tax over the next four years; and

“Whereas the tax increase will mean the average family can pay an estimated extra \$50 to \$200 for a flight on top of their tickets; and

“Whereas the massive tax increase: (1) punishes consumers and communities; (2) makes Ontario a less attractive destination to invest and expand into; and (3) compounds an already large competitiveness gap with neighbouring US airports; and

“Whereas the flight tax increase flies in the face of a Liberal election promise of no tax increases on the middle class; and

“Whereas the proposed tax increase will drive away over 400,000 air travellers out of Ontario when three million Ontarians are already crossing the border annually to fly from US airports; and

“Whereas this tax increase will impact many industries across Ontario including manufacturers, freight and tourism, including hotels, restaurants, travel agents and

tour operators, among others who support the tourism industry; and

“Whereas, according to the Canadian Owners and Pilots Association, the increase will effectively squeeze the personal aviation and flight training sector, decreasing activity and curtailing jobs such as aircraft repair and servicing, and flight training; and

“Whereas British Columbia, New Brunswick, Alberta, Quebec and Saskatchewan have eliminated international flight fuel taxes, while Ontario's rate is set to become one of the highest fuel taxes in the world; and

“Whereas Dr. Fred Lazar of the Schulich School of Business indicates in his study that this tax increase will cost the province up to 2,907 full-time jobs and decrease provincial GDP by up to \$97 million annually;

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

“Ground the flight tax increases pending meaningful consultation and a full study of their adverse economic impacts before it's too late to reverse the damage to Ontario's economy.”

I fully support this, will affix my name and send it with page Jenny.

OFF-ROAD VEHICLES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by Mr. Ron Viau from my riding in Hanmer, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas a motion was introduced at the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads ‘that in the opinion of the House, the operation of off-road vehicles on highways under regulation 316/03 be changed to include side-by-side off-road vehicles, four-seat side-by-side vehicles, and two-up vehicles in order for them to be driven on highways under the same conditions as other off-road/all-terrain vehicles’;

“Whereas this motion was passed on November 7, 2013...;

“Whereas the economic benefits will have positive impacts on ATV clubs, ATV manufacturers, dealers and rental shops, and will boost revenues to communities promoting this outdoor activity”—such as my own;

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

“We call on the Ministry of Transportation to implement this regulation immediately.”

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TIME ALLOCATION

ATTRIBUTION DE TEMPS

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think this might be the longest run-on sentence ever spoken.

I move that, pursuant to standing order 47, and notwithstanding any other standing order or special order of the House relating to Bill 21, An Act to safeguard health care integrity by enacting the Voluntary Blood Donations Act, 2014, and by amending certain statutes with respect to the regulation of pharmacies and other matters concerning regulated health professions, 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 Social Policy; and

That the Standing Committee on Social Policy be authorized to meet on Monday, December 1, 2014, from 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., and Tuesday, December 2, 2014, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 4 p.m. to 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 21:

—notice of public hearings on the Ontario Parliamentary Channel, the Legislative Assembly'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 6 p.m. on the second day of public hearings;

That the deadline for filing amendments to the bill with the Clerk of the Committee shall be 12 noon on Wednesday, December 3, 2014.

That the committee be authorized to meet on Thursday, December 4, 2014, from 9 a.m. to 10:15 a.m. and 2 p.m. to 6 p.m., for the purpose of clause-by-clause consideration of the bill;

On Thursday, December 4, 2014, at 2 p.m., 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. 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 Monday, December 8, 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 Social Policy, the Speaker shall put the question for adoption of the report forthwith, and at such time the bill shall be ordered for third reading, which order may be called that same day; 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 votes on second and 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): Ms. Matthews has moved government notice of motion number 9. Shall I read it again?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Debate? Who's leading off the debate?

I recognize the Deputy Premier.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very pleased to be able to participate in this important debate, and I look forward to hearing from my honourable colleagues from all parties. I think we can all agree that the health and well-being of Ontarians is a top priority for all members in this Legislature. Bill 21, Safeguarding Health Care Integrity Act, is a combination of two time-sensitive bills that were previously introduced in the last Parliament.

The first bill, Enhancing Patient Care and Pharmacy Safety Act, was introduced more than a year ago and was debated for many months in the House. The second bill, Voluntary Blood Donations Act, was first introduced nine months ago and was debated and referred to committee with agreement from all parties. Both bills died on the order paper last May. Both bills were also part of the Liberal plan that we put to the people in June. We are following through with that mandate.

We're now moving forward with Bill 21. This motion allows the House to pass this bill before the new year.

Schedule 1 of the bill would prohibit paying or accepting payment for blood and plasma donations in Ontario. If passed, this bill would help preserve the integrity of the voluntary blood and plasma donation system we have in Ontario.

Following the tainted blood scandal of the 1980s, Canada's blood system was established on the principle of voluntary donation. However, as is public knowledge, there have been cases in Ontario of clinics that intend to pay individuals for their plasma donations. We've heard from many health care organizations and individual Ontarians, including victims of tainted blood, who oppose private, for-profit plasma clinics.

With these types of private clinics, the principle of voluntary donation is at risk. As a government, we stand firmly against payment for blood or plasma donations in Ontario, and that is why we need to pass this legislation as quickly as possible.

1350

Schedule 2 of the bill focuses on the regulation of hospital pharmacies, specifically Ontario's cancer drug supply system. When it came to light that 1,019 patients received weaker doses of chemotherapy drugs than had

been prescribed by their oncologists, our government appointed Dr. Jake Thiessen to conduct an investigation to determine the cause of the underdosing. His investigation yielded 12 recommendations to protect public safety, and our government is committed to implementing them.

One of the recommendations requires legislative changes, which this proposed legislation addresses. Our proposed legislation would amend the Drug and Pharmacies Regulation Act so that the Ontario College of Pharmacists can inspect and license all hospital pharmacies operating in Ontario. This is a means to ensure that medication management and processing systems in hospital pharmacies are standardized.

Speaker, we know that there is support from members from all parties. In fact, members from both opposition parties have made positive comments in support of this bill. I'm very pleased about that.

The member from Nickel Belt, the health critic for the NDP, agrees that there is an urgency to passing this legislation. Here's what she said: "We have a bill in front of us. I hope it will go to committee as fast as we can send it there."

"Let's move on with it. It has been two years. This is way too long."

I couldn't agree more.

The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound has said, "My PC caucus colleagues, including our health critic, Christine Elliott from Whitby-Oshawa, are supportive ... but we do want to make sure that it gets to committee."

Again, I couldn't agree more. This is a very special moment in this Legislature, Speaker: We all agree.

There's also support for this bill from those who matter the most. Antonia Swann is the widow of a tainted-blood victim. She said, "I applaud Minister Hoskins for re-introducing this bill to make it illegal to pay for blood in Ontario, and it would be prudent for other provinces, as well as Health Canada, to follow his lead."

She went on to say, "I know that my late husband, James Kreppner, would commend the Ontario government for protecting the voluntary blood donation system."

It's time to move forward with Bill 21. In the last Parliament, this Legislature was ground to a halt and was unable to move forward on important pieces of legislation like Bill 21. In fact, only 39% of government bills were passed in the last minority government. That's compared to more than three quarters of bills that were passed going back to 1990.

Voters of Ontario sent a clear message last June: They don't want any more of the stalling tactics of the opposition parties. I urge all members of this House to support this motion. They agree with the substance. Let's get this done. Let's help pass this bill as quickly as possible.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure for me to have the opportunity to speak on this closure motion. As I've said in previous debates, there were a couple of bills that the

government House leader asked both parties in opposition to allow quick passage for. This particular bill that this closure motion deals with, Bill 21, was a bill, as I indicated right from the very start, that our party felt needed to have a few extra days of public hearings. In fact, our critic, the member for Whitby-Oshawa, Ms. Elliott, did want to have some public hearings, and I communicated that very openly to the government House leader at our very first House leaders' meeting.

But last week, Speaker, I have to tell you, I had a great suggestion from the Chair of Cabinet, the minister without portfolio, the member for St. Catharines, the Honourable Jim Bradley, and I'm going to take him up on his suggestion.

All of us here have a tremendous admiration for the member from St. Catharines. He has been here since 1977, so that means his 40th anniversary as a member will happen during this term. It's an incredible milestone of public service. I think my colleagues here this afternoon would agree with me that Mr. Bradley has probably forgotten more about the inner workings of this place than some of us will ever know.

Given that respect that I believe we as fellow legislators have for Mr. Bradley, when I was preparing for the debate, I took his suggestion, because who better to look to for some guidance on this troubling issue of time allocation than Jim Bradley?

It's a very important point. No matter on which side of the House you take your seat, deep down I think we all struggle with the concept of shutting down debate. Debate is the hallmark of our democratic society. It's the reason we get up in the morning and come to this place at Queen's Park.

Over the weekend, I took the suggestion that Minister Bradley gave me and I reviewed Hansard over the weekend and checked the official record from my friend the member from St. Catharines.

I have to tell you, it was a very illuminating read to look at his great concern for the erosion of the democratic process when he spoke as a member of the opposition on time allocation motions. I hope that the new members of the Liberal government will pay particularly close attention to his words, because we all know that they don't have to do a lot of research on a bill or on a time allocation motion because the Premier's office is ultimately just going to hand them their speaking notes on that particular motion.

When I looked at the wonderful comments of the minister when he was in opposition, I had to make sure that I put them on the record today. Here's what the esteemed member for St. Catharines had to say on December 11, 2001:

"Mr. Bradley: This is indeed an interesting bill, but what's even more interesting right now is the time allocation motion that faces us. For the people who are watching this perhaps on their television sets at home, I should clarify that. That is the choking off of debate, the ending of debate or the government allocating how much time there shall be for the debate on a piece of legislation."

Choking off debate—Mr. Bradley has such a way with words. I couldn't have said it better myself. In fact, I think I'll use his words, "choking off debate," during our discussion of this motion.

Let me continue, though, with his remarks of that day. Here's the member for St. Catharines:

"We are operating in this Legislative Assembly at this time almost exclusively on what are called time allocation motions. That's most unfortunate, because it's what you would call anti-democratic."

Wow: "operating almost exclusively on time allocations" and "anti-democratic." I guess the saying goes that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

I'm going to continue to quote, if you'll allow me, the member for St. Catharines:

"Is this the first government that ever used a time allocation motion or a closure motion? No. But this government has consistently used these motions to pass legislation through this House even after this government imposed upon the Legislature drastic changes to the procedural rules of this House to grease the skids for legislation that it deems appropriate for the province.

"The best way to deal with legislation is to have the government sitting most of the year so it can receive careful analysis and debate in this House and in committees and, in fact, in committees that travel across the province to get meaningful input. We do not have that."

That's an interesting point because that's exactly what the opposition parties have been suggesting to the government. Our party has suggested that we have province-wide hearings on Bill 10. Our party suggested that we have province-wide hearings on Bill 21.

It's interesting, when we look back at the debate, to see that that's exactly what the member for St. Catharines, when he was in opposition, recommended happen so that you could get that feedback.

The next speech not only spoke to the problem with closure but it also talked about the concentration of power in the Premier's office. I know that the current government House leader understands that, because the power of his position has been all but taken away. When it comes to the House leaders, he doesn't actually negotiate with the member for Timmins—James Bay and me; he just carries out orders. He just basically gets the orders from the corner office, from the Premier, and that's what he comes back to dictate to us on.

1400

Here's a bit of a speech from the member for St. Catharines, Mr. Bradley, from May 30, 2001. Here's the member for St. Catharines:

"I regret that we are dealing once again with yet another time allocation motion, which is a motion that chokes off debate in the Legislative Assembly. It is my observation after a number of years, and I think talking to people who have observed this Parliament for a number of years, that it has been diminished so remarkably by this government that it has become almost irrelevant. That is most unfortunate, not simply for those of us who sit in the opposition or for the combatants who are of a

partisan nature in this House, but for the democratic institution that indeed it has been in the past.

"It was once a significant institution, in my view. I remember, as a person before I was elected, coming and sitting in the public galleries. Those were the days where you didn't have somebody blocking you at the door and making you get passes and so on. You simply had to sit in the public gallery and watch the debates that took place. And we did sit in those days; the House did sit both in the daytime and sometimes in the evening, particularly on Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

"If you listened to the debate in those days—I'll say, admittedly, that there are always those who view the past as perhaps" much "better than the present, but I had a number of students who have gone through the Hansards and read some of the speeches and noted that indeed they were very good speeches in the House in those days. They were more lengthy than they are now, in many cases, so that ideas were able to be elaborated upon. There was a greater detailed analysis of legislation that took place, not only in the House in Committee of the Whole, because often we went to Committee of the Whole to deal with clause-by-clause, but also in committees of the Legislature.

"I think it was more ecumenical than it is today."

The member goes on: "Today the strongest person is the party whip. The party whip simply tells the members of the committee what shall happen, and it happens. That's unfortunate, because on all sides I think members have something to contribute: the opposition to concede when the government has made moves that are acceptable and good, and the government members to find problems that might exist in government legislation. But that is virtually gone. It is virtually dictated now by the Premier's office. The speeches we hear in the House tend to be speeches which seem to originate from the government caucus service bureau, and I understand the need for some research for speeches, but they are virtually meaningless, because they can't influence the government or the procedures that take place. That's most unfortunate."

I wholeheartedly agree with the member for St. Catharines in his speech. Behaviour like he's talking about is very unfortunate, and frankly, I'm surprised that the member is now willing to participate in this, given his so strong views.

Now, granted, those two speeches that I quoted were made at a time when the Progressive Conservative Party sat on the government side. I think we remember those days, especially now that Ontario's economy is struggling under the weight of this government's mismanagement. Those were the days when Ontario's economy was booming. It was a time when our great province was the economic powerhouse driving Canada's economy. Unfortunately, things have changed. I know that sometimes I say we used to be the economic engine and now we're the caboose; that's the railroader family in me. I know that most people know there isn't even a caboose now. This, again, is under the last 11 years of this government.

I know my colleague, the House leader for the third party, is going to have plenty of things to say later about time allocation. But I also want to make sure that, in his remarks, he doesn't just talk about PC governments and Liberal governments. I want to go back a little further in Hansard, if I might.

My friend, the member for St. Catharines, had plenty of things to say, as well, about the NDP and how they ran this place during their reign. I have a speech during a time allocation debate on November 24, 1993. That's right, Speaker. Coincidentally, the speech the member for St. Catharines gave was 21 years ago today. I hope, on this anniversary, that Minister Bradley will throw off the shackles that the Premier's office has placed on him so that he can speak freely, so that he, himself, can quote some of his past comments in Hansard. Here's a replay of that debate, 21 years ago, on November 24, 1993. I appreciate it's long, so I would ask the members' indulgence, but it's very profound words.

Mr. Bradley: "I wish to speak to the closure motion which is before the House by once again indicating my concern at the number of closure motions which have been forthcoming from the government House leader and under the NDP government of Bob Rae.

"The reason I do that is that in many years gone past Mr. Rae entered the House in a by-election when Mr. Lewis resigned. Mr. Rae became the leader after Mr. Cassidy stepped down as leader. I can well recall that he felt very strongly about the fact that the opposition should have the opportunity to fully canvass all the arguments on any of the bills before the House, and he was a very strong defender of that particular opportunity....

"I'm concerned about the closure motions because I think they limit legitimate debate. I recognize that a government ultimately might have the opportunity to close down a debate that's been going on a very long period of time. But as I've indicated to the House in days gone by, the purpose of these debates is to canvass public opinion, to make the public aware of what is happening.

"All of us have experienced the situation where we have encountered our constituents and they've said, 'What is this particular bill all about?' or 'How did this bill get passed and I didn't know anything about it?' They are legitimate questions. One of the reasons is that the bills tend to get passed very rapidly in this House.

"Sometimes there are hearings. There is going to be a bit of an opportunity for hearings in this case. I think there should probably be more time provided for that, but also I think it's important to provide more time to discuss the amendments that might be brought forward by both the government and the opposition. If the hearings are going to be meaningful, if the hearings are going to be worthwhile, then I think it's exceedingly important for there to be legitimate debate over the amendments that flow from those hearings. That's what makes a bill stronger.

"If we want the Parliament to work on a more or less consensus basis rather than a confrontational basis, it's important for the government to be able to accept amendments from its own members who may have some

good ideas or from members of the opposition. Sometimes the members of the opposition put them forward at the behest of those who have made appearances before the committee.

I think it's important to at least debate those adequately. The provision of this closure motion really means that there won't be the opportunity for that kind of debate which I think is very healthy for legislation of this kind."

And it goes on and on and talks about Mr. Rae and the member for Windsor-Riverside. It goes through a very long debate. But the one aspect that I want is when Mr. Bradley talks about the Speaker. In that speech he says:

"You as Chair, Madam Speaker, sitting in that position, used to have more power. You used to be able to use more discretion to determine, as an independent person, as a person with personal judgement, how much time should be allocated to any piece of legislation or whether in fact enough debate had taken place. While there may have been quarrels from time to time with what a Speaker indicated by way of ruling, there was a general consensus that one should accept that ruling and the House should proceed."

That was interesting. Back in that time, the Speaker had the discretion to allow debate to continue; and then the issue of time allocation came forward.

In the speech he also used the word "henchman," which was a word that I'm not sure—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was a henchman back then.

Mr. Steve Clark: But he said the word should have been "protégé" rather than henchman when it comes to government members, so he didn't use it to you, sir.

What I want to say is that it was an excellent speech by the member. He was very consistent when he was in opposition. No matter what party was in government, he had very, very strong views about time allocation. I actually want to thank him for giving me the suggestion to go through some of his speeches and quote them today. I think it was very appropriate.

What I want to say is that when you look at the comments appealing to Mr. Rae's government not to be mouthpieces, not to concede to the unelected advisers, I think it's wonderful advice for the new members of the Liberal caucus to not just take what you're given and read it in the House.

I know that the member for St. Catharines was very sincere 21 years ago when he made those comments. I know he was sincere in 2001 when he made those comments. I want to again say that we need to put that type of comment on the record.

I again want to reiterate that when I was asked by the government House leader about letting some bills pass, which would basically have them debated a few hours, go a few days in committee and come back here, we did not say no. But there were some bills, like Bill 21, where we were honest and open with the government and said we wanted to have some hearings.

1410

So on behalf of our caucus, I would like to move an amendment on this motion. I would like to move that the

motion be amended by adding the following after the second paragraph:

“That the committee be authorized to hold public hearings in the following locations: Hamilton, Guelph, Ottawa, Kitchener, London, Windsor and Sudbury;” and

That the fourth bullet point in the third paragraph be amended by deleting the word “second” and substituting “eighth”; and

That the fourth paragraph be amended by deleting “Wednesday, December 3, 2014” and substituting “the first weekday following the completion of public hearings”; and

That the fifth paragraph be amended by deleting “Thursday, December 4, 2014” and substituting “the second weekday following the completion of public hearings”; and

That the sixth paragraph be amended by deleting “Thursday, December 4, 2014” and substituting “that day”; and

That the seventh paragraph be amended by deleting “no later than Monday, December 8, 2014” and substituting “the first sessional day following completion of clause-by-clause”.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Clark has moved that the motion be amended by adding the following after the second paragraph:

“That the committee be authorized to hold public hearings in the following locations: Hamilton, Guelph, Ottawa, Kitchener, London, Windsor and Sudbury;” and

That the fourth bullet point in the third paragraph be amended by deleting the word “second” and substituting “eighth”; and

That the fourth paragraph be amended by deleting “Wednesday, December 3, 2014” and substituting “the first weekday following the completion of public hearings”; and

That the fifth paragraph be amended by deleting “Thursday, December 4, 2014” and substituting “the second weekday following the completion of public hearings”; and

That the sixth paragraph be amended by deleting “Thursday, December 4, 2014” and substituting “that day”; and

That the seventh paragraph be amended by deleting “no later than Monday, December 8, 2014” and substituting “the first sessional day following completion of clause-by-clause”.

Further debate.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I can't say that I'm pleased to rise in this debate because, quite frankly, I think it's a sad thing that we're having to yet again use time allocation in this House. I would remind members of the House that when this particular Parliament came back after the last election, the government with great, I would say, fanfare talked about the importance of being able to have the opposition and the government work together in order to pass a very busy agenda that the government had put forward.

The Premier, through the media and then eventually the government House leader with the House leaders of the Conservative and New Democratic parties, said that they wanted to find a way for us to be able to work together, to deal with the agenda that the government is putting forward, and that they sent us a very direct signal. That signal was, “You tell us what it is you want, and if it's reasonable, we will accommodate; but you need to allow us to pass a part of our agenda in a fairly reasonable way from a time frame” from their perspective. So we went back and said, “Okay, that's interesting. That's a step in the right direction.”

I know that I did, and I know that Mr. Clark, the member from—

Mr. Steve Clark: Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —Leeds–Grenville, did, as the House leader for the Conservative Party, look at the agenda the government had put forward. I think originally it was four bills. Now it's up to seven or eight bills, so it was a bit of a moving target, which is a whole other issue that I'll raise in a minute. We looked at it and said, “Okay, let us go back to our people, think about if we had to pick from these bills, which ones we really want to have some time on, to make sure we give the bill proper time to be dealt with in the House and in committee. We'll come back and make some recommendations.”

Well, we got back and we started sort of testing the waters and saying, “Okay, we understand the government wants to move these bills forward, but we need to have some time for public hearings—and public hearings doesn't mean just here at Queen's Park. It means going to Hamilton, it means going to northern Ontario, it means going to eastern Ontario and different places around this province, so that the public can be part of this process, because after all this is the people's Parliament. This doesn't belong to you and I as elected members. We're only here as the people doing the work of the public that sent us here.”

So we came forward with some suggestions about some of the travel that we would expect to see, and I don't think it was really unreasonable what had been put forward, but it was an opening position. I guess you could say that the government may have thought that the opposition was asking too much. Maybe that was their position; I don't know. But we never got to the second step. They never came back and said, “Well, you know what? On this particular bill, you're asking for X number of days of public hearings and travels around Ontario. We're not happy with that. We would like to cut it down to” whatever. We never got to the second step of the discussion. This from a Premier who says she wants to get in a conversation with Ontarians. God, she can't even get in a conversation with us, in her own Legislature.

So the government turns around and says, “Never mind. We're going to time-allocate everything.” What was the point of asking us that in the first place if the government had no intention of working with the opposition and determining some sort of way of moving forward that allowed the government to get their bills but

also gave an opportunity to give public scrutiny to those bills that were of most interest to Ontarians and to the opposition?

Mr. Steve Clark: It's an insult.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would say, yes, it was a bit of an insult, because we went out and did the work and the government wasn't even entertaining us getting back to them with what might have been, I think, a fairly reasonable compromise.

I understand that negotiations, on all sides, go this way: Government, when they put something forward, will try to minimize it; the opposition will go back and try to get as much as they can. But the real beauty of the system, if it works well, is that no party walks away from a House leaders' meeting in this Legislature feeling completely satisfied that they got everything that they wanted, because, like life, it's a bit of a compromise. So the government has had to give us something when it comes to public hearings, and in doing that—I think it would be a better process for their bills, and I'll get into that later. We might have happened to give in a bit.

No, not only did they say they were going to time-allocate the four bills that they told us they were absolutely needing to get—and this was the list of bills; it grew to five, then it was six, then it was seven. Now it's up to eight. So I say to the government: Get straight. Decide what the hell your priorities are—pardon the language, Speaker; I take that back. Decide what the heck your priorities are when you come to the opposition to talk about moving your agenda forward.

We all understand there may be things that come out of the ordinary—and not ordinary, I should say, in this place—where you've got to deal with something; for example, SARS when the Conservatives were in government. You had to deal with that right away. In this case, the question of sexual harassment and the non-reporting by people who have been harassed—I understand those kinds of things come up, and yes, that might skew the agenda somewhat. But generally the government knew what they wanted this fall. I can't believe that they came to the fall session and said, "Oh, my God, we have no idea what we want. Let's just make it up as we go." I know it may look that way, but no government—

Mr. Bill Walker: That might be the case.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I hope they don't operate that way. They had to know what they wanted. Instead, what they're doing is they're relying on time allocation.

Well, from the government perspective, it all comes down to what we heard the Deputy Premier say, that these are only tactics by the opposition; it's all about game-playing; it's about the opposition trying to hold up the government. Popycock! This is a Parliament. Go back and read your history. It has been in development for almost 1,000 years, and the whole premise behind the parliamentary system is that the government gets to put forward legislation, and the opposition gets a chance to scrutinize, along with the public. And guess what? The government gets its way. We understand that. That's how Parliament is run in this place, and it's how it has run in

England for millennia—or not millennia but for hundreds of years—because the British parliamentary system is based on, over the years, the development of a system where there is that compromise between always understanding that the executive must have its way and also understanding that there needs to be some scrutiny and that the opposition is there to scrutinize legislation and, yes, at times, to propose, as has been the case in every Parliament. The opposition, either by way of private members' bills, by opposition day motions or by questions in the House, proposes ideas to the government that we hope the government is going to go with at one point. That's the way the system should work.

But no, the government decided it's going to time-allocate everything. What are you really achieving here by way of time allocation? You're going to rush your legislation through, after six and a half hours of hearings, at six and a half hours of debate at second reading. You're going to get a two-hour debate at the time allocation motion, and then it will get time-allocated into committee, with one or two days of hearings, a day maybe of clause-by-clause. Everything is going to be truncated. We're going to have a flawed bill. It will come back for third reading, and we'll get two hours of debate, if we're lucky, the time divided equally between the whole gang of us. Who really is being served in this scenario? Is it the government? Well, the government would say yes, because they get their agenda forward. But does it make for better legislation? I argue it does not.

1420

I will propose that for probably 80% of what's on the order paper today, the opposition could agree on passage, on some sort of quick passage, where there would be less time spent on certain bills and more time spent on others, as is the case. If the government took the time to sit down and try to work a way to go through it, we could get through a huge part of the order paper fairly quickly. That's the way it used to work around here.

When I first got here, there was no such thing as time allocation. Hey, there weren't even limits to speeches. Members used to get up in this House, and if they wanted to speak for two hours or they wanted to speak for two weeks, they had the right to do so, and God bless.

But what used to have to happen, and this is what we've lost, is that the opposition House leaders, along with the government House leader, would sit down and they would figure out how to make the agenda move forward. The government couldn't, on their own, force legislation through the House, because there was no time allocation. As a result, there was a need for the government to sit down with the opposition and try to find a way forward.

Here's the biggest difference, and my colleague the House leader for the Conservative Party, from Leeds-Grenville, mentioned it in the speeches that Mr. Bradley made, and Mr. Bradley is 100% right. The power of this Legislature has moved from the floor of the House to the corner office of the Premier. That's what has happened

over the last number of years. Is that good? If you're the Premier, it's wonderful. You get all the power. You get to do what you want. It's almost like government by fiat. But I think it's a bad thing, because it doesn't allow members to have the kind of say, both by way of debate at second and third reading—but, more importantly, to allow their constituents and stakeholder groups that they represent to have their say through the committee process.

There was at the time, when there was no time allocation, a need for the government to sit down and to work out with the opposition what should happen. I remember, for example, there was a guy by the name of Mike Harris. I'm going to say a nice story about Mike today.

Mike Harris decides, in opposition to Bob Rae, that he doesn't like the NDP budget. All right, fair enough; he had his right. He's an opposition member who had a particular point of view that I disagreed with, as a government member, but he had the right to have that particular point of view. Mr. Harris walked into the House and essentially said, "No deals until that budget travels X amount of days in X cities across Ontario." It held up the House for a period of a couple of weeks.

Mr. Harris got up, and in introduction of bills, guess what? There were no limits for time when it came to introduction of bills. Mr. Harris got up and he started reading bill after bill: "I move that the name of the lake in" such-and-such a place "be changed."

I remember Mr. Gravelle, the member for—

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thunder Bay–Superior North.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —Thunder Bay–Superior North, was here. He remembers. He got up—

Interjection: Rivers and lakes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It was rivers and lakes. He changed the names, or did something in the naming, of every river and lake in the province of Ontario, as a way to get the government to sit down and to negotiate.

When our House leader—I can use his name, because he's no longer here—Mr. Dave Cooke, refused to negotiate with then-House leader Ernie Eves—I can use his name, because he's not here, but I can't use the name for Jim Bradley, because he was here, so I'll have to say the member for whatever his riding was.

Mr. Steve Clark: St. Catharines.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: St. Catharines. Did I get it right? Okay, that's good. I love having you guys around me.

Mr. Steve Clark: I'll keep making sure you're getting all the riding names right.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's really good vibes and dynamics.

But the point is that Mr. Cooke was forced to sit down with the opposition and to try to find a way forward. Mr. Harris, at the time—I didn't like it. I wasn't in agreement. I can tell you that 74 members in government were not in agreement. But he had his right, as an opposition member, to use the rules of the House in order to make his point, and to use them as leverage with the government to be able to move forward what he was trying to do.

So we gave in. As a way of being able to move forward and to get some of our legislative agenda through, we gave Mr. Harris, then leader of the third party, a period of a couple of weeks of hearings across Ontario.

Guess what? He got his hearings. We heard a lot of stuff during those hearings, some of which I didn't like. I was there. Je me souviens. But some of it was good suggestions that we actually took.

In those particular hearings, I remember, there were some issues in regard to municipal tax assessment. There were issues around resource-based taxes. There were different things that were raised that were problems within the existing tax code—not that we had raised taxes, but there were problems in the existing tax code and within existing legislation that allowed people to organize and bring before the committee, and guess what? Some of that stuff, if it didn't find itself in the budget, found its way into legislation in order to deal with those particular issues that were raised.

As a government member, I didn't do all of those hearings; I only did a couple of days of them. But I remember there were some really compelling arguments made on particular issues that we had to move forward. So my point is, yes, it was a tactic, as the Deputy Premier says, on the part of the opposition then to be able to get the attention of the government. But at the end of the day, the government had to make a deal in order to be able to move forward.

But here's the kicker: The opposition then agreed to a bunch of bills they had no interest in holding up. The opposition said, "We're prepared to give you this bill. We'll give you that bill. We'll take no time at third reading; just bring it in for a vote. We're done in committee on this one." There was a whole bunch of the legislative agenda of the government of the day that got agreed to by both sides of the House, because the Liberals wanted something and the Conservatives wanted something, and we got a good chunk of our legislative agenda done in exchange for a couple of weeks of hearings on the budget bill. Was that a bad thing? Absolutely not.

The problem with time allocation is that it takes away the ability of the opposition to put some pressure on the government to negotiate, and that's why they won't get rid of it. The government has no interest in changing the rules, because as long as the corner office, the Premier of Ontario, who says she's so progressive, can use the draconian hammer, she will use the draconian hammer called time allocation—whoa, "time allocation."

Mr. John Yakabuski: We'll make the allegations; she'll do the allocation.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Exactly. That was a bit of a Freudian slip. But in the end, it doesn't serve anybody, in my view.

Remember that the whole idea of time allocation is counterproductive, because what it does is not only force every other bill to be debated, which normally wouldn't be debated at any length; it also makes for flawed legislation. I used the example the other day of the sustainable

forestry development act, when we brought that out for travel; and I do remember, under the Conservatives, that there was the change to the municipal assessment act—changes that were put forward where we had pretty wide public consultations. In both cases, members of the government and members of the opposition—in one case an NDP government, in the other case a Conservative government—listened to what people had to say, didn't do everything they asked, but made some changes.

I remember being on the municipal assessment act changes at the time—that would have been about 1996, somewhere around there. I remember having reams of notes of stuff on the assessment system because we were moving from one system to another. We had just moved into market value, and we were moving, at that time, into AVA, actual value—I forget what they called it; there have been so many machinations. But there were problems in the way it was done.

When we went to Committee of the Whole, guess what? We got some of those changes done. That, I think, was a good service to the people of Ontario, because it made a more functional bill. I think it was a good service for this Legislature, because it allowed members to participate, knowing they could actually have their say. And I think it was good for the government, because they ended up with a better product at the end.

The other thing that has happened indirectly as a result of time allocation is that it has taken us away from using Committee of the Whole House as a way of being able to deal with bills between second and third reading. There were a number of bills, I remember when I first got here, that were not the type of bills you really had to do a lot of public hearings on. They were pretty straight-up kinds of bills. Everybody was in agreement; there was no disagreement on all sides of the House. So, rather than sending the bill directly from second to third reading, we would send it to Committee of the Whole. You were there, Mr. Speaker. You were elected in 1990, along with myself, and we used to deal with a fair amount of bills at second reading.

Do you remember Noble Villeneuve? I can use his name, because he's no longer a member over here. He was from eastern Ontario somewhere. I remember he was on a mission on an agricultural bill; I forget exactly what the bill did. He used Committee of the Whole to great effect by proposing a lot of amendments to the bill as a way of being able to get a particular amendment he wanted, which we didn't want to do. Well, guess what? We did part of what he wanted. Was that a disservice to anybody? I think it was a service to the people of Ontario; a service to members, because they felt as if they were getting something done; and a service for the government, because we made a better bill.

The problem is that in the current system we have now, the government doesn't want to back down on anything, because if they do, they look as if they're weak, and they don't want to amend their bills because, again, it makes them look weak, and they think they know everything. Well, you know what? I learned something a

long time ago: I don't know everything. You rely on the advice you get from people, you listen to conversations and debate about issues and you can refine what you're thinking and what you want to do based on that. So it's a really sad thing that we're not using Committee of the Whole.

1430

I'm going to wrap up in a second, so I just have one other point that I want to make, and that is that the government is not—and I'm just, I guess, repeating what I started off with—doing itself any service by time-allocating because in the end what they're doing is that 80% of the agenda that could be agreed to and passed through the House and through the process fairly quickly isn't. It forces everything to be debated ad infinitum, and I don't think that serves the interest of the public because at the end what you end up with is a flawed bill.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a pleasure to join—well, it's not a pleasure. I guess I can accuse myself of lying; I can't accuse anybody else. I'm lying when I say that, because it's not a pleasure to join this debate because we shouldn't be having this debate. We should be debating the merits, the problems, the pros and the cons of Bill 21.

Unfortunately, the government has decided once again to ram it through the House, to avoid and stifle the democratic process or, more to the point, in the words of the member for St. Catharines—was it still St. Catharines back in 2001? It might have been St. Catharines when he was first elected back in 1977—Minister Bradley—when he says that this was the choking off of debate and strangulation by regulation. That's what it is, because the government brings in the regulation of a time allocation motion, which basically strangles the debate on Bill 21.

I am one of the members of this Legislature, of whom there are many, who have not had the opportunity to even speak to Bill 21, to even engage in the debate. This is supposed to be a chamber of debate. Sometimes you have to ask yourself if we're actually having that opportunity to use this chamber in the way that it was designed by our forefathers when they considered this Confederation and when they considered this Parliament. Right now, as my friend from Timmins—James Bay has said, it's a chamber that is directed by the corner office on the second floor, particularly in the circumstances we have today, which is a majority government.

We have House leaders' meetings. I join my House leader at those meetings. We're supposed to have meetings to negotiate how this House might operate, how this chamber might debate and how much time we might agree to. As we've said before, there are bills that we're not looking for a great deal of debate on. We could sit down and talk about some of those, but unfortunately that's not happening.

We go in on a Thursday afternoon and there's an edict from that corner office I'm talking about on the second floor, just down the hall—you just go out those doors and turn right; it's right about there. Right about there is that

corner office where all the power lies. I don't believe that was ever the way it was intended—well, I know it wasn't intended because that wasn't the way this Legislature worked when my father was a member here, beginning in 1963. Debate wasn't stifled in that way.

Did somehow the world fall apart in those days? Did somehow we fail to pass the necessary legislation? One of the problems, I think, is that the government passes way too many pieces of legislation—way too many bills. In order to do so, they just have to make sure that they accelerate their agenda, thereby precluding the members of this Legislature from having proper input into those debates.

On this bill itself—as I said, I've not had the opportunity to debate it. But you have to ask yourself: If we can't debate it here, how does one day of hearings—is it one day?

Mr. Steve Clark: A couple of days.

Mr. John Yakabuski: A couple of days of hearings; two days of hearings in Toronto—how does that make this bill the best that it could be? It's just simply not feasible. This is a very significant piece of legislation. It's going to change the way, in law, that plasma is procured in the province of Ontario.

I might point out that I'm a blood donor myself. I've given blood over 50 times. I feel sorry for the people who got it, maybe, but they keep taking mine so somebody must be getting it. But three of our four children have O-negative type blood, which is the rare blood. It's a pretty high percentage in one family. My father had that rare blood. I don't. Having that rare blood makes their blood donations even more critically important. I support the blood donation system here in Ontario and in Canada, Canadian Blood Services.

When the government talks about outlawing the procurement of plasma or allowing it to be done for a fee, they're ignoring some of the facts. That is that 70% of our plasma comes from the United States, where it could easily be plasma that was paid for—easily, plasma that was paid for. Are they going to ban the import of any of those products from the United States? Is that going to be part of the legislation? That requires some debate. You can't have a piece of legislation that would, in fact, make the government hypocritical within its own laws. I would hope not.

But we're not even having the opportunity to talk about that part of the legislation because, once again, they have decided that we will no longer debate this bill. We will have a compressed period of committee hearings. There will be a compressed period of clause-by-clause. It even determines what we can do on third reading, which is going to be—what, two hours? I don't have the motion in front of me. Two hours of debate split equally, I ask my colleague?

Mr. Steve Clark: It is.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Two hours of debate split equally on third reading.

At the end of the day, we're going to have this bill pass—they want to make sure they have this passed

before we leave here in the second week of December. That's their plan. Did they never hear the carpenter's creed of measure twice and cut once? Let's get these things right instead of ramming them through. Let's have the debate that is necessary. You might learn something.

As my friend from Timmins—James Bay said, he doesn't know everything. I certainly don't know everything, but I'm pretty comfortable in saying that nobody over on the other side knows everything either. But collectively, we may be able to come up with the best piece of legislation that best serves the people of the province of Ontario and best protects the integrity of our blood system.

I recognize that we live in a different system than they do in the United States. I've been in the United States, where you're at a mall parking lot, and there's a mobile bus there collecting blood. You can go in, you can make a donation, and you can get some money for it. I haven't done that. I have not been paid for any of my donations. I wouldn't think that they're that good.

So we do have a different system, but let's not pretend that we're an island unto ourselves here in Canada. We rely on the blood plasma collected in the United States for some of our supply. Wouldn't it be terrible if our supply was curtailed to the point that we couldn't conduct necessary emergency surgeries or other procedures to save lives? That would be wrong.

Mr. Bradley talked about a couple of dates there. I just want to throw it in there that one of those interjections on the NDP government in their time allocation was on November 24, 1993. I'll just say, because it struck me when it was said today, that is also the date that my one-year-old brother, Kim, passed away. It's also that today Pat Quinn, the great coach of the Toronto Maple Leafs, passed away, too. My condolences go out to the family of Pat Quinn. I'm a big fan of his, and I'm sure he will be missed.

What else will be missed is a real, genuine, wholesome debate on Bill 21. You on the government are denying us that opportunity. You are denying the people of Ontario the opportunity to hear that debate. I daresay that, at the end of the day, you will likely have a less comprehensive, weaker piece of legislation than you otherwise might have had. You may have to go back and revisit this sometime because you're going to learn when this legislation is passed—and it's going to be passed because myself and my friend Mr. Bisson and my friend Mr. Clark are powerless to stop you.

1440

You see, you've got your majority now and you're flexing your muscles. You're going to tell us and the world that “No matter what those” whatever “on the other side of the House think, we're running the show now. We suffered, for that little period of time between 2011 and 2014, in that minority situation, and we're going to let you know all over again that the world is as it should be in Liberal land and you're going to pay the price.” Unfortunately, the people of Ontario are paying that price as well. Shame on you.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm privileged, as we all are in this House, to be able to stand up and speak to bills where other people in this province don't have this privilege. Now we have another time allocation bill in front of us that is stopping us from using the privilege that the people of all of our ridings sent us here to do. Not only are we time-allocated in this House, but we're finding ourselves time-allocated in committees. So people across the province, when they want to talk about things that are in committee, are also being stifled and being stopped from doing that process.

I know, Speaker, that some of the best work that happens in this House happens at committee level. So when we have people travelling through the province, or not travelling through the province, shall we say, our communities—I'll get back to that. But people who have travelled here are left for five minutes to speak and give their piece at committee. That's shameful. They have travelled so far. Ontario is a big province and here they're being stuck to five minutes, and then we as members have three minutes to question those people, to maybe help enlighten what they've brought to the table or concerns about what they've brought to the table. But all of that is being taken away in today's Liberal government.

Today, we have Bill 21 in front of us under time allocation. We've had Bill 15, the auto insurance bill, in front of us in time allocation. We've had Bill 18, Stronger Workplaces for a Stronger Economy, in front of us under time allocation. Bill 8—and this is the most ironic of them all, Speaker, because this is the Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act—has been under time allocation. How is it possible that the Liberal government that is talking about accountability and transparency is stifling the very thing from happening in this House by time allocation? There are serious problems going on here. I'm just shocked by the last one.

Which other ones? Bill 10, the Child Care Modernization Act, was here. There have been amendments put forward. We wanted to travel that bill across the province, to speak to child care providers, speak to families who need child care and aren't able to get those services, for them to be able to speak to the bill. This is a major change to the way that child care is being provided in our province. It's something that affects every family in one way or another. Whether it's affecting them today and their young children, or whether it's going to affect their grandchildren or great-grandchildren, this is a major bill that we need to be discussing. And yet this government has decided that they have the only say, that they know best, that nobody else has any ideas or anything that could make this bill better, because they have it all down. They have stifled debate on that, and they have pushed that through under time allocation.

I understand that they came back from this election with a majority, but all of the other people on this side of

the House were also elected by the people in their ridings, by their constituents, to come here to speak on their behalf. When the government of the day, which is this Liberal government, says, "No, we don't need to hear from you because we know it all," there's a problem with that, Speaker.

Let's see what else I have here. Today is Bill 21, Safeguarding Health Care Integrity Act. New Democrats think this is a good bill. We think it actually should have been done a long time ago, but here we're seeing it in front of us. We're happy to see it move through, but we think there are concerns that some people have about the bill. But they're not going to be able to have their time in court per se to speak to this bill.

Let me find it here. The College of Physicians and Surgeons has this to say about the bill:

"[T]he college will be seeking amendments to fine-tune" the amendments in schedule 2.

"[T]he college does not feel the current 'discretion' language and information-sharing provisions shall meet the intended objectives."

If this is being time-allocated in committee, when is it that the people on the committee are going to have time to absorb these issues that people are bringing forward? They're not. Everything is just going to move very quickly, and people will not have time to say, "Maybe that's a good idea." Right? This is the College of Physicians and Surgeons. Should they not have a say about a bill that, frankly, is going to cover our entire province? They're the people who do the jobs. They're the professionals. We should be listening. We should be taking time. We should be absorbing this information that professionals in these fields, the qualified people, are bringing to us to make sure that we're making amendments that make sense for them.

I find it ironic. When I was listening to a previous speaker before me, I heard comments from the member from St. Catharines, comments about his dislike for time allocation in this House. I'm going to read some, Speaker, because I'll tell you, this is an interesting read. This is from the member from St. Catharines:

"What is disconcerting is watching the steady erosion across this country and other jurisdictions of the democratic process and nobody seeming to care. I think you judge a government, any government, anyplace based on what they do when they think no one is looking. If you can get away with it and you simply implement policies which you think are expedient for yourselves—that's more related to the way this House operates perhaps than policies across the province—if you can get away with it, of course, there's a great temptation to do it. The real people of principle will not utilize that opportunity."

"The real people of principle" right here, the member from St. Catharines said, "will not utilize that opportunity."

Here's another one. These are rich: "Another time allocation motion, of course, and I don't speak in favour nor vote in favour of time allocation motions, for obvious reasons.

“Unfortunately, what most of the population of Ontario—I would say probably over 99%—doesn’t realize is that this government is railroading a number of bills through this Legislature.”

I’ll just stop the quote for a second. You would think he was saying this today in this House, if he was on this side of the House.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: How things have changed.

Miss Monique Taylor: Yes, how things have changed. I’ll go back to the quote:

“Since it’s not a topical thing to cover in the mass media, it’s not going to get the kind of coverage it should and, generally speaking, people in the population don’t follow procedural affairs very much. But it is actually disconcerting to watch the way this government is ramming through legislation.”

There are many quotes here from the member from St. Catharines. The member from St. Catharines has been in this House for a long time. He is a very respected man in this House. People take what he has to say, usually, pretty seriously. So why aren’t his own members taking his own words seriously? Why is this Premier continuing to ram things through for the people of this province?

I think that good debate, good discussion and good policy come from people from across the province able to have their say, able to put their input, and I think it’s really unfortunate that this Liberal government doesn’t find the usefulness in that, that they don’t find the respect for other people of this province to have a say, to make good decisions, to make good laws. It’s really unfortunate.

I just have to say this: I’m sure I’ll be up in this House again speaking to another time allocation motion, and I find that really unfortunate. Thank you very much for your time, Speaker.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It’s a pleasure to add some thoughts to this debate, particularly after my colleagues from Leeds–Grenville and Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

1450

I’m going to start off by saying that a little earlier in this debate this afternoon, the Deputy Premier and President of Treasury Board, the former Minister of Health, suggested time allocation. I’d like to suggest to her that one time I’d have liked to see her use time allocation would have been the Markdale hospital decision, because then the people of Markdale and community wouldn’t have had 12 years to wait for their health care. In this case, I wish she would have used time allocation. That was the one time I might have agreed she could have used time allocation, and we’d in fact have that hospital built.

I’m going to go back to the current Minister of Health and ask him, perhaps, to do that and speed the process up, so that those great folks in Markdale and area get the hospital that they deserve. I’ll be at a meeting there tomorrow night, actually, to hear some of the updates on that. Hopefully, we’re going to actually move forward with that project.

It’s a case, again, where I really have to step back a little bit. Liberal members used to define allocation as, and I’m going to quote, “a motion that limits, stifles, ends debate and ends the involvement of the people in the province of Ontario in having a say in legislation.” It’s the height of hypocrisy to be able to come into this House—

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

Mr. Bill Walker: Withdrawn, Mr. Speaker; my apologies. Maybe I’ll use the term that they say one thing and do another. It has the same end result, I think, and that’s what they’re doing. My colleague from Leeds–Grenville, in his earlier remarks, referred to the member from St. Catharines as saying in Hansard that they choke debate. Well, what that means to the people of Ontario is that you’re not allowing proper discussion to happen; you’re not allowing the people of Ontario to have a true say in developing legislation and regulations that, at the end of the day, will impact their lives.

It’s been interesting to stand in this House and see Bill 10, the Child Care Modernization Act, time-allocated. My colleague from Simcoe North, Garfield Dunlop, has been trying his best to ensure that the people of Ontario have a true say. This is something that’s going to have huge consequences in regard to child care opportunities across Ontario. Certainly, the most important, of course, is what child care provision to our next generation, to our future leaders and constituents, is going to be. It’s interesting that they, again, want to just ramrod that one through.

What I’m hearing back in my riding is people saying, “You know, it seems like every time the Liberals come out with something, it’s just that they know, they have better thoughts, they have control, they are just going to do what they want, but they don’t go back to the actual community.” They don’t go back to the actual stakeholders, who are closest to most issues, and truly seek their input. They may have the odd meeting here and there, but they certainly don’t listen and implement most of that feedback.

The other one—I can’t say “the height of hypocrisy,” because I know that’s unparliamentary, so I won’t go there, Mr. Speaker. The Public Sector and MPP Accountability and Transparency Act that this government introduced: They time-allocated it. How can we actually stand here and not push back? You’re bringing in a bill to try to get the people of Ontario to trust you, to say that we truly are coming into this revered House to ensure that we’re doing the right thing for Ontarians, and they stifle, they choke off debate on the MPP accountability and transparency act. It doesn’t get any worse than that.

It’s very tough, when I go back home to my great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, to have a discussion, because people are asking, “How can they do this bill? What’s going on in that place? What are they thinking?” I’m not making this up, and I’m not the person saying it. These are the comments I’m hearing from my constituents: “How do you stand in that House and listen to this

every day? How do they introduce a bill about accountability and transparency and shut down debate on the very bill they are trying to suggest they, holier than thou, are going to implement on behalf of the great people of Ontario?"

It's a very challenging role to actually not sound partisan on that, because I, honest to goodness, don't understand how those elected members can stand there and say they are doing the right thing, and that they bring in a bill like that and stand solidly behind it and solidly behind their Premier.

The last time I debated Bill 8, we asked to have Laura Miller and Peter Faist—the two people who were the most knowledgeable in that whole boondoggle—brought in front of the committee so that we could actually get to the bottom of the billion-dollar gas plant scandal. The government consistently said, "No, you cannot have access to those two people." Why is that? How can you ask the great people of Ontario to trust you and believe in what you're saying when you won't allow those two key witnesses to come forward? That, Mr. Speaker—

Mr. Bob Delaney: Point of order.

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

Mr. Bob Delaney: Pursuant to standing order 23(b)(i), I would like to ask my esteemed colleague to please address the subject before the Legislature. I respect his opinion but that is not what's being discussed here this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I would just remind all members of the House that it's important to have relevance with respect to the debate. We are now debating actually, if I'm not mistaken, the amendment to the motion, and of course, remarks need to be relevant. I'll remind all members, and I return to the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and to my colleague for bringing that. It's always good to hear the standing orders, and I'm glad to hear that they can cite those off. I remain convinced that if they're going to do those types of things and stand and try to correct us on our record, then they need to ensure that they're actually bringing legislation that's forthright and that they're actually going to stand behind. So I think it is very relevant, because this is the time allocation of this bill, and I'm trying to draw the parallel that you can't come into the House and say one thing about time allocation and go the opposite way. At the end of the day, we need to ensure that we certainly have the ability to discuss these matters.

There is going to be a significant challenge, going forward. When I did my hour leadoff in regard to Bill 21, I did raise the concern that there are going to be, potentially down the road, shortages of blood supply, and I think there is a lot more going into research, particularly in the areas of Alzheimer's and dementia. I find it interesting, again, that this government is not open-minded enough to actually look forward for a change. Rather than always trying to spin it after they've made a

mess of something, why don't you look forward and say, "You know what? There is a looming potential shortage out there." How can they deny people, particularly those who have family members suffering from dementia or Alzheimer's, the ability to ensure that there is a supply available down the road? If that means that there has to be some paid-for-service blood, then that has to be the case.

Currently, today, there is 70% of blood plasma imported from the United States—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Plasma protein. I correct my record.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Products. Not plasma—

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much—plasma protein products. Let's play semantics of the words, but at the end of the day, you still need plasma protein products to be able to do that research to ensure that we have the ability to find a cure somewhere down the road and give those families—so I can't believe that this government is that short-sighted, that they would bring a bill and time-allocate it for their own partisan needs, as opposed to truly thinking about what they need to be doing for the people of Ontario.

If there is some good coming out of the debate today on time allocation, I'd like to put on record that I think we've had a breakthrough, because I believe the member from Timmins—James Bay actually—and I'm going to quote him, acknowledging "glad you are here," as he pointed to the PCs, and that's a pretty rare thing that we hear in this House. So perhaps there is some good to come of it, and we'll move on and hopefully be able to do great things together as the opposition. Our job, of course, is to hold this government to account.

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Walker: A couple of my other NDP colleagues, who I quite like and I think are more on our side than they sometimes let on—but that's a good thing, and we're working hand in glove with them to be able to make sure things are moving forward.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: He's not naming names.

Mr. Bill Walker: No naming names. The members from Manitoulin and Windsor, I really like those guys.

Mr. Speaker, you can see that this bill is having some impact, but just think if we could take it out to all of Ontario and hear from other people, like my colleagues from Windsor and Manitoulin, and actually get the true feedback from all Ontarians. It's what really baffles me when the Liberals continually time-allocate a lot of these bills. If they're forthright and really want—as the Premier continues to say, "I want to work in partnership. I want to work in collaboration. I want to have some conversations." Well, how come you're shutting down debate on half the bills that we've brought into this House? You can't continually do one thing and say the other. At the end of the day, you can't continue to stifle democracy.

The Green Energy Act is one of those, Mr. Speaker. They've stripped totally the ability for local municipally elected politicians to have a say in whether to site wind

turbines in their backyards, for the people that they actually have been democratically elected to represent. There's yet another example. In my three years here, I continually hear one thing but I see another when it comes down to what the Liberals want to do. They come out, they typically have a pretty flashy buzz line and a 30-second cut, and at the end of the day, they do the exact opposite. You can't speak out of both sides of your mouth. Once again, Mr. Speaker, I will not say the word "hypocrisy," because I know that's not allowed in the House, but at the end of the day—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): There's another rule that you can't say indirectly what you can't say directly. I have to ask you to withdraw it once again.

Mr. Bill Walker: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker. It's probably a rookie error, and I do apologize. I'm trying to learn as quickly as I can on my feet, and I truly do apologize for using the word "hypocrisy" when I speak about the Liberals, because I know that's unparliamentary, and will not do that in the future, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'll attempt to explain again. You can't say indirectly what you can't say directly, so you can't use that word. Don't do it again, please.

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Mr. Bill Walker: Withdraw, Mr. Speaker, and I do apologize. I'm glad my colleagues on the opposite side of the House are helping me with my learning curve here in the Legislature. I will do my best to honour the spirit of their intent for once and will do what I can. I hope that they won't stifle the debate on that, at the end of the day—time-allocate my ability to speak.

This is a very important bill. People's lives are on the line when you're talking about blood services and blood transfusion.

Before I finish, I'd like to send out a really strong commendation to all of those people across our great province who give blood. As the slogan says, "It's in you to give." I encourage every Ontarian who has the ability to go and do that. I thank the Canadian Blood Services and all of the volunteer groups that do that.

At the end of the day, it's very important that we have time to truly debate this and know that we're looking to the future. We need to have ways to ensure that that blood supply is there when we need it. If it's your loved one who is in that situation, I think we want to ensure that it's there regardless of what is your principled decision on whether you believe in volunteer blood or paid.

At the end of the day, what we can't be doing on things like this—like Bill 10, the Child Care Modernization Act, or like Bill 8, the MPP Accountability and Transparency Act—is to stifle debate and not allow Ontarians to have a say. If you're truly sincere on that side of the House, then bring these things forward. Allow us to travel the province when we need to. Have the true open debate. That way, we hear, which is what our job is: to listen to the people who put us in the House and enact the best legislation that will serve them to the best of our ability.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is indeed an honour to stand in the House this afternoon and make some further comments on Bill 21, the Safeguarding Health Care Integrity Act. No way can I match the passion of the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound or my colleague from Hamilton Mountain, who spoke so effectively about this bill.

Before I get into the meat and potatoes of what I want to say, let me just give you a quotation, something I found from Walter Lippmann. When we're talking about transparency, when we're talking about the role of the opposition, Mr. Lippmann, way back in 1939, said, "The opposition is indispensable. A good statesman, like any sensible human being, always learns more from his" opponents "than from his fervent supporters."

That's why I think the government should listen to the opposition more. They shouldn't be trying to shut them down. They should be open, they should be transparent and they should be accountable. That's why I believe that, instead of stifling debate, what the government should be doing is going around the province in committee, leading the way back into the ridings where the people suffered from a lack of the proper chemotherapy drugs.

I know that it was discovered in Peterborough. I had more than 200 in my area, in Windsor-Essex. I believe there were more than 600 patients in London who got the diluted chemotherapy drugs. The government, if you want to be accountable, if you want to be transparent, should be in those communities, meeting face to face with the men and women and children who did not receive the drugs, the treatment, that they were supposed to be given.

Speaker, I can imagine, if you're told you have cancer, if you're told you're going to have to undergo this treatment, that you put your faith in the system, you put your faith in the doctors and you put your faith in your medication. Who knows what long-term effects you will suffer because your initial treatment was not what it was supposed to be?

Just take the common cold, Speaker. If you're supposed to "take two tablets and call me in the morning" but your two tablets are only a quarter of a tablet, you're going to make more than one call in the morning. You don't know, if you would have taken those initial two tablets, if your cold would have gotten better overnight. It's much, much worse when you're dealing with cancer and when you're dealing with a diluted drug.

Let's change this focus a bit. Let's have the government go out on the road, go out into those communities—don't go to New Brunswick, Speaker. Let's just keep it in Ontario, but we do know that a lot of people in New Brunswick were affected by this lack of the proper drug as well.

I think that's what this government should be doing. I think they should be held accountable, and they should be held accountable to the people who elected them, to the people across this great province. They shouldn't be

afraid. They shouldn't be afraid to take this on the road. They shouldn't be afraid to meet the people face to face and hear the stories—to hear from the people who were actually affected by getting drugs that were not what they were supposed to be. I just don't get it. You want to silence the voice of the opposition. You want to limit your debate.

I'll give you another quotation, if I can, Speaker; this one from Harry S. Truman, back in 1950. He was addressing Congress, and he said:

“Once a government is committed to the principle of silencing the voice of opposition, it has only one way to go, and that is down the path of increasingly repressive measures, until it becomes a source of terror to all its citizens and creates a country where everyone lives in fear.”

I don't want to live in fear in Ontario. I don't want people in hospitals to live in fear. I don't want the government to be afraid of facing up to the people who received drugs that were not what they were supposed to be. I think we have to be open. We have to be accountable. We have to face the music. We have to face the people whom our methods have affected. We went out to tender for a drug. We went to the lowest common bidder. We changed the way we used to do business, and they weren't given the drugs they were supposed to receive, that they had been receiving before. And it was only because a couple of alert people working in the pharmacy at the hospital in Peterborough caught it, so only one person was affected in Peterborough. But by then, more than 1,000 people had received drugs that weren't up to standard.

Speaker, when you want to silence the voice of the opposition, when you want to time-allocate a bill, you're silencing the voices of the people who did not get what they thought they were getting. They did not get what they pay for. And that is not right. Ontario's health care system deserves better than that, the people in Ontario deserve better than that and, Speaker, the government deserves to treat the opposition and the people of Ontario better than this. This is not something they should be proud of. They want to be accountable, they want to be transparent, and yet they want to slam the door on debate. They want to slam the door on the people who wish to speak to them, who wish to bring their stories to the people who make the decisions.

Speaker, I can't support time allocation. I know the government wants to do it. I don't understand it—the government that prides itself on being open, transparent, accountable at the right time. But I guess this is not the time: not the time for debate, not the time to be held accountable, and for that I say shame, shame, shame.

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

M. Michael Mantha: It's always a privilege and a pleasure to stand in this House and speak on behalf of the good people of Algoma-Manitoulin.

C'est tout le temps un plaisir d'apporter la voix, les problèmes, les « concerns » et les idées venus des

résidents d'Algoma-Manitoulin, surtout sur ce projet de loi-ci et puis l'allocation de temps sur le projet de loi.

On s'est tous embarqués dans la position qu'on a tous été élus ici pour une raison. Puis, il y a plusieurs gens qui, quand je vais dans mon comté et que je leur parle et que je les rencontre, une des plus grosses questions, et je suis certain que plusieurs gens se la font poser ici dans la Chambre, c'est : « Pourquoi est-ce que tu vas à tellement d'événements? Pourquoi est-ce que tu vas à une fête? Pourquoi est-ce que tu vas à un anniversaire? Pourquoi est-ce que tu vas à un évènement sur le cancer? Pourquoi est-ce que tu vas à un carnaval? » Bien, je vais vous le laisser savoir. Une des plus grosses raisons c'est pour écouter leurs idées. C'est pour me donner la chance d'améliorer les miennes et mes connaissances de ce qui se passe dans ma circonscription.

1510

Quand je pars de l'île Manitoulin, de Gore Bay ou de Meldrum Bay pour aller jusqu'à Espanola ou Killarney, et puis que je traverse sur la North Shore pour me rendre à Prince township, aller à Goulais River et jusqu'à Wawa, Chapleau, Hornepayne et puis Manitouwadge—oui, c'est un gros territoire, et j'en ai juste nommé quelques-uns. Mais nous, comme députés ici, ça devrait être un « incitatif » qu'on devrait se représenter, se redonner et se reconfirmer à nos citoyens de l'Ontario, d'aller écouter leurs paroles et d'aller écouter ce qu'ils veulent partager avec nous autres, surtout dans l'amélioration d'un projet de loi comme tel.

Fermer le débat ou limiter l'opportunité, en effet, d'avoir les discussions avec les gens de l'Ontario, je vais vous dire, ce n'est pas la bonne ligne à prendre. Ce n'est vraiment pas ce à quoi les Ontariens s'attendent de nous. Les Ontariens veulent participer à ce qu'eux-mêmes voient être leur processus législatif. Ils veulent participer et veulent apporter leur point de vue. Mais, en limitant le montant de temps qu'on a ici, vraiment, on a fermé le débat. Mon collègue de Leeds—oh, donnez-moi une petite seconde-là.

Sorry. I'm going to talk about you, Steve.

Mr. Steve Clark: It's all right, buddy.

M. Michael Mantha: Mon collègue de Leeds-Grenville a vraiment utilisé et a donné des commentaires tantôt dans son discours. Il a utilisé des mots comme « choking off debate ». On étouffe la conversation, c'est comme ça que ça se dit en français. Il a aussi dit « anti-démocratique » parce qu'on ne va pas dans les communautés qui ont vraiment été affectées par la dilution des médicaments les gens ont pris le temps de mettre leur sagesse et leur confiance dans les médicaments qui ont été dilués et ils les ont reçus, puis ils n'ont pas reçu la propre attention à leur santé.

Quand on a été élu—et puis félicitations au gouvernement. Ils ont eu un gouvernement majoritaire. Mais on a entendu un message, moi-même, qui était bien clair, de la première ministre. C'était qu'elle était pour être un gouvernement transparent et puis « accountable ». Comment est-ce qu'on se rend transparent et puis « accountable »? C'est en sortant des murs qu'on a ici et

en allant avoir la discussion avec les gens de l'Ontario. C'est en allant les écouter. C'est d'écouter les experts. C'est d'écouter les gens qui ont été affectés par les problèmes ou les projets de loi qui sont présentés où on a la discussion avec tout le monde à travers cette province.

Mais on décide maintenant qu'on va étouffer ce débat-là. On va leur permettre—mais il faut que tu te rendes ici à une certaine date et à une telle heure. Il faut que tu sois ici. Tu as deux minutes, un tout petit peu de temps, pour expliquer ta situation, et puis après ça tu as deux ou trois minutes pour donner une réponse, ou pour nous autres, comme parlementaires, de questionner les personnes qui apportent leur témoignage. Est-ce que c'est démocratique? Non. Moi, je dis que non.

Je pense qu'on doit plus aux Ontariens. Je pense qu'on devrait prendre plus d'emphase, et non pas seulement faire des décisions qu'on fait ici dans la Chambre. On devrait prendre le temps d'aller communiquer avec les gens de notre province et de vraiment les écouter, non seulement les gens, mais aussi les experts.

L'allocation de temps, est-ce que ça va marcher? Moi, je dis que non et il y a plusieurs autres Ontariens qui vont être d'accord avec mon opinion. Encore, c'est tout le temps un plaisir d'élever la voix des gens d'Algoma-Manitoulin, mais aujourd'hui, le gouvernement, encore une fois, a étouffé le débat.

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

Mr. Clark has moved an amendment to government notice of motion number 9. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

I wish to inform the House that I have received not one but two requests for deferral. Therefore, according to standing order 28(h), the vote will be deferred until tomorrow at the time of deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

BETTER BUSINESS CLIMATE ACT, 2014

LOI DE 2014 VISANT À INSTAURER UN CLIMAT PLUS PROPICE AUX AFFAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 20, 2014, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 7, An Act to enact the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, 2014 and the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act, 2014 / Projet de loi 7, Loi édictant la Loi de 2014 sur l'obligation de faire rapport concernant la réduction des fardeaux administratifs et la Loi de 2014 sur les partenariats pour la création d'emplois et la croissance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated second reading of this bill, the member from

Niagara Falls had the floor. I will now ask for further debate.

The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will do my best not to say anything that needs to be withdrawn today.

Bill 7, An Act to enact the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, 2014 and the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act, 2014, from the Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure, is reintroduced from the last Parliament's Bill 176.

The Liberal government will talk a lot today—if they choose to stand and speak to this bill; it's not time-allocated, perhaps—about how they've overachieved. Last week, the finance minister, in his fall economic outlook, used the word "overachieved." In the 11 years this government has been in power, they have doubled our debt. They spend more on debt servicing yearly than they do on the whole social services sector I am privileged to be the critic for. I'm not certain what definition of overachievement that meets. It certainly does not meet the overachievement expectations of the Conservative Party on this side of the House.

They'll talk today about how they built a strong and dynamic economy in Ontario. There are hundreds of thousands of people who wake up every morning without a job. Every day in my constituency office, people are coming in saying, "Bill, things are bleak. Things are grim. I need help." We've lost 350,000 manufacturing jobs, a lot of that attributed to both their mismanagement and the high, high energy prices that have tripled under their tenure, and they're talking about another doubling to tripling in the next four years.

So I struggle at times, and I'm trying to be objective. I'm trying to give them a fair shake to turn things around, to bring a different approach. For my first two and a half years here, under Premier Dalton McGuinty, I saw them going down the track of saying, "We know. We're going down this path." They didn't want to listen. They didn't want to accept input from either the official opposition or the third party.

In a minority Parliament, we were at least trying to hold their feet to the fire and make sure they made good decisions. Now they have the majority, under Premier Kathleen Wynne. I spoke just recently to another bill, the MPP accountability and transparency act, Bill 8, and they're time-allocating. They time-allocated that piece of legislation, that bill.

Again, they say one thing and do totally another. I'm not going to use a certain word, because I know it's inappropriate to use in this House, Mr. Speaker. I respect that of you, and I know there's a member opposite just hoping I use that word so he can get back in the photo again, but I'm not going to give him that luxury this time. I gave him two last time.

Mr. Speaker, if they bring those types of things—overachievement and how wonderfully they've built our economy—I'm just going to stand over here and say that those are absolutely pure fallacies, and then I'm going to

turn around and I'm going to try to provide some facts for the great people in this House and those listening at home—and especially for the pages sitting in front, because we're going to hand the torch to you, and I want to make sure this province is in better shape than today when you're my age, and that you have the ability to drive for your families going forward.

Here are the facts, Mr. Speaker. The unemployment rate is 6.5%, which is way too high for the province historically. Again, I think my colleague from Leeds–Grenville used the analogy today that we used to be the engine of Confederation, then we became the caboose, and now we're not even certain what the caboose is.

What I think of when I think about how this government has led us to the economic demise we are in is that machine at the end of the railway track. I don't know what it's called, Mr. Speaker. Maybe Mr. Clark, with his background and family on the railroad would know, but it's one of those things where there are two people and they're going up and down. At the end of the day, it's a bit like where I think the government is taking us. They're up and they're down, but they really have no consistent plan.

Interjection: A handcar.

Mr. Bill Walker: An endcar. Thank you very much, to whoever anonymously shouted that out to me. It's a endcar. Well, this is an endcar, sadly, and my hope is that we don't go off the end of the tracks into the pit, the debt hole they have dug for us.

I wanted to stand again today, Mr. Speaker, because I believe the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change was talking about the children. I want to remind him that every child born in this great province starts their life—the first minute of their life—with \$21,000 of debt. That is a sad place to be.

1520

Ontario, once the manufacturing bastion of Canada, has been abandoned by Electro-Motive Diesel, Heinz, McCormick-Beta Brands and Kellogg's, all leading major economic losses around Ontario communities. I believe even in the great riding of Fergus there was a large factory, a 100-year-old factory that went out of business under the tenure of this Liberal government, partly, again, because of their mismanagement of the economy, the high energy rates, the red tape that they've created—and all the while wasting billions of dollars on boondoggles like the gas plant fiasco that has never produced nor will ever produce a single kilowatt of power; and Ornge, that absolute boondoggle of our health care system where, sadly, four people have died. We see those tragedies continuing. We have the eHealth boondoggle, another billion dollars that could be going to the front line, to our hospitals, to our schools, to those that need community services and need a hand up. It's a sad day when they continually come into this House and again say, "We are the masters of the economy." The bar is pretty low.

In my riding in the last number of years we've lost a thousand jobs—in London, 30,000 jobs since 2008. Half

a million people remain unemployed today and half a million children live in poverty in today's Ontario—half a million. That's simply unacceptable when we see the continued waste of dollars and resources by this government—and no change, might I add. I don't see a difference of approach from this government since I've been here in my three years. Under new leadership with Premier Wynne, it's the exact same. There are some new people in the front rows and a few in the second row who I think are trying to make some change, but at the end of the day I don't see anything significantly changing under this government's leadership.

This is no achievement; in fact, it's colossal mismanagement and continues to be. After 11 years of mismanagement that ushered in thousands of new regulations, red tape that—again, small businesses, medium businesses, large businesses are saying to me, "Bill, I'm drowning in it. I'm spending more time doing paperwork and shuffling paper for the government's needs than I am spending time with my clients, with my customers, or even with my own people to give them better training and more safety opportunities."

The Liberal government wants to unburden the Ontario public and businesses by setting up a so-called Burden Reduction Reporting Act. I'm not certain how many more studies this government can do. I'm not certain how many more high-paid consultants they're going to hire.

Again, when I first arrived they had hired Don Drummond, the TD economist, a renowned economist, their choice. They had that whole report put in front of them. At the end of the day, they were going to be proud and say, "We've implemented the bulk of those recommendations." Well, all the minor stuff out on the edges—they've tweaked at the edges, but none of the significant, none of the really true, strong decisions that have to be made to move us forward have actually been implemented from that study. I'm fearful that the Burden Reduction Reporting Act—they should at least be stepping back, saying, "Why do we need a Burden Reduction Reporting Act?" if not for their failure to have a very streamlined process that allows people to get to work.

Firstly, it's ironic that this bill is coming from a party that, up until the year 2012, would not even acknowledge red tape was a serious problem in Ontario. But irony aside, I think it's about time to eliminate unnecessary government burdens, especially the outrageous ones. Again, I'm going to cite some examples because I believe the people really need to see that we're putting a thought process into this, and we want to be an opposition that truly holds them accountable and holds them to transparency, which they strongly suggest they want to do, despite—once again reminding the public—that they've time-allocated that very bill that they're introducing into this House.

Just as an example, and I spoke about this specific example last month in response to the government's announcement to redevelop long-term-care beds, an investigation into Ontario's LTC, long-term care, found

that “there are as many as 160 distinct steps, including accessing nine separate databases, just to move a senior from hospital into a long-term-care bed in Ontario.” Mr. Speaker, 160 steps: Someone in that state who needs health care, and we’re putting them through 160—just think of it, not only for the patient but the family of that patient, having to go through that type of bureaucracy and burden to move a loved one from one facility to another. There’s no way anyone, I don’t think, even on that side of the House, can stand here and proudly say that they’re proud of that and they support that there needs to be a 160-step process to move someone from a facility to another.

“Bureaucracy is such an obstruction that consultants to industry in the US ... are being retained to help streamline the process of moving seniors into Ontario nursing homes.” Again, we’re hiring people from the United States. God love our cousins to the south, but I’d rather see that money going to the front line. I’d like to see that money going to the actual patients who are coming through my office saying, “I can’t find a bed. I have no ability to get my loved one the services they need.” They’re actually cutting back on home care services in some cases. Again, they’re spending money on a consultant from the US and we’re telling our constituents, “Sorry, but there’s no more service for you because there’s not enough money from this government.”

Unfortunately, such bizarre facts are not limited to the long-term-care situation. Government or regulatory burden is widespread and costs over \$11 billion in lost productivity annually. If you took that \$11 billion in lost productivity that we could be putting through our economy, helping those people at the front lines, providing much-needed jobs, providing health care, providing education, providing those in community services and special needs with the service they need—\$11 billion there. Then take the \$10.5 billion this government spends on interest payments on the debt that they, and only they, have amassed. Think of that. That’s \$21 billion—billion, with a B—that could be going to the front line to help those people wanting a job, to help those seniors who need help.

They are now saying you are going to get less home care in some places. We’re going to go to the Alzheimer Society. In my riding, I just met with the executive director, Deborah Barker, a couple of weeks ago about this very specific fact. They’re stretched to the max. They’re already picking up a lot of other burdens, and this government just callously says, “We’ll cut back, but you just go out to another group like Alzheimer’s and dementia, and get your help there.” Well, they are breaking at the seams and can’t keep up as it is. So how do we just download that; take it off our accountability and put it onto someone else? That’s not acceptable from any government, and specifically not from this Liberal government.

I especially look forward to seeing how this government reduces and/or streamlines the regulation burdens on farmers, who sadly are fed with red tape. Again,

farmers in my riding, those who have had generations and generations, are bringing their concerns to me and telling me, “Bill, I don’t know how much more we can do in regard to red tape. I never have time to be on the land. I never have time to be on my tractor. I don’t have time to actually teach the next generation because I’m spending so much time filling out paperwork that, in the end, does nothing but burden me more and take me away from what I love to do.”

The Ontario Federation of Agriculture gave both Premiers McGuinty and Wynne specific recommendations with regard to reducing the regulatory burden on farmers. The first and foremost recommendation was to involve the agriculture and agri-food sector in the regulatory development process. What a novel idea: going to the grassroots, going to the people at the very forefront of any industry and saying, “How can we do it better? What can we eliminate that is slowing you down, taking your eye off the ball, and not allowing you to be as productive and creative and innovative as you can be?”

Why would we not go there? That was a pretty fundamental thing. You would have thought they would be ahead of that. They should, as a government, have already been there. You shouldn’t have even had to have that recommendation made to you, but they did, and yet they still haven’t really implemented the ability. Again, they’re stifling debate on various bills in this House so that we cannot go out to Ontarians, the stakeholders who truly can impact the system, and allow them to have their say, to give us their expertise and wisdom so we can create the best processes that we can.

They’ve also called on the Liberal government to engage in a regulatory impact analysis. They told you that legislation like Bill 6, the Great Lakes Protection Act, is unnecessary, as existing statutes address the concerns you are claiming to address in this new bill. Nevertheless, you went ahead and introduced it. That’s one that, again, I watch fairly closely. Of course, my great riding of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is surrounded by the Great Lakes; they have a huge impact on all of us. The Great Lakes impact all of us, but that buzzword, “how would you not want to protect,” just goes to show that they’ll use that headline and cover it up with the details later on; there’s really no benefit. Why are we creating new agencies, new unelected bodies that are going to govern something as important as the Great Lakes? I will stand here whenever I can and ensure that we go back to the grassroots, that we have the stakeholders in the room on any issue, so we’re getting the best front-line thought process, experience and successes we can to ensure that we have the best legislation possible.

As such, I think it’s key that the government define the word “burden,” instead of leaving its interpretation to the personal whim of whoever is the minister of the day. Again, we get caught up in wordsmithing here and using acronyms. What we really need is just frank, open, honest discussion. We need to ensure that we’re all in this room coming together to ensure that we develop the best legislation, the best regulation, that respects the front

lines, that respects the experts in any of their fields, regardless of whether it's agriculture, the nuclear industry, small business, child care, health care or education—it doesn't really matter. We need the people who truly are at the front lines and know their game the best.

It really would be helpful at times in this House if we could just get past some of the spin and rhetoric and truly open up. You can't say "accountability" and "transparency"—I'm going to go on about this again today whenever I can. It just smacks of—I won't say it—saying one thing and doing the absolute opposite. You can't bring a bill on MPP accountability and transparency and shut down debate to slam it through the way you want it. If you want transparency and accountability, you have to open it up to everyone to have their say. You have to have a proper process so that the people out there agree and understand and feel they've actually had the time to input and give you the thought process and shape that bill to be the best that it can be.

1530

Mr. Speaker, I could talk about that all day long, and to some people, it seems like maybe I have. I'm going to move on.

The second part of this bill deals with job creation, another sore spot for this party and this Liberal government after 11 years of mismanagement and poor calculation and, at times, just truly leading the public astray in regard to what they've said they're going to do and, at the end of the day, what they end up implementing.

They want to design, plan and organize geographic economies or so-called business clusters in different communities. At the end of the day, we need to ensure that a government is looking at all geographic regions with the ability to thrive and survive. A lot of what I've seen in my three years is very punitive to rural and northern Ontario.

I introduced the transportation bill for rural and northern Ontario. It received unanimous consent from all three parties. That resolution received it the same day I presented it, and to this day they have not called one single meeting to even discuss that.

We need those types of issues to be brought, for all three parties to discuss and find creative and innovative ways to implement solutions.

This bill gives the government the mandate to plan and consult as well as amend and revoke economic planning. Personally, I feel insecure about any bill that compels us to trust the Liberal government to organize our local economies. I stand on fact: the absolute worst debt and deficit records in our provincial history. In 10 to 11 years, they have actually doubled the debt that took the rest of the governments of our proud history in the province of Ontario to accumulate. Sadly, what we saw in the last budget, which is why I voted against it, and in the budget before that, which I voted against, is that they're continuing to overspend.

We have to have the ability to live within our means. If not, we're putting that debt on those great pages sitting in front of you. I come to this House every day because

of my two sons, Zach and Ben, who are 17 and 20, and my nephews and my nieces, and friends of my family who have children that age who are in college, who are in university, who are in public school and high school, so that we have an opportunity for them to thrive and to want to be proud to stay in Ontario, and not jump on a bus and head to the west, not head down to the States, Mr. Speaker. Sadly, that's what is really happening today as we speak.

It was interesting earlier today in question period, the way the Liberals handled some of the questions. The reason why we have so many of our classrooms empty is because there are so many families leaving this great province, because it's more prosperous in other provinces. Then they try to turn it on us and say, "Don't downplay Ontario. Don't talk down about Ontario."

Well, you know what? The reality is, if we weren't standing here for Ontario, that exodus would be even faster. We want to turn this great province around. We want to ensure that we have the ability for the next generation to have the great lifestyle that I've certainly enjoyed as a result of those who went before me.

The fact is, this government doesn't actually know how to create jobs without paying cash for them. Again, you can't continue to bribe and to tell people that we're going to pay for something when all you're doing is moving that debt forward a number of years. Again, as I said earlier today, \$21,000 is what every single child born into this province of Ontario is indebted, the day that they are brought into this great province and this great world—unfathomable.

Ontario has given 109 companies \$800 million over eight years and created only 30,000 jobs. That may sound like a big number, but put that per job, Mr. Speaker. We're the only jurisdiction, probably in the world, that pays upwards of \$140,000 per job that never seems to last. We've had examples, and I can't think of any off the top of my head right now, but there have been a number where they've handed out money to a very specific industry, only to find that that industry has left Ontario—no accountability, no recourse to have to pay that money back. They're gone, and the money is gone with them. The jobs that they proposed never ever actually found their way to stay in Ontario as permanent jobs.

The green energy sector, again with the wind turbines—they promoted 60,000 full-time jobs, I think it was going to be. I'd like them to stand in this House, just one of them, and give me the absolute black-and-white facts of where those 60,000 permanent jobs are. I just don't believe it. I don't think it's there.

Again, the 30-second sound bite: People just drive by it and, at the end of the day, take it at their word. We're telling you, Mr. Speaker, there are a lot of those examples where they've said one thing and done another, and the action just doesn't stand behind them.

We have to support our small businesses. In Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, we've lost small businesses on the Liberal watch, specifically abattoirs. We lost 50% of them because of the regulatory burden that they refuse to fix.

They continually cut: \$500 million in cuts to education are a direct threat to rural schools, many of which they're targeting for closure, just as they targeted the Bluewater technology centre, which closed a few years ago. In my great riding, you take a school out of a small rural community—that's the fabric of the community. That's the heartbeat. That's the jobs. That's the factory. That's the start of a downward spiral. You can use rhetoric like, "They're half empty." That's because we're not doing things in the Liberal government to ensure that we have a thriving economy so people want to remain in rural Ontario.

I could go on and on—20 minutes certainly isn't nearly enough for me to get into a topic of this magnitude. But I'd like to just suggest that we need to ensure that we always have the ability for government to set high bars. When you've doubled the debt and doubled the deficit in 11 years and you continue to dig and overspend—to dig that hole of deficit that these young children are going to actually, at some point not too far down the road, have to come up with, that's a sad day. I'll continue to stand in this House and fight to ensure that we get back to balanced budgets.

I challenged last week and I'll challenge again: If you don't balance the budget by 2017-18 like you said you will, in the spirit of accountability and transparency, I would ask each of you to stand up that day and resign.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a pleasure being in the House to listen to someone who has become what I would like to say is a good friend. There's a lot that we have in common. He has a Ben and a Zach—a 20- and a 17-year-old?

Mr. Bill Walker: Yes.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I have a Matt and a Roch, a 19- and a 16-year-old. That's why I'm here, between them and lot of people who have supported me across Algoma-Manitoulin. Each and every day that I come in here I feel the passion that you have for the good people of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. I have that same passion for the people of Algoma-Manitoulin. You're absolutely right: When you talk about a bill which is identified as the Better Business Climate Act—that's what it says it's going to create—is that actually what's going to materialize and what is actually going to happen for constituents and for the communities in my riding?

One of the most troubling aspects—I'll just speak on behalf of the challenges that small businesses and municipalities face. I'm going to keep my discussions about TSSA for another day. I hope I have my full 20 minutes on that one—just the fact of what they're doing across Algoma-Manitoulin, destroying communities and destroying small mom-and-pop operations. But I'll keep those comments for another day. Those will be coming.

The regulatory burdens that are imposed on small municipalities and the challenges that they have—the expensive engineers and the consultants and the environmental assessments and the applications—it just throws it on them. Put that into a northern Ontario perspective—which I know my colleague also knows from his area

because of the condensed building season, which is probably a four- to five-month window—all of this puts a heavy burden on those small municipalities.

I just wanted to congratulate the member for bringing a perspective from his area, and I look forward to bringing my own from Algoma-Manitoulin. Again, big issue, and I'm sending you a message: You guys need to deal with TSSA.

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 comments from the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, who comes from a great area in our province where I love to visit and watch the sunsets and spend some time in in the summer when I can. We were talking about that the other day—what a wonderful place it is to go in the summer.

Today what we're talking about is Bill 7. It's the Better Business Climate Act. It's got two schedules to it: a very easy bill to understand. It requires the minister to publish an annual report on the action that the government has undertaken to reduce unnecessary government burdens and regulations.

I think all parties, at some point in their life as a government, have decided that it's time to review the impositions we sometimes place or the impositions that can build up over time on the businesses that form part of our wonderful economy. That's what schedule 1 does. It makes sense. I think it's a sensible way to move forward.

Schedule 2 supports the development of cluster growth. That is really something that I think is pretty exciting. Ontario already is doing very well in that regard. We rank number two in all of North America in the number of information, communications and technology clusters. That's led by clusters in this area here, in the GTA, but also in the great ridings of Kitchener-Waterloo and up in the Ottawa area. When you look at us financially, Toronto ranks third in North America and 11th in the entire world when it comes to our competitiveness ratings for global financial centres.

There's a lot in this bill, Speaker. It's the sort of bill we need to do. It's not about what we regulate; it's about how the regulations are actually brought into action. We understand the critical importance of cluster development, and, as the Toronto board of trade puts it very clearly, clusters collaborate, so our economy can compete.

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We need to pass this bill, Speaker. I look forward to further comments.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I'm pleased to join in the debate and provide a few minutes of comments on Bill 7 for my friend the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, who always articulates the issues of his riding. He's a very passionate advocate for his constituents, and I appreciate a lot of the things he put on the record.

In my riding of Leeds-Grenville, on Friday we had our annual Economic Development Summit for Leeds-

Grenville. It's organized in conjunction with the Leeds–Grenville economic development department; our three community futures development corporations, Thousand Islands, Grenville and Valley Heartland; also the Thousand Islands workforce development group, in addition to the economic development departments in Prescott, Gananoque and Brockville. It was a great day, a great opportunity for us to speak to job creators, new municipal politicians—a real great cross-section from Leeds and Grenville.

One of the things people talked to me about was the regulatory burden that they're feeling is increasing day after day. I mentioned to them that we have this Bill 7 before the Legislature. I talked to them about schedule 1, this Burden Reduction Reporting Act, where the minister has to—and I'll read right from the explanatory note—“publish an annual report with respect to actions taken by the government of Ontario to reduce burdens.”

When I told them that, they were a bit surprised and they said, “You mean the government's not going to set any targets or goals? They've just tabled in the bill that they're going to publish a report. That doesn't seem to deal with what the real issue is.”

Certainly I heard loud and clear from my constituents on Friday that they definitely wanted this government to set some priorities. So I hope that the members of our caucus who are on the committee would consider some of those amendments, to actually put in practice an actual number goal.

Those are my comments. I see I've already run out of time. I'm sure the members would let me have more—

Interjections.

Mr. Steve Clark: Actually, no, they're motioning to sit down, so I better do that, Speaker.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: This particular bill is much ado about nothing. What is interesting is, everything that is contained in this bill—in the two schedules of the bill—the government already has the right to do, which raises the question: Why is the government bringing this to the Legislature to demand legislative time that could be used on other bills that they say are supposedly important? I think the reason is pretty simple: They're trying to send a signal to those people out there who are interested in less red tape, trying to make it look as if they're doing something, but in fact are not doing a heck of a lot that they can't do already.

The bill essentially mandates that the government should write a report about what they've done to reduce red tape on an annual basis, but at the same time in schedule 1 of the bill they're giving themselves the ability to decide when it's going to be printed, should it be printed, or should it not be printed and not have a reporting date whatsoever. Let's say the first report gets printed and they don't like what it was and they got bad press. They, by regulation, can undo the whole thing and say, “We're not doing it anymore.” This is kind of laughable because the government says it's trying to be transparent, but in fact schedule 1 of the bill allows them

an escape clause if they don't like the report that has been written on the issue of red tape.

On the issue of clustering—my God, Speaker, as if government never looked at industries in a cluster when it comes to doing things. You look at the mining sector, the forestry sector, the pharmaceutical or automotive sectors, we've been doing that for years. Again, there's nothing here that cannot be done, that cabinet doesn't already have the power to do. All of the legislation the government drafts, they've delegated the authority to cabinet to do what the heck they want. So this bill, at the end of the day, is not going to do much to hurt anybody, but I would say that this is more an exercise in communications than it ever is an exercise in actually getting something done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the questions and comments. We return to the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's always a pleasure to hear from my colleagues, my good friend—and you are good friend—from Algoma–Manitoulin. We do share a lot of the same thoughts when we come to this House.

The Minister of Labour, I welcome you to Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound any time. I would welcome your chequebook as well up there, because there are some projects we're still trying to get you to spend good money on as opposed to the money that's been wasted by your government in my three years here.

My colleague from Leeds–Grenville, our House leader, does a remarkable job, and I return to him and the work that he does on behalf of his constituents in Leeds–Grenville and the leadership he provides. The member for Timmins–James Bay, as well—he stands in the House and is always articulate. Even the odd cuss word comes out, but then he retracts that and usually says so.

Mr. Speaker, what we really need in this House, if they truly want to have a jobs and growth act, is that they need to actually get some control around the energy rates. We have the highest energy rates in North America. It's driving small business, large business, big business—anyone—out of the province at record speeds. We can't have that. We can't continue to have the highest rates and expect we're going to attract and retain businesses in Ontario.

Training and apprenticeship: We've called again for apprenticeship. We have a major boom that is coming at us. A lot of seniors in the demographic will be retiring. What are we doing today to train that next wave of apprenticeships, those skilled tradespeople out there, from the mechanic to the hairdresser and across the spectrum? We don't see much happening there.

The regulatory burden: Again, a report comes in and they don't even have to publish the report that they're going to spend hundreds of thousands of dollars, typically with a consultant, probably from the US, to produce, and then they're not even going to implement. They don't even have to table it. That's unacceptable.

They also need to use funds, in my mind—rather than picking winners and losers of business, what they should be doing is things, and we've been calling for it in rural

areas like ours, like expanding the capability of broadband Internet so that all businesses have a level playing field, so everyone can compete and bring that opportunity to their community.

Things like infrastructure—roads, bridges, dredging of harbours—those types of things create employment. And commit to the nuclear industry and ensure that we have those refurb, so we have the low rates that we need to encourage business. Thank you very much.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It is indeed a pleasure to stand and speak on Bill 7, the Better Business Climate Act, also known as An Act to enact the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, 2014 and the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act, 2014. It was all introduced, I believe, by the Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure way back on July 7, during that wonderful summer sitting we all so very much enjoyed.

I thought long and hard about this bill, all six pages of it, Speaker, and I had a brief chance to review what some of the members have said about this bill in the debate leading up to my time here this afternoon. Listening to the members here this afternoon, I tried to understand what impact this bill would have on the businesses in my great riding of Windsor–Tecumseh and of course on the corporations that we have there, the big ones. I want to tell you a tale. It's not a tale about two cities, although I suppose I could start with the words of Mr. Dickens: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness...." But that was 1775 and not today, 240 years later, in Ontario.

Let me tell you not a tale of two cities but of two neighbouring jurisdictions: Ontario and the state of Michigan. Both jurisdictions are heavily involved in the automotive industry. Reporters and other editorials at my home newspaper, the Windsor Star, spend a great deal of their time writing about the automotive industry. As you know, what you read on a daily basis can shape your opinion, especially of course around election time. So when we discuss the six-page proposed Bill 7, when we discuss partnerships and jobs and growth, let's spend a little more focus on automotive jobs and the growth potential of the automotive industry.

Here's what Michigan has done to preserve, protect and grow its automotive industry. Anne Jarvis, in a front-page story in the Windsor Star about a week and a half ago, says that Michigan is serious about the automotive industry. The governor, Rick Snyder, created an Automotive Industry Office. He appointed a very experienced automotive specialist, a special adviser, and the governor gets a monthly briefing from the special adviser on the automotive industry. Michigan, unlike Ontario, has developed a 30-year plan that capitalizes on emerging trends in vehicle design, technology and materials. It tracks drivers and the changing demographics of drivers.

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The results—and these are the results that speak to the aspirations, if you will, of Bill 7: Michigan, in the past

four years, has attracted one quarter of all automotive investment in North America. One quarter of every dollar that has been invested in North America's automotive industry has gone to the state of Michigan.

Speaker, I'm embarrassed to tell you this, but right now, Michigan assembles more vehicles than Ontario—sad but true. When Michigan saw themselves losing automotive production, losing investment, according to Tony Faria, a good friend of mine who works at the University of Windsor—he's an expert in the field; he's the co-director of the office of automotive vehicle research at the University of Windsor—Michigan drew a line in the sand. Mr. Faria says they didn't want to lose more production and investment. They fought to bring investment back. Talk about a success story.

There was a Chrysler plant in Sterling Heights that was slated to close. Instead, \$1 billion was invested. General Motors: Nearly half a billion dollars went their way, opening the possibility of a second shift at one of the plants. Michigan stamping plants benefited, plus R&D and a lightweight materials research centre.

Bill 7 can make these examples a reality in Ontario if the will is there. We can have the best of times again if we use our wisdom and don't follow a foolish path to nowhere. I know the minister will tell us that he has a plan, that the government has invested \$800 million in Ontario's automotive industry over the past 11 years. I know that the federal government has ponied up money as well.

Let me digress for a moment. In this morning's Globe and Mail there's an article by Barrie McKenna. He writes about one of the federal funds that we're talking about here. This is a fund from Ottawa's budget of a year ago, 2013. There was \$200 million set aside in the 2013 budget to spark innovation in Ontario's hard-hit manufacturing sector. That's a "best of times" kind of an announcement. But here's the "worst of times" kind of thing about that fund: From that budget in 2013, Mr. McKenna tells us, "18 months later Ottawa has yet to approve a single project from its Advanced Manufacturing Fund." That was revealed after the NDP industry critic, Peggy Nash, put forward a written question to see what the government was doing with our money.

There's no wisdom in that kind of government fund, but a lot of foolishness, if you want to ask me about it. Here's a fund, Speaker, intended to pay for large-scale transformative manufacturing activities as well as to encourage commercialization and to spur the adoption of cutting-edge technology. Some parties can talk a good game, make a headline or two, but never spend the money for what it was intended, or delay spending the money that was budgeted. Do you think the industry doesn't notice? Of course the industry notices when that sort of thing happens. You put the money in the budget but you never release it.

Getting back to what I was saying about the better plans in Michigan, neither Ontario nor Ottawa have recouped anything close to what Michigan has. The sad part of it all is that the experts, the automotive analysts, say that Ontario is being left behind. That's why this bill

is so important. This bill can be a game-changer with the right improvements. It is essential that we recognize, no matter what side of the House we're on today, that around the globe—and the auto industry is truly a global industry—auto assembly investment rose more than 9% to \$17.6 billion last year, but Canada didn't reap any of that investment, any of it.

I expect the minister will assure us that just recently, he and the Premier announced \$86 million, or 10% of the new money planned for the Honda plant in Alliston. To that I say thank you from this side of the House; thank you for that money in Alliston. But while that secures the future of that plant and the existing jobs in Alliston—and that is important; don't get me wrong—it doesn't grow the industry.

Bill 7 talks about partnerships for jobs and growth. Speaker, a short history lesson: Last spring, Chrysler Canada was in discussions with the government about growth at the Windsor assembly plant. You remember that; I'm sure you do. We all do. The former leader of the Conservative Party made headlines when he called any provincial investment at the Windsor plant “corporate welfare.” That prompted Chrysler's Sergio Marchionne to walk away from those discussions, saying they had become a political football and he wanted no part of it.

The scary thing about that experience is the warning of Mr. Marchionne, who, by the way, is one of the most highly regarded, respected visionaries in the automotive industry today. In walking away from those discussions about the provincial partnership with the long-term growth plan for the Windsor assembly plant, Mr. Marchionne said Ontario and Canada have to decide if they want to be part of the global auto industry in the future. He said—these are his words, words to heed, words to take to heart—that we, the Ontario government and the feds in Ottawa, don't appear to be working hard to attract investment.

I find that a very scary indictment, Speaker. We have a short-term investment plan for the Windsor assembly plant, but because of the way that deal was bungled, there is no long-term plan, no 30-year plan like they have in Michigan. That should scare us all.

The Michigan plan created a one-stop office to cut the red tape, to assist industry investors to navigate the myriad of government agencies and regulators. It established another Michigan priority: expanding the skilled trades base through education and training, so that when the new plants relocate to Michigan, the skilled talent is there to fill the jobs.

This was a really good article by Anne Jarvis. I think the ministry staff should check it out if they haven't already done so.

I know that some skeptics on the other side may well say, “We can't compete with jurisdictions, especially those in Mexico and some of the southern states, because of the incentives they throw at the feet of industry decision-makers.” But Ontario and Michigan have other attributes, other advantages: having the right talent, the skilled workforce, the engineers; having the right supply

chain; being geographically located. These are all highly rated, as well as what could be improved in this bill.

The minister has the ability. His hand is on the button. He can press that button. He can improve this bill. He can save the Ontario automotive industry. Instead of sitting on that button, he can get off his button and make amendments to Bill 7 and get Ontario's automotive industry back on track. Indeed, Ontario's manufacturing industry can be put back on the rails.

We need a real policy, a made-in-Ontario automotive strategy. We need a made-in-Canada automotive policy, but if Ottawa won't lead, then Ottawa should follow or get out of the way and let Ontario take over. Let Ontario restore to greatness our manufacturing industry, our automotive industry. It's within this bill to make that happen if, and only if, the Liberal government will follow Michigan's example and get serious about a 30-year plan. The government can say they have a plan. The minister can tell us again about his dedicated automotive unit and about its staff dedicated to attracting foreign investments, about the \$2.5-billion Jobs and Prosperity Fund and the southwest development fund. But, Speaker, where are the jobs? Where's the future growth? And where are the results—the determination?

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Mr. Marchionne doesn't think much of what Ontario brings to the table, what Canada brings to the table. This is a global industry. We need visionaries. We need people to think outside of the box. In an editorial on November 15, the Windsor Star concluded, “Whatever fuzzy, inarticulated game plan Ottawa and Queen's Park claim to have isn't working. Just ask Chrysler CEO Sergio Marchionne, who basically said our country lacked an understanding and sophistication when it came to the global auto sector in the 21st century. Either get in the game or get lost. And rightly so.” That editorial went on to suggest that we should follow Michigan's example and hire an auto czar, someone with personality and energy who knows the industry and can work the room.

It needs to draft legislation that gets more people trained in the skilled trades that are required or will be required in the future. It needs to do more on the supply side of the automotive question. Bill 7 doesn't do that.

Let's do more. Let's dream bigger, or higher. Let's work together to improve this legislation. It is a good start. It will certainly be supported on this side of the House, but let's be more creative. Our taxpayers deserve nothing less. We have to do more to secure a better future for our manufacturing industry and the people who work in those fields. These are good, well-paying jobs, the kind we need to protect and preserve, and to grow, to give us hope for a better future, to set the bar higher for the next generation. We can't sit back and allow our manufacturing base to slip away piece by piece, plant by plant, cluster by cluster.

This bill speaks to the development of clusters. But without more planning, without a long-term strategy, this could be cluster's last stand.

Interjections.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I had to say it. Thank you for that reaction. I expected nothing less.

It's a very serious piece of legislation that could do much better. It could set the stage for a real automotive strategy, a real manufacturing policy—not just a paper tiger plan to say, “We have an app for that,” but a workable blueprint for prosperity in Ontario. It could be something we all could be proud of, no matter what side of the House we're on, no matter what region of the province we come from, no matter for whom we speak when we stand on the floor of this great institution.

Speaker, our time is running out. We need action, and we need it now. We cannot afford to lose one more manufacturing job in the province of Ontario. We need to formulate a legislative policy that protects what we have, that attracts the attention of the industry decision-makers and that convinces them, “Yes, indeed, Ontario has turned the corner.”

We wish to be a player. We understand the needs of the industry, this global automotive industry. We wish to be a full partner in securing the future of Ontario's manufacturing sector. We need to stand on the rooftops and make our voices heard: Ontario gets it—finally. We will bring forth the incentives. We will secure the jobs. We will invest in Ontario's future. We believe in the automotive industry, and we will compete in the 21st century. We will show those around the globe that have been winning the competitions up till now that the gloves are off, it's game on in Ontario, and we're in it to win it. The bill speaks to the beginning of that, Speaker, but it doesn't go far enough.

We can't deny that talking about reducing red tape for business is a good thing, and developing clusters, as I've mentioned. But I will say—and hopefully the government is listening—that once this bill makes its way to the legislative committee process, the bill should be fully discussed in more detail and proper consultations should be held around the province in the various regions, in the manufacturing regions.

We should have committee hearings in Windsor, in London, in St. Thomas, in St. Catharines, in Oshawa. We should have them across the province. If this bill is going to have the effect on business that the government thinks it will, then I say we should be taking feedback from those who live and breathe the world of business every day.

I hope the government is prepared to have a proper consultation period, not like the time-allocated consultation that has been happening to some of the other bills in this session of Parliament.

I'm not a business person, but I've dealt directly with business people for a long, long time and I listen to what they have to say. They say that there's a lot of red tape that can be cut, a lot of process that can be trimmed. I think that the people who put those kinds of hours into their business deserve to be listened to, and to do that, you have to get away from Queen's Park, out of this bubble, and go listen to what people in Ontario are saying.

Speaker, just as I wrap up, I want to thank you again for listening. I thank the voters in my riding of Windsor–Tecumseh for sending me here to bring their voice to this floor, and I hope today that voice has been heard.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to commend the member for his time in this debate.

I'm going to have a chance a little bit later to speak to this in more detail, but it is truly remarkable, how this bill actually does nothing that the government can't already do.

There are two sections in this bill. The first one talks about the need to be able to diminish the regulatory burden. Well, as we all know, the government already has the ability to do that. Government is the one who makes regulations at cabinet. That authority has been delegated to cabinet by this Legislature. So the government can change any regulation it wants, because they're the ones who drafted the regulation and they can be the ones who un-draft the regulation or get rid of it or amend it.

As for the issue of clusters, nobody disagrees—and I think the member from Windsor–Tecumseh makes a good point—that we need to have a very strong approach to how we deal with various sectors of our economy and various geographic areas of our province, to be able to stimulate growth and get the investment we need to create the jobs that are necessary in our economies.

But tell me what in this bill the government doesn't already have the ability to do. The government has been there, what, for 12 years? They've allowed how many closures of how many car plants in southern Ontario, how many saw mills, how many paper mills, how many pulp mills? How many of everything has shut down? And the government, all that time, has had the authority to do what's in this bill, yet all those places have shut down.

So why does the government come into this House with this bill, if nothing other than they want to be able to have a communication exercise to say, “Listen, I'm doing something for you”? Let it be known that there's nothing in this bill that the government can't do already.

This is akin to the government filibustering its own legislative time in the Legislature on its own. I would call it “tactics” of the government.

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

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I'm very pleased to speak to you today on Bill 7, the Better Business Climate Act. This legislation is going to show that our government is working with key stakeholders to continue growing Ontario's economy, and we want to do this with cluster developments and by reducing the burden of running a business in Ontario.

We have heard some of the members complain about the business climate in Ontario. I just want to share with you some personal observations.

I have a son who graduated at the height of the recession with a degree in computer and video game design.

He was actually looking at leaving Ontario but decided to stay here because he wandered into Kitchener's Communitech Hub. This is our tech cluster, which could easily be followed elsewhere in Ontario. There, he received some mentoring and some training. He was connected with some angel investors. This facility is supported by our government. His company now has 25 employees.

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He has an office also in California. He has the option of packing up and going there and living and working there full-time. But he chooses to stay in Ontario. He likes the low tax rate here. He likes the pool of talent that he can get here. He also likes the positive business environment that is being provided by our government.

We heard some members across the floor state that it was the best of times, it was the worst of times. Maybe it just was not a good time to push for an election, because the fact is that here in Ontario, we have an excellent business environment. In my family, I see people actually taking advantage of this. I'm very proud of how well he is doing.

Mr. Speaker, once again I want to stress that we understand that creating a successful business climate means reducing unnecessary regulations and practices and that we are very committed to establishing and maintaining these cluster developments.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to make comment on the member for Windsor–Tecumseh's—

Interjection: The fine member he is.

Ms. Laurie Scott: The fine member that he is—his comments on Bill 7. It says An Act to enact the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, 2014 and the Partnerships for Jobs and Growth Act. Again, fancy titles—what do they really do?

The member from Windsor spoke passionately about his part of Ontario and the need for an auto sector strategy that actually keeps jobs. I heard the Liberals say over there that it's the best climate in Ontario. Then why did we lose over 300,000 manufacturing jobs? They haven't come back. Why are so many of the industry groups and the trades fighting the College of Trades? They say that there's less burden. There's actually more burden than before.

It says that the definition of burden is by the interpretation of the minister. Well, this government's ministries add more barriers, the College of Trades being one. They're going to increase the number of industries affected by the College of Trades. That's more tax burden on those employers.

You know what? The west has won. The people in Ontario are going west. The young people are going west.

The highest hydro rates in North America, the highest business taxes in the province, the highest amount of debt—when you add all the other provinces together, it's still the highest amount of debt and deficit. That doesn't make people want to come and set up business in

Ontario. I don't know what part they aren't getting. And they certainly aren't staying.

Interjections.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Why is everyone moving west, then, if things are so great in Ontario, as you say? You don't know people are moving west? The west has won the battle of the young people. They are taking our young people out west to get jobs because there are not any here, and it is largely due to this Liberal government.

Interjections.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I see this is a lively debate today, which is a good thing. Maybe that's one of the reasons we shouldn't time-allocate bills: because people do have things they want to contribute to debates on both sides of the House. It actually only makes democratic sense to allow debate to continue until members don't have any feedback on some of the fancy-titled bills that you bring forward. Sometimes, really, they're not all they're cracked up to be, in the action of the titles—that they're produced.

I want to just add my comments to this bill because it does talk about, in a short version of the original bill that has been printed—it's called the Better Business Climate Act. We definitely need better incentives for business to create jobs.

I don't know if this will be the answer to that question, but I can tell you, in the riding of London–Fanshawe, we have had the highest unemployment rate for a very long time. I know the member from London West talked about it. Recently, she asked a question. It had gone up 1% last month. We need job creation to be for good-paying jobs, jobs that are going to have benefits, jobs that are going to allow a family to be sustainable on that income—single parents, double-income families.

The member from Windsor West made a good point about manufacturing—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Windsor–Tecumseh.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Excuse me, Windsor–Tecumseh. I correct the record on that.

Things that the government can do to spur job creation: Incentivizing jobs coming to southwestern Ontario, as he talked about Chrysler, is a step forward. It is a little disappointing, however, that the member from the Conservative Party talked about it being corporate welfare and, in effect, kind of sidelined the prospect of that happening.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. We return to the member for Windsor–Tecumseh for his reply.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: I'd like to thank the members from Timmins–James Bay, Kitchener Centre, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and London–Fanshawe.

To my friend from Kitchener Centre, we have mutual friends in the media, but when she said that perhaps the timing wasn't right for an election, I get a kick out of that because if we didn't have the election, the member wouldn't be here today. It goes both ways.

But we do need the government of Ontario to develop a real provincial automotive strategy. I continue to hear from people—especially in my area, from people who work in the plants—that we need a coordinated provincial automotive strategy, something we'd tie in if Ottawa ever gets a real one as well. They've done it in Michigan, and Michigan's approach to aggressively chase and secure auto investment is certainly paying off in their jurisdiction.

When we talk about a plan for Ontario—I talked about editorials in the Windsor Star, my hometown newspaper. I believe they had it right on when they said what Ontario has “doesn't sound like a strategy. It sounds like an afterthought. Folding the auto industry—worth tens of billions of dollars in Ontario alone—into a ministry that handles any and all ideas is hardly what we'd call a blueprint for success. Especially when we compare it to the focused approach Michigan has taken under the leadership of Governor Rick Snyder, who last year created the Michigan Automotive Office.”

I leave the debate with this, Speaker: We need to do more. We need to be dynamic and quick to change, like our competition, and when things aren't working we need to bring about the right changes. Hopefully this bill will be effective and do something. I just think we do things too fragmented and we need a real strategy, a strategy that lays out the plan and the details, so please, give us those details.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I was patiently waiting for the official government side members to participate in their own bill. I find it very odd that they don't have any interest in defending the value of Bill 7. However, on behalf of the residents of Dufferin–Caledon, I'm pleased to participate in this debate.

I was scanning the explanatory notes and the schedules in Bill 7. There are two schedules in Bill 7. I have to say, Speaker, not to be rude, but there's an awful lot of wiggle room in this bill. I call them “wiggle words.” When I ask my daughter to clean up her bedroom, I don't say that I would consider it advisable; I say, “Thou shalt.” There are a lot of words like “if” this act requires; the minister “may” consider it advisable; “if” the plan is continued; and “if” the minister prepares a plan. I particularly like this one in schedule 2, where it talks about subsequent reviews of the plan:

“If a plan is continued, the minister shall, on or before the fifth anniversary of the day that the report stating that the plan is being continued is made public, conduct a review of the plan for the purpose of evaluating whether the objectives and intended outcomes of the plan have been achieved by,

“(a) consulting with persons or entities who have an interest in the development of the cluster.”

I have to say, on the day that we have just debated yet another closure motion on yet another all-important piece of government legislation, it's a bit rich to be talking about “they must consult.”

1620

This Bill 7 has got some interesting words, very little action and very little meat, for lack of a better word. Bill 7 is supposed to talk about the Better Business Climate Act. How appropriate that we're doing this today, because earlier today I met with the Ontario Real Estate Association, and as our meeting was concluding, David Grime and Jenny Anderson—thank you very much for driving all the way from Dufferin to have a meeting with me here at Queen's Park—talked about what they need to see from their government to make Ontario better and to make their industry thrive. We got to talking about the value and the importance of jobs and industry.

On the one hand, it's nice that the government has brought forward a bill. It is just very unfortunate that there is not a lot of meat in it. The success of our economy is tied to that success. We all remember the disastrous global economic recession that occurred not too long ago. Countries that believed they wouldn't be touched by the recession were hit harder than expected. Ontario, of course, was hit hard and I would suggest to you is still recovering. Ontario's economy went into a recession and has since then never been able to rekindle its past productivity.

Our federal government counterpart has done a good job in protecting our country's economy. That is why they will balance the budget, and have a surplus, I might add. This government has not done enough to promote our province's economy. Rather, I believe they've made it worse. The policies of this government have decimated Ontario's manufacturing jobs. Over the last decade, the province lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs. My own riding of Dufferin–Caledon has been adversely affected by the rising energy rates in our province. A company in my riding notified me earlier this fall that their energy bill for one month—one month—came to a total of \$37,802.41. That's absurd. Only under this government's watch would we have the highest energy rates in all of North America. If we don't understand that high energy costs impact businesses' ability to thrive and to choose where they want to do business, then we're not paying attention.

Let's put that into perspective for a moment. Back in 2003, Ontario's energy rates were 4.3 cents per kilowatt hour. Now it's more than 15 cents per kilowatt hour on average. In addition, the average price paid by large industrial power users is 4.8 cents in Montreal, 5.45 cents in Chicago and 8.12 cents in Detroit.

Part of having a competitive business climate includes having competitive energy prices. The two must go hand in hand. You cannot expect a company to thrive if they are paying exorbitant energy costs and their competition pays a quarter of that on their energy. Unfortunately, this government has not come to that realization. That's why this government has said energy rates will continue to rise for the foreseeable future.

Speaker, I'd like to discuss the purpose of Bill 7. Bill 7 was brought forward to help improve Ontario's economy through the reduction of red tape and through

the development of geographic economic clusters. I will speak about the second portion of the bill soon enough.

This government loves to boast that they like to eliminate regulatory burdens. The fact of the matter is they're not doing a very good job. Government red tape is one of the primary causes for the destruction of Ontario's manufacturing sector and for the overall stagnation of the province's economy. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business estimates that government red tape costs Ontario businesses \$11 billion a year. This is a staggering amount. That's time and money that could be spent on small, medium-sized and large businesses hiring more employees, branching out to new sectors and helping spur innovation. Instead, what employees are spending their time on is filling out yet more government paperwork.

The CFIB also noted that government red tape is the second-largest concern for businesses. Too often, we've heard story after story of companies leaving Ontario because the business climate is no longer sustainable under this government's watch. What is even sadder is the fact that many workers who have lost their jobs when companies have either gone bankrupt or left are now moving from this province to others like Alberta, where their business climate is welcoming to industry.

This government has no credible solution to stimulating job growth and attracting new business investments. In the past eight years, this government has spent more than three quarters of a billion dollars in the name of job creation. In this year's budget, the government introduced the creation of a \$2.5-billion Jobs and Prosperity Fund. Will it make a difference? This government thinks picking and choosing winner-and-loser companies will make them want to do business in Ontario.

But there's no logic to this. This government continues to live in a fairy tale. They believe continuous spending will result in economic job stimulation. Just look at what we heard from the Auditor General recently in her study of the reopening of teachers' contracts. It mentioned that we spent half a billion dollars to solve one issue. Where did that money come from? That came out of a tax system that is already overburdened.

This government doesn't even pretend to balance the budget. Just look at last week's fall economic statement. This government's revenue projections were completely wrong. They missed the mark by half a billion dollars. As a result, they lowered the revenue projections for the next three years compared to what they initially said in this summer's budget, which was only three months ago.

Based on this government's own calculations, the province's GDP growth has stagnated and will remain at 2.4% for the next three years, yet this government continues to tell us they'll be able to balance the budget by 2017-18, even though they've missed every deadline so far.

The government also claims that the economic outlook is improving, but Ontario's fiscal outlook is worse than it was 12 months ago, with larger deficits expected over the next two years compared to the projections in the 2013

fall economic statement. In fact, the government's economic projections for this year and every year through 2017 have been lowered from those in the 2014 budget passed just four months ago.

The Bank of Canada, the Conference Board of Canada and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce have all provided evidence that the government's path is unsustainable. The chamber's recent report concluded that Ontario will not grow its way out of debt, but I ask this government: How will they balance the budget when revenue projections continue to go down? The answer? Pretty simple: They intend to increase taxes.

In the fall economic statement, they said that "should economic conditions persist that result in the province's revenue outlook falling further below the 2014 budget projection, the government will consider other tools, as necessary." This government loves using phrases like "other tools" as a euphemism for taxes.

This government does not have a grasp on the everyday life of Ontario residents. The average Ontarian cannot afford any more tax increases. They already have to pay for our province's debt and high energy costs. The total cost of servicing the debt, paying the interest, was \$12.6 billion. This is the third-highest expense behind health care and education. Ontario's debt is larger than the debt of all of the other provinces combined. What is also interesting is even while admitting to considering increasing taxes, they also claim, "This would be done while continuing to make critical investments in the programs and services that people depend on, such as health and education." I don't think that's happening, Speaker.

Numerous CCACs and hospitals are reporting operating deficits across the province. This has led to cuts at the Erie St. Clair CCAC, the closing of the Leamington obstetrics unit, poor service at the Champlain CCAC and the layoff of 40 workers at Timmins and District Hospital.

The president of the Ontario Nurses' Association has said that the government has laid off 1,600 nurses in the past number of years. What's ironic—no, it's not ironic; it's frustrating—is that executives at CCACs have experienced salary raises. Earlier this month, I questioned the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on the Central West CCAC's decision to limit the number of new patients it helps due to its supposed lack of funds while their CEO was given a \$24,000 increase on her salary in 2013, which brings her salary to \$267,333.47 a year. But they can't provide service.

1630

This government wants to talk about improving health care. Well, a good start would be to prioritize front-line care over executive compensation at the CCAC. We shouldn't be increasing executive salaries at CCACs when people like my 87-year-old constituent, who suffered a severe heart attack, was refused access to a personal care support worker. Instead, his daughter was expected to care for him. But she, too, has physical ailments that limit her capacity to care for her dad. There are many more cases like this that I hear about in Dufferin-Caledon.

Health care should not be about giving out hefty raises to bureaucrats. It is about funding front-line care that all Ontarians deserve. That is why front-line health care should be the number one priority of CCACs. My constituents expect their tax dollars to go to services that matter most to them, and if they only knew that their hard-earned money is going toward executive bureaucratic salaries instead of front-line care, they'd get very angry. This government can continue to claim they will make investments in health care, but we all know that's not true at the front line.

I also want to mention this government's hypocrisy when they say they will make investments in education. We just found out that this government plans to cut half a billion dollars—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to ask the member to withdraw that unparliamentary remark. I haven't been allowing it this afternoon.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I withdraw. I don't think I've ever had to do that, Speaker. My apologies.

However, that doesn't take away from the facts, and the facts are that this government plans to cut half a billion dollars from education funding. This will inevitably mean school closures—school closures in areas where you would need to travel longer distances to get to the next school. We would be putting an unnecessary burden on our system and on our parents to transport their children to further schools because their government decided to close the local school. Once again, Speaker, this government can continue to claim they will make investments into essential services, but we all know that has proven not to be the case.

This government believes they will be able to find \$700 million by tackling the province's underground economy. It sounds like a good idea. They boast about tackling contraband tobacco and tax avoiders, but the fact of the matter is, they can't even track individuals who are released on bail and have already broken the law. I asked the Attorney General if they tracked those released on bail. Unfortunately, her answer was no. How can this government expect to get their finances in order when they can't even track the criminals they've already caught? This government is incapable of leading this province to success.

We once were the backbone of this country's economy. But under this government's watch, we have become a have-not province. I want to emphasize this because it's not about pride, it's about our ability to take our resources, to take our excellent manpower and put it into manufacturing and building Ontario. We don't have to rely on other people's help to pay for essential services that our citizens have come to expect. Now, we have become the reverse. We are the ones asking for money from the federal government. This government continues to complain that the federal government is not doing enough for Ontario. What this government fails to mention is that their own public accounts documents show they received \$600 million more from Ottawa last year than the previous years. This government needs to

stop blaming others for the mess they've created. This government needs to take some responsibility.

Speaker, I want to spend a few minutes discussing the various clauses of Bill 7. The first part of Bill 7 requires the minister to publish an annual report on what the government is doing to reduce unnecessary regulations, or as we like to call it, tax burdens. In addition, part 1 of the bill sets out that the minister will have the power to make regulations with respect to the report which may include regulations "specifying any actions to reduce burdens that must be referred to in the report" and "prescribing the manner in which the minister must evaluate, quantify or describe actions of the government."

I've spoken about this before. Regulations, to me, are very concerning, because all it takes is two signatures from cabinet ministers. It doesn't even have to have a debate or a discussion at the cabinet table, let alone, a public debate, that is Hansard here in this chamber, or a public forum at a committee where members of the public or impacted individuals can talk about their concerns. Regulations have the ability to change the intent of legislation within days. It's the worst way to govern, because you govern by stealth. You can pass a bill that sounds very nice—Better Business Climate Act sounds pretty harmless, sounds like a good idea—and then the regulations can change the entire intention of what we thought we were debating and discussing here in this chamber. I've talked about it before.

In this small, six-page bill, regulations are mentioned, I think, half a dozen times. So if you think, as a member of the public, that by reading this piece of proposed legislation you know the intent of the bill, you don't, because you have to wait until you see the regulations, and the only time you get to see the regulations is after they are passed. So it is very concerning to me.

I spoke about it at the beginning of my debate. There's nothing in this bill that compels the government to take the requisite action to crack down on unnecessary burdens. The government doesn't need Bill 7 to ensure that we are open for business here in Ontario. What they need is ministers who get the importance of manufacturing, who understand the value of what we need to create jobs and have a proper business climate in Ontario. They don't need it through legislation. What we need to do is have ministers who are doing their jobs proactively, going out and seeking out new businesses.

I'm sure everyone here does it in their own riding. When a business is interested in siting in and opening up in Dufferin–Caledon, I absolutely talk to them. I talk to them about the opportunities. I talk to them about the business climate that happens in Dufferin–Caledon—the job market, what our unemployment rate is, what our hydro rates are—so that they have all the information they need to make the choice to site their business here in my riding, in Dufferin–Caledon. I'm sure we all do that. The minister should be doing that at a macro level across Ontario. He or she certainly doesn't need Bill 7 to accomplish that.

I think I will leave it at that. There are all kinds of improvements that can happen in committee, not the least of which is to take out some of those wobble words like “may” and “if,” and actually make this legislation something that we can be proud of and that we can point to for new businesses that want to site in Ontario and actually make a difference.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I enjoyed listening to the member’s contributions to the debate for Bill 7, the better business climate bill. But she makes very a good point, that those wobble words need to be pinned down. Quit wobbling around. If this bill is going to be effective, “shall” and “if” aren’t going to make changes to what they’re proposing. They need to say “should” and “would,” not the wobble words that the member talked about.

Also, Speaker, there’s a word in there called “clusters.” This bill addresses that the government wants to work with clusters in certain regions and areas of Ontario. But we already have these clusters that are formed—unique; sometimes in two cities. In London, in effect, we have manufacturing clusters. We have a very up-and-coming digital technology enterprise that’s growing in London. I’d like to know a little bit more about how this government defines what their role is in the cluster portion of this bill.

Also, the member from Timmins–James Bay makes a very good point, that this bill is already—in effect, the information in it is already being done, because the government can make changes to regulations. Regulations don’t come before the House, so they have the power to make those changes without legislating this particular bill.

When it goes to committee, I’ll be really interested to hear how businesses find that this will be a helpful tool going forward in job creation and making it a better business climate. I look forward to that and hope that businesses will have that information in their deputations to actually make this bill stronger and move us forward into a better business climate for the growth of jobs.

1640

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

Mr. Chris Ballard: I’m delighted to be able to put my two minutes’ worth into this debate.

I was so happy to hear the member from Dufferin–Caledon speak about the fact that Ontario was hammered exceptionally hard in 2007-08 as part of the global recession. I think we’ve done a lot of things to move this province ahead. Job numbers tell us that we’re definitely moving in the right direction.

So much of that recession was beyond the control of this province. I think, given the discussions that have been ongoing over the past few months, Ontario really feels that it’s on its own, trying to move forward. Our finance minister made the point recently that Ontario puts \$11 billion into the national treasury that it does not see back. And \$1 billion or \$2 billion back would go a long

way to helping not only with our marketing but all sorts of different areas of government.

With regard to Bill 7, though, since 2008 the government has eliminated 17% of all regulatory requirements. That’s 80,000 regulatory burdens. The new burden reduction strategy will save over \$100 million by 2016-17. That’s not small potatoes.

Right now, Toronto ranks third in North America and 11th globally in competitiveness ratings for global financial centres. Ontario ranks number two in North America in information, communications and technology companies, led by clusters in the GTA, Kitchener-Waterloo, and Ottawa.

I think the legislation is a clear reflection that our government is working with key stakeholders to continue to grow Ontario’s economy.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: I’m really not sure just where to start here. I’d love to have more time. I’ve only got two minutes.

They talk about the federal government giving them an extra billion or two to spend on marketing. Any more money that is given to them, they would likely waste it, like we’ve seen over the last 11 years. I mean, \$1.1 billion on a power plant or two to not generate a kilowatt of electricity will be the legacy of this government for years to come.

I go back to the fact that Barack Obama spent a billion dollars to get elected, through private sector donations and perhaps public contributions etc. They spent \$1.1 billion to get a few Liberals elected.

Anyway, this act, Bill 7, this burden reduction act: As a private member, when I first got to this House, I tabled a bill called the Transparency in Government Bills Act. I believe, if I can recall, that they voted against it. But that would be forcing the government to do a cost-benefit analysis on government legislation that would provide insight to all stakeholders, not just those who are the insiders, to actually see the costs of legislation this government is bringing forward—a variety of costs. What are the environmental costs, the health costs, the true financial costs?

We can all remember the Auditor General referenced in his report—when the Liberals brought in their Green Energy Act, he said that in other jurisdictions, when they did similar things, jobs were lost through the implementation of such an act as the Green Energy Act, because they simply didn’t do their due diligence.

A lot of this can be done in regulation. I’d love to have more time. I only have 10 seconds, of course, but again, I just don’t know where to start with this. It’s an unnecessary piece of legislation. They talk about consulting the stakeholders, who seem to like it, but there are too many that are simply just gone from the province to even speak with.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Indeed, it’s a pleasure to speak to the comments made by the member from Dufferin–

Caledon. It's always a pleasure to listen to her in this House. She brings much passion to her role as a people's representative.

If I can tell a story out of school, Speaker, from my perch up here in the back row, I can see the member's desk. I see she has a photograph of her family on her desk, and she does that because when she gets agitated at something the government has done, I've seen her look at the photograph and try to calm herself down. It doesn't always work, I'll tell you—she can heckle with the best of them—but she does make an effort.

I liked the part of her speech where she said that the people of Ontario can't afford any more taxes. I think she's right on that. She talked about cuts in health care. We heard the Minister of Health say today that he's not making any cuts to the CCAC in Windsor. Yet the CCAC in Windsor is running a \$4-million to \$5-million deficit and making all kinds of cuts. I don't know who's calling the shots—who's running the show—but I know there are definitely cuts in the health care system at the CCAC in Windsor.

When I was elected, a friend of mine, Paul Couvion, from the west side of Windsor gave me a bunch of red tape—rolls of red tape. I was going to bring in a roll for the minister, but I was told it would be unparliamentary, so I can't give him the tape and the scissors. But it begs the question, if you've been there for 12 years and you've created some of this red tape and lived with it for 12 years, why now? I guess it's never too late to do the right thing. But saying you're going to cut the red tape you helped to create is a little bit like trying to close the barn door after the horse is gone.

Having said that, Speaker, I think the bill is a good first step. I think it can be improved. I hope we have time to talk about it. I hope we have time to take it out on the road and improve it out in our regions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments.

We return to the member for Dufferin–Caledon for her response.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: To the member from London–Fanshawe, thank you very much for your kind remarks.

Newmarket–Aurora, listen, I'm thrilled that you participated in a two-minute hit, because your colleagues have chosen not to defend Bill 7 during this afternoon's debate, which I think is terribly unfortunate. So thank you for participating in at least two minutes.

To my ably excellent colleague the member for Kitchener–Conestoga and the member from Windsor–Tecumseh, thank you.

I guess I would just like to remind people that there's a reason we debate, there's a reason we participate in this process, and there's a reason, quite frankly, that the process needs to include public participation and committee work, because that's where the amendments happen. We, the 107 members who sit in this chamber, don't have a lock on all the good ideas. We need to make sure that our citizens, our people, our job creators, our people who are struggling, who understand what is happening on the

ground in Windsor, in London, in Dufferin, in Kitchener, get a chance to participate and say, "I have an idea. I think this can make this bill better." We need to make sure those voices are heard.

I will close by saying this bill is not perfect; it's far from it. There are amendments that could be made that would improve it, that would actually give direction to the minister currently and any subsequent minister, and we need to make sure that happens at committee and that the amendments come forward and are passed.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I was up all weekend, excited, just waiting to get into this debate, because, oh my God, this was going to be earth-shattering, unbelievable. It must have taken them all of about two minutes to print this bill when they put it together. It has got voluminous parts—oh, it's only two schedules—and I want to go through it. I've got to tell you I was so excited; I was going to write a speech. But I thought, "You know what? I think I'll just ad lib it, because there's not a heck of a lot in here to write a speech about."

So let me go through this. But first of all, before I go there, what's interesting is that the government is not participating in this debate. If the government was really, truly excited about this bill, you'd think the members of the government would be up on their feet talking about this and, more importantly, saying to the opposition, "Let's get this out of the House so we can get it into committee and actually go out there and do the work that has to be done to make sure these two schedules of the bill get done in such a way that is the best possible for our economy and the people of Ontario." But, Mr. Speaker, they're not even doing that. I would be somewhat remiss, if I was a government member, to participate in this debate, especially if I had read it, because there is nothing in this bill the government can't do now.

1650

Let me explain why. The government, for years now—and this didn't start under a Liberal administration. I want to be clear. I want to be nonpartisan on this point. Governments over the last 20 years have started to delegate the gist of bills, when it comes to regulation, to cabinet. It used to be, when I was first elected here, that a government would draft a bill and very little of the regulation was left to cabinet. In fact, everything was pretty well spelled out in the bill. It would say, "The minister has the power..." It would say, "The minister shall do the following." It wouldn't say, "The minister may ..." but "the minister shall do the following in the prescribed manner of the bill." All of the nuts and bolts of how legislation works were actually designed right into the bill.

The reason we did that, Mr. Speaker, was really simple. You remember. You were a bright-eyed, bushy-tailed young member. Do you remember that, 1990, when we both came in that class? We were all excited. We came into this Legislature. But the reason that gov-

ernments did that is because we wanted to make sure that the legislation that we draft—

Interruption.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What is going on in this building?

Interjection: It's like a windstorm.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There's a windstorm that almost blew the windows out.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins–James Bay has the floor. I can hear him fine.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: All right, but we're not going to end up in Kansas, are we? I don't want to wake up and be in Kansas with a pair of slippers on, looking for some guy by the name of the Wizard of Oz. Let's hope that doesn't happen.

I just say, Mr. Speaker, in all seriousness, when we first were elected in this place—

Interjection: And your name is Dorothy.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: What is the name of the dog? Toto? Where's Toto when I need him?

Anyways, when we first got elected in this place, the reason that we would not delegate the authority to write regulations to the minister was that we wanted to make sure what was done was actually going to be done in a manner that the Legislature had decided and had voted on.

I used, the other day, the example, Mr. Speaker, about when you were in government under Mike Harris. I can use his name now because he's no longer a member. When Mike Harris was the Premier here in Ontario, he drafted a bill—and you remember, Speaker, because we all voted in favour of it—that said no municipality could start a casino unless there was a referendum. It was a pretty good bill. We accepted it. Fortunately, because we got into the mode of leaving everything to regulation, Premier Harris delegated the authority on how that bill worked to cabinet.

And then what happened, Mr. Speaker? It turned out that the government under Mr. McGuinty changed the regulations in the bill so that you didn't have to have a referendum. So where the House had proclaimed itself to have a referendum, the government took away that right just simply by regulation, and they were allowed to do that because everything was delegated to regulation.

This is the point of this bill. This bill does two things. It deals with Schedule 1, which says, "The minister shall make available to the public an annual report with respect to actions taken by the government of Ontario to reduce burdens."

"Burden" is described in the act under section 1: "'Burden' means a cost that may be measured in terms of money, time or resources and is considered by the minister in consultation with other members of the government"—meaning cabinet—"of Ontario to be unnecessary to achieve the purpose of the statutory, regulatory procedural, administrative or other requirement that creates the cost"—*fardeau fiscal*, as we say in French, or *fardeau administratif*.

The point is, the government already has that right. The government, because we delegated the authority to cabinet, can do this already. So the government doesn't need the permission of this Legislature to say, "Oh, there's a regulation somewhere that we can change in order to make it that, yes, we protect the environment; yes, we protect health and safety of workers; yes, we protect the rights of the citizen; but we can do it in a smarter way that is less burdensome to business." The government could do it now. Why do they need a bill to do this?

Here's what's really interesting. It says, under section 3 of schedule 1, "The minister may make regulations respecting the report, which may include regulations,

"(a) specifying any actions to reduce burdens that must be referred to in the report;

"(b) prescribing the manner in which the minister must evaluate, quantify or describe actions of the government...;

"(c)"—this is the important one—"prescribing a date for the purpose of clause 2(2)(b)."

So the government, by its own power that they're giving themselves in the bill, can choose or choose not to do what is spelled out in the bill, something that they already have the authority to do in the first place and that they don't need a bill to get done. Did you follow that? That was pretty interesting, the way that I pulled all that together.

My point is, all this does is say the government shall draft a report, the minister will decide what's in the report, the minister will decide how the report is written, and the minister will decide when the report is to be published on what they've done to lessen the burden on businesses when it comes to regulation. Well, you hardly need a bill to do that. So you've got to ask yourself the question, why is the government doing this?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Why is the government doing this?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, it's an exercise in public relations. That's what this is all about. The government knows that there is, quite frankly, a huge problem for them politically in this province. A majority of Ontarians in the last election didn't vote Liberal, if the government hadn't noticed that. Our first-past-the-post British parliamentary system gave them a majority, but it wasn't the majority of Ontarians.

One thing that people don't like about this government is that they're not exactly enthused—*excités*—in regard to their ability to create a strong economy and create jobs. In fact, it's quite the opposite.

I think people in Windsor have a real problem understanding why the government doesn't take stronger action and more decisive action on creating jobs in the auto sector. If you live in London, what is the government doing? How many jobs have you lost in London over the last while? If you live up in northern Ontario, where my friend from Algoma–Manitoulin and I come from, there is a litany of job losses across the north that

people are upset about. If you live in Cornwall, I'm sure it's the same.

Mr. Steve Clark: Brockville.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Brockville; I thought it was Cornwall. To the member from—

Mr. Steve Clark: Leeds–Grenville.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Leeds–Grenville. Don't cover that up with your Christmas card. I just want to make an advertisement. Steve will be putting out his Christmas cards soon, and I've got one coming, so I really, really appreciate it.

I got away with that because the Speaker wasn't watching me.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: He's still not.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He's still not. He missed it. Nothing, Speaker. It's okay.

But my point is, in schedule 1 the government is giving themselves the power to write a report, which they can already do now if they so choose. In the bill the government is not only giving themselves the power to write a report, which they already have the authority to do, they're also giving themselves the authority to decide what goes in the report, a power that they already have, and when to publish it, a power that they've already got. So this is really much ado about nothing.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Why are we debating this bill? They already have the power to do this.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: This is my point: Why are we debating this bill? And I'll get to that.

But I want to deal with schedule 2. This is the one that really takes the cake.

I listened to the member from Windsor–Tecumseh speak passionately about the need to have an auto strategy that looks at being able to create more jobs in the auto sector here in Ontario. He talked about those in the automotive sector who are trying to do exactly that but feel somewhat stymied by the Canadian/Ontarian experience of dealing with government.

It's not that government is a bad thing. I'm a New Democrat. I believe government is a good thing. I believe that government can be an instrument to make good things happen. There are all kinds of experiences in our history where government, when they decided to do something, did it extremely well. This nation would not be a nation if it hadn't been for the building of a railway across this country, something that government decided to do. There are all kinds of examples, from 1867 on, that show that government could do good things.

But schedule 2—give me a break: “Ontario is committed to maintaining its competitive edge in the increasingly competitive global economy.” That's in the preamble. Oh, my God. Like we didn't know that? Wow. I read it in the bill—I was so excited this weekend—so I knew it was true.

Then it says, “Clusters, which are geographically concentrated groups of interconnected businesses and related entities, can perform an important function in regional economic development by increasing productivity, innovation and competitiveness.” Like we didn't

know that already? My God, I read it in a bill. I was so surprised when I saw it there, I thought, “What a good idea.” Can you imagine that? Somebody actually looks at the mining sector and says, “I have a strategy on how to assist the mining sector, create more jobs and be responsible to the environment and to Ontarians.” Can you imagine the government having an idea of doing something around the automotive sector? I would have never thought that if I hadn't read that in that bill in the preamble. I thought, “Very, very smart. Boy, these guys have it.”

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Then in the last part of the preamble, it says, “Ontario can act as a catalyst to spur the development of clusters. By working with businesses and other entities to develop plans with respect to the development of clusters, Ontario can promote the growth of jobs and the economy.” Oh my God, I didn't know that was possible, Mr. Speaker. I read it in the bill, I hurried to my computer, I started to write this very long speech and I went, “But they can do that already.” It was like a huge letdown. As I looked at the iPad that I got from the Legislature as part of the little project that they've got going on, I read the bill and I thought, “My God. All of these things we can do already.”

So then I said, “Okay, well maybe there's something in the nuts and bolts of the”—

Interruption.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I think somebody's trying to jump out of that heater up there. You can hear him banging on the pipe. It's an old building. It's got character, I gotta say. Can you hear it? Clunk, clunk, clunk. It's pretty funny. My office does that all the time. It explains why I speak the way that I do.

But let me go through schedule 2 of the bill, which is really interesting. This takes the cake. It defines both “cluster” and “minister.”

“‘Cluster’ means a geographically concentrated group of interconnected businesses and related entities; (‘pôle de compétitivité’).” Okay, cool. I'm cool with that.

“Minister” I don't need to describe. We all know what that is.

Here's what it is. It says, “The minister may prepare plans with respect to the development of clusters.” My God, a minister could never do that until this bill came to this House. Did you know that? Never would a minister even think of doing something like that.

It says, “The minister may prepare plans with respect to the development of clusters,” and then it talks about the content of the plan: “A plan with respect to the development of a cluster shall include the following:

“1. A description of the cluster.” Did you know that there's an automotive strategy, member for Windsor–Tecumseh? Did you know there was a mining sector, Mr. Mantha from Algoma–Manitoulin? Did you know there was an agricultural sector, Mr. Clark from Leeds–Grenville? My God, we didn't know that until we saw that bill.

“2. An assessment of challenges and opportunities with respect to the development of the cluster.” We don't

know there's challenges? We deal with them every day. I just got off the phone with somebody with regards to a challenge in one of these clusters.

"3. The objectives and intended outcomes of the plan." I didn't know. My God, they need regulation and they need legislation to do that?

It goes on to describe—but here's the thing: Under section 4, "If the minister prepares a plan with respect to the development of a cluster, the minister shall"—and this is really the fun part;

"(a) make public a draft plan and consult"—oh, no. I wanted to go to 5. Sorry. Let me get to 5:

"Amendments to plan

"5(1) The minister may at any time make amendments to a plan with respect to the development of a cluster by making public the amended plan along with an explanation of the purpose of the amendments." In other words, if he don't like what's going on in the cluster and what the government is doing, he or she can change it. Hello? Like ministers can't do that now?

Then it goes on to say, "Plan preparation ceased, plan revoked

"6. The minister may decide to cease the preparation of a plan with respect to the development of a cluster or revoke the plan at any time by making the decision public, and the minister's obligations under this act with respect to the plan cease immediately."

Let me see if I understand this. They have fallen off the turnip truck and they've found out there are clusters in our economy, something we already knew; they have decided they're going to make a plan on how to work with the clusters in the economy, something that the cabinet already has the authority to do; and they've got to make that report public. I guess that's the only new part. I guess you can give them some credit for that one.

But then in the end, guess what? The report comes out. It's a damning report that they don't like? Under section 6, schedule 2 of the bill, they can get rid of the whole darned thing.

So I say to myself, "What is this all about?" This is a communications exercise. This is the government of Ontario saying, "We want to ring the bell. We want to shine the light over there, showing that we're doing something, because we certainly don't want you looking over here, where things are going on."

Again, I say it's interesting that members of the government have decided not to participate in this debate. I would think they would be proud: They would be on their feet, they would be engaging in debate, they would just be pushing their points forward, and they would be so proud of what they're doing. Well, if I was a government member, I don't think I would get up either. I would be surprised.

So I'm saying to my friends on the other side, with all due respect and all friendship—you know me, I'm a big friendly kind of guy. Meet me in the hallway, and I always say "Hi," and all that kind of stuff. But couldn't we be using our legislative time to be doing something else? Is this an attempt or a tactic, as the Deputy Premier

said earlier today, for the government to filibuster its own Legislature with a bill giving themselves the authority on something they already have the authority to do? Is this a strategy? I'm beginning to think that it is.

It is unbelievable. I've been here for 25 years, and this is one of the—it's well-meaning. I don't want to make fun of the fact that we should be working to develop plans around clusters of industry. My good friend from Windsor–Tecumseh made good points about why that's so necessary. But to have a bill to give you the authority to do something which you already have the authority to do is a little bit strange, would you not say? I bet you, opposition House leader from Leeds–Grenville, that this might get some committee time. This might get traveled around the province. If there's one bill that the government will decide to travel, I predict it will be this one, because they'll be able to say, "Look what we're doing for the people of Windsor, the people of Brockville, the people of Ottawa, the people of Timmins and Sudbury and London and Windsor" and different places. If there's any bill that will be traveled, the unfortunate reality is—not that this is a bad bill. It doesn't harm anybody. It's more or less a communication exercise on the part of the government.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: A marketing exercise.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would say a marketing exercise, as my good friend, the member from London–Fanshawe—

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Yes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'm getting these ridings straight, Mr. Speaker. I'm learning after all these years. This is pretty good.

I just say, this is really an interesting use of legislative time. This is a bill my friend Steve Clark, the member from Leeds–Grenville, and I—

Mr. Steve Clark: You're going to get all of them.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: —I almost had it—would have agreed with the government: We're not going to hold this up in the House. This is a bill that shouldn't have been time-allocated, and my bet is that it will be time-allocated. This is a bill where the Tory House leader and I, with the permission of our caucuses and our leaders, could have said, "You know what? We'll give you this one. In exchange, let's have a little bit more time for whatever it is that you wanted"—you had decided on day care and we would have put something else forward. But no, instead, we're going to use legislative time to debate this for six and a half hours. The government is going to bring in the two-hour time allocation motion. They're going to refer it to committee for two or three days here in Toronto because they're not going to travel it, and then it's going to come back to the House for a couple of hours for third reading.

I just say, what's this all about? This Legislature should be about us in this Legislature finding ways to address the problems that the people of Ontario face. There are people across this province who are either unemployed, underemployed or afraid of losing their employment that really need the help of their provincial

and federal governments—and municipal, in some cases—to do all that they can, to roll up their sleeves, to get what needs to be done, done, so that we're all able to have the benefits of a strong economy and what jobs bring to our families and our local communities. Instead, what we've got is a public relations exercise, essentially, by the government, who's trying to say, "Look what a great job we're doing and look what else we're going to do for you," when they already have the authority to do what's in this bill in the first place.

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

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I always find the member opposite quite entertaining when he gets up.

Interjection.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I think he spooked the ghosts of radiators past away up there. I don't hear it beeping—

Interjection.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Yes, you do. I don't hear it beeping anymore.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Aaron Lemieux says hi, by the way.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Who does?

Interjection.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Oh great; good. Say hi back.

I just want to say, Mr. Speaker, before I get completely thrown off track here, that there's nothing wrong with ringing the bell on clusters or shining the light or getting a focus towards those things that we have every reason to believe, if embraced, will work better in terms of economic development in our province. There's nothing wrong with that. In fact, the focus on clustering has been shown to be very effective. I spent some time last week at the digital marketing innovation hub down at Ryerson, several hundred thousand square feet of young people who are working collaboratively in cluster areas. I suspect a good hunk of those young people down there are going to be multi-millionaires by the time they're 30—very innovative ideas.

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There's another cluster that's an innovation centre that McMaster has developed. By the way, McMaster will be here—well, they're here now, actually, in room 228. They're quite anxious to talk to the members of this House about the impact of their innovation clustering. I would invite you all to come there.

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Who won the football game?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: It was a great game, I've got to tell you. Oskie wee wee, oskie waa waa. We're underdogs next week, but I want to make a prediction right now: Ti-Cats are going to win next week.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to this bill again and to the member for Timmins–James Bay. I think in summary, what he was really saying is that this is truly a public relations exercise yet again by the Liberals to tell the public how wonderful they're doing, and giving them

authority to do something they already have authority to do, which is truly sad.

One of the challenges—and I think he brought it up quite early in this comments—is that nothing really compels this government to actually take action. It talks about what it can do, and it talks about what goes into the plan besides who should be consulted. It determines how the plan is reviewed, revoked or made public, but they don't even have to bring that plan back to us. They don't have to bring that report. They're going to spend lots of money again on a report that may never see the light of day if it doesn't say exactly what they want it to say, and we know what that will be: The world is rosy, everything is good, the economy is rolling right along, and they're overachieving yet again.

Tell that to the 300,000 people who are unemployed. Tell that to the people who are not getting front-line services in health care. Tell that to the people who are not getting services in community and social services, which I'm privileged to be the critic of.

It concerns me yet again that here's another bill with a great title that sounds like it's wonderful, but the businesses in my riding are telling me that there's too much red tape. The cost of energy is driving them out of business. They can't keep up with the burden of all of the red tape from this government. They want to see some significant change. And the debt loads that this province is carrying are putting the burden back on those businesses which cannot expand in our province.

This bill also talks a fair bit about trying to get more business. If we don't see the action—it's a lot of talk about a plan, a lot of talk about legislation, but what is really the plan they have that they haven't done in the last 12 years? What we want to see soon—I've wanted to see it the whole three years I've been here—is the actual action piece to all of these bills that they bring out, not talking about the platitudes of how wonderful they're doing. What's really going to change to allow the people at the front lines to truly have more jobs, better health care and better education?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

M. Michael Mantha: Toujours un plaisir d'être présent dans la Chambre en arrière de mon collègue de Timmins–James Bay. Puis, il apporte, après 25 ans—25 ans, mon beau Gilles?

M. Gilles Bisson: Oui.

M. Michael Mantha: Il apporte 25 ans d'expérience ici dans la Chambre et il apporte tout le temps une atmosphère, on va dire, multicolore, sur ce qu'on envisage dans notre province.

Puis le message que Gilles, mon collègue de Timmins–James Bay, a apporté au plancher aujourd'hui, c'est essentiellement que quand tu as une belle fenêtre—et elle est vraiment belle, la fenêtre—la fenêtre ne changera pas si tu ajoutes des rideaux. Et puis essentiellement, c'est ce qu'on fait : « Voici la belle fenêtre. On va la décorer avec un beau petit rideau alentour. » Ça ne donne rien. Il n'y a rien. C'est encore une fenêtre. Tu peux ouvrir la fenêtre

et l'air peut entrer. C'est l'essentiel qu'un gouvernement devrait faire.

Ce qu'il y a dans le projet de loi, c'est exactement ce qu'un gouvernement doit faire. Tu dois identifier où tu peux avoir—excuse, c'est une affaire qui m'a bafoué dans le projet de loi. Qu'est-ce que ça veut dire, « cluster »?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: How do you say “cluster” in French?

M. Michael Mantha: C'est ce que je regarde pour. C'est un pôle de compétitivité. Je viens juste d'en apprendre encore aujourd'hui.

M. Gilles Bisson: Tu peux dire un « cluster ».

M. Michael Mantha: Bon, je vais dire « cluster ». Vous savez, franchement, ceci est essentiellement la tâche du gouvernement. S'il faut qu'on attende de reconnaître leur tâche à travers un projet de loi tel quel, c'est vraiment une perte de temps pour tous les gens qui sont ici. C'est leur rôle. C'est ce que le gouvernement devrait envisager de faire. Puis pour apporter ceci à travers un projet de loi, franchement, c'est une perte de temps. Faites votre job. C'est ce que les gens attendent de vous.

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

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm very happy to have the opportunity to rise in my place and speak a little bit this afternoon for a couple of minutes on Bill 7. I did listen closely to what the member from Timmins–James Bay and some of the other opposition members had to say with respect to this bill. If there's any particular thing that I'm struck by, by and large, based on the comments and debate and discussion that I've heard so far, it's that the general principle that is at the foundation of this particular legislation is supportable or is supported.

I understand there are concerns that are being expressed about whether or not this is the precise tool to be used to accomplish the outcome that we are talking about, and I understand, I suppose, where members of both opposition parties are coming from, Speaker. But the bottom line is that this is legislation that has extensive support from those who will continue to work closely with our government to help spur economic development and growth.

As I've said many times in the past on other legislation and other debates that we've had, Bill 7 is yet again another step forward in the evolution and the progress that our government has made across a wide variety of issues that are very important with respect to making sure that our economy remains strong and vibrant. For example, some will know that since 2008, over the last six years, our government has eliminated 17—

Mr. Bill Walker: Point of order.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm just wondering if we have quorum in the House.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much.

The Minister of Transportation had the floor when we started the quorum call. I return to the Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Thank you very much, Speaker. I was in the midst of explaining what a great evolution or progress this government has made with respect to drastically reducing and eliminating some of the regulatory burden. That's one of the reasons, along with a lot of the other crucial investments we've made to help keep the economy strong, that just recently we've seen such strong employment numbers and such strong job numbers. It's why the province of Ontario remains either the best or second best in terms of its ranking with respect to foreign direct investment. It's why there's a great deal of optimism in communities right across this province with respect to our economic future.

I would hope that because, by and large, the members from both opposition parties who spoke did not talk with respect to opposing the substance of this bill, we can continue to move the debate forward, get the legislation passed and, together, we can ensure that Ontario's economy remains strong.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Timmins–James Bay has two minutes to reply.

M. Gilles Bisson: J'aimerais beaucoup remercier les députés d'avoir répliqué à mon discours. Écoute : c'est pas mal clair ce que le gouvernement a dans ce projet de loi. C'est vraiment quoi? C'est l'habilité d'être capable de faire un plan, quelque chose qu'ils ont déjà le droit de faire; et l'habilité de regrouper, régionalement et par secteur, différentes parties de notre économie pour être capable d'aider ce secteur, quelque chose qu'ils ont déjà l'habilité de faire.

As I said inside the speech that I just gave today, the government has the power to do everything that's in this bill, so it leads us to the conclusion, why is the government doing this? This is like, “Everybody, look over here. Look over here. There's something that's nice and shiny and new we want you to look at, as if we're doing something.” But the reality is, they don't want people looking over here, which are the problems in the economy.

Across this province, we're having a problem when it comes to the economy, and the government wants to be seen as having done something, but the reality is, there's nothing in this bill that's any different than what the government could do now. This is nothing short of a communications exercise on the part of the government. The government, in a funny kind of way, is filibustering its own legislation with a communication exercise. I'm not saying what's in here is bad. What I'm saying is, it doesn't accomplish anything that you don't already have the power to do.

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So I just urge the members across the way—there are things that we could be working on together. This is one

of these bills we could have easily given you quicker passage on in exchange for allowing other bills to travel the province on issues that are important to the people of this province. We need to remember: This is not only our Legislature. More importantly, this is the Legislature of the people of Ontario. What we need to do is always remember that it's them that we work for. When we don't allow the people of this province to fully participate in vetting legislation by way of the committee process, I think that's a pretty big letdown on the part of this Legislature when it comes to the responsibility that you have as a government to the people of Ontario.

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

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm just trying to give the government the opportunity to stand and to debate Bill 7, An Act to enact the Burden Reduction Reporting Act, 2014 and the Partnership for Jobs and Growth Act, 2014.

As has been said many times this afternoon in the Legislature, this bill doesn't really require legislation. The member from Timmins–James Bay was right: This can all be done in regulation. It does not have to have a formal piece of legislation. Even within the act, it says that the government has the ability to withdraw everything that the act may be able to do to help small business. Talk about redundancy and a bill that really is fluff and does not need to be done.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business has been encouraging the government for years to reduce the regulatory red tape burden that's unnecessary. It's incredible how the piles of paper grow and the government jobs grow for red tape and regulations that don't need to occur. No wonder taxpayers go crazy when small business people get strangled by red tape. Every time they have to fill out more papers, it takes away their profitability. It takes away their chance to maybe create some more jobs. But no, it's buried in red tape, buried in paperwork that does not need to occur. In fact, every hour that a small business person has to spend dealing with government forms or dealing with what seem to be unnecessary regulations is an hour taken away from that very thing that I just mentioned, what they do best, which is actually serving their customers, trying to expand their customer base, trying to grow more jobs, because they want their businesses to grow and be profitable. That is the goal of most small business people. I don't think it's understood by the government at all. We, along with the CFIB, have been saying for years with great passion, "Stop killing small businesses in Ontario. Stop making it more frustrating for us to do business here and to grow. Get out of our way." Of course, there has to be a certain amount of regulations that are existing in the province, but not near as many as this government has let grow and expand.

The CFIB said, "Well, it's an okay first step. It's not really what we asked for, but at least they're looking at it and saying 'reducing red tape and regulation.'" They are asking for regulation reduction targets to ensure that there is zero net growth in terms of regulations and red

tape, helping to reinforce the one-to-two rule whereby for every new regulation affecting small business and tying them up, two regulations would be eliminated. That's something that we have long been crying for, but again this could just be done—if I can say the word again—in regulations, not in legislation, not taking up our time where we could actually be doing something to solve the large number of problems that exist for small businesses out there.

One example that we continually hear is not just about red tape. It depends on what business you go into. You can have an example every day of ridiculous pieces of regulation and paperwork that need to be done, but it actually is something that we have to focus on. So, yes to reducing red tape, but we know that energy is a huge problem out there. If I did a survey of businesses in my area, hydro would be number one, followed closely by red tape.

I know that there have been many, many articles written about the exorbitant cost of hydro and electricity bills, but also the exorbitant waste of government bureaucracies within OPG and Hydro One. There have been some articles written lately. This one is by Lorrie Goldstein on November 8. It's called "Wynne's Billion-Dollar Hydro Boondoggle." Basically, it says, "'Ontario's Breath-Taking, Record-Breaking Month for Electricity Bills' ... reveal that last month, Premier Kathleen Wynne's Liberal government paid \$1 billion more for electricity than the market value of that power."

The "'global adjustment' in Ontario—the difference between the market value of electricity and what it actually cost to produce—topped \$1 billion, for the first time, ever."

That's like the power plants all over again, just in one month.

Mr. Bill Walker: The waste is unbelievable.

Ms. Laurie Scott: The waste is incredible—an extra charge on all of our hydro bills.

As I've said many times in this Legislature, energy poverty reigns supreme. We have, in this province, for the 90th-some month in a row, the highest unemployment in the whole of Canada. The Liberals have been in government for 11 years, so I can't say they're really on the right path.

The waste in electricity from poor planning is costing us businesses and manufacturing jobs—over 300,000. I'm sure there's more. How do you actually get those jobs back? We've got a little bill here that says they're going to reduce the red tape and do some clusters for economic growth. Really? That's going to help bring manufacturing jobs, or jobs at all, back to the province of Ontario? I don't think so.

Like I said, a good first attempt, the red tape thing, but really something that could be done in regulation.

The real story is, if you don't have a proper business climate, which we don't—I touched on hydro and forcing wind turbines upon us in rural Ontario and solar projects upon us, subsidized to a great extent, in communities that don't want them. Right now, there's an Environmental Review Tribunal going on in my riding of Haliburton—

Kawartha Lakes–Brock that's in its second week, in which we've had Manvers Wind Concerns. Groups have had to raise a great deal of money to do the appeal for five wind turbines. They're going to interfere with the projects of the Cham Shan Buddhist temple, the Peterborough airport—they are business expansions. The Cham Shan temple is a business expansion. The biggest thing is, they're building them on the Oak Ridges moraine. We're overproducing tons of electric power here, but yet we're subsidizing projects that communities don't want. It is bad, bad policy.

There are actually some solutions out there. I know that Parker Gallant has said, "What's the solution? If the province wants to contain electricity rate increases, it needs to halt new hydroelectric, wind and solar projects. In order to reverse rate increases" which the government has said is going to increase by at least 47% over the next five years, they should "seek opportunities to terminate the existing contracts between renewable energy companies and the OPA." But the Premier has indicated that "that's not where they're headed." They're actually going to ask for more projects in their next energy plan.

Alternatives to costly new renewables have been mentioned here—also, importing electricity from Quebec while Ontario refurbishes its nuclear power plants. We've seen European countries that have shut down their wind turbines. We're not learning anything. All we are doing is increasing energy rates, driving residents out of their houses and driving people out of their homes.

There was a man during the campaign who would correlate the increase in his hydro bills to how many extra loaves of bread—he obviously owned a bakery—that had to be made. I think he said it was almost \$700 more that he's going to have to make in his bakery, so that many more loaves of bread, in order to pay for the increase in his electricity bill.

1730

At some point, there's a breaking time, when people say, "I just cannot make it." That, I think, puts it in perspective. So when we say we want to help small businesses, and I said the pretty title that goes on, the reality is that we have a huge debt, a huge deficit. Businesses that want to start up or expand see that, that we're \$287.3 billion in debt, and 11 years ago it was \$139 billion. It's averaging out to about \$21,000 per person in the province of Ontario, and this government has put this burden upon them.

The deficit is not going down, as the government says; it's actually going up by \$2 billion and it's a \$29-million-a-day interest payment. Just servicing all that debt is the third-largest budget item.

The member from Dufferin–Caledon spoke earlier about health care costs and how the CCACs are cutting health care costs and the Ontario Nurses' Association is saying how many nurses are laid off. Unfortunately, that's what happens when you don't balance your books and when you don't have proper fiscal management. Health, social services, education: They all suffer. We know \$500 million is coming out of education. We don't

know what schools they may be closing, but we know that there's \$500 million coming out of education.

So when they bring forward Bill 7, it does a bunch of schedules, it does a little bit of red tape reduction. Let me see. From CFIB, another statistic: It's an \$11-billion loss in productivity with red tape every year—

Interjection.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Every year, my colleagues are saying. Does that make sense to anyone over there? Does anyone even care over there? I don't think so.

They said "the geographic economic clusters." Well, eastern Ontario has huge, huge problems. They have a small rural population, a lot more roads to service. It's a lot harder to get high-speed Internet there because of the geography of the area. The Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus has produced papers upon papers—very good information about eastern Ontario and the fact that it is harder to do business and it's a struggle to do business in eastern Ontario. Has the government listened to any of this? I don't think so.

I think that every ministry has been analyzed by its stakeholders—say, the Ministry of Agriculture. You can go into areas in my riding—we went into Sunderland Co-op. They had to have so many permits they covered a whole wall. We took a picture of it. The number of permits was unbelievable. For every ministry, they have to go in and fill in the same thing: their name, their address, things that take up time. You can get into 50-some permits required by Sunderland Co-op or a co-operative like that. They already can tell you what red tape and regulation needs to be eliminated that is no longer useful. If you look at the agriculture sector and you look at the Ministry of Natural Resources, they can tell you. The people out in the field can tell you what red tape and regulations need to be gotten rid of.

It also says in here "the regulatory burden." Well, let's just talk a little bit about the apprentices and the College of Trades. We long fought against the College of Trades over here. Tons of industries signed up to stop the trades tax, people who want to grow their businesses, who want to be employed in Ontario. A College of Trades is unnecessary. They're already regulated by other ministries. They don't need a college of trades, which, by the way, for people listening at home, is not an actual college that helps young people get into the trades at all.

We've long said that the ratios are wrong in the province of Ontario. I said earlier that the west has won. The west has won the battle for our young people. If they wanted to get a trade, why would our young people not go to a province in western Canada where they are accepted quickly, it's structured with business and education out there so they can get into their trade and make good money? We all know there's a shortage of skilled trades coming—well, it's here. If you go to northern Ontario, in the mining field they're bringing in people from as far as Africa because we cannot get young people into the fields that they need.

I fought for over a decade, as my colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound—I fought for over a decade before your time here—

Mr. Bill Walker: You're always ahead of me.

Ms. Laurie Scott: —not before Wiarton Willie, but before your time here—to change the apprenticeship ratios to 1 to 1. Other provinces do it. This is just too many controls by this government to stop our young people from getting into the trades. We continue to fight. We haven't won it yet.

I see that they now have Tony Dean, who's going to look over the College of Trades to see what is going on there—or what should not be going on there, maybe, I can say. But a huge waste of money, and again, extra taxes and extra burden onto our—everything from the hairdressers to the barbers to the mechanics. They're going to look at the construction trades next.

I can tell you, when the home builders were here last week, they were so against the College of Trades. They wanted to invite Tony Dean up to Haliburton, especially, the Haliburton home builders, to say, "This is what the College of Trades means to me employing people and what it means to me staying in business."

When you see any rationale for Bill 7—they should look at the College of Trades, seriously, because that's a loss in productivity here in the province of Ontario. It's a loss of jobs for our young people. But I don't think that they really, really care about tackling that issue, the same as they don't care about tackling the hydro rates that I mentioned. So hydro rates and the red tape burden.

I am more than pleased to talk about a bill here this afternoon, but I can't stress enough the fact that we don't need this bill at all. It doesn't even require us to have debate time. I'd like to debate a whole lot of other issues that actually the government could—we could help them with wins on. I had just spoken to the Ontario realty association. They came to see us, and they said, "What is this about the government going to maybe give municipalities more taxing powers? How is that helping us?"

We said we did not agree with that. Toronto has that now, and in specific, it's with the land transfer tax. My colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings spoke to them this morning.

Mr. Todd Smith: I did.

Ms. Laurie Scott: Good job.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you.

Ms. Laurie Scott: You were right on the money. They see that the real estate market will just slow right down. It's another impediment to people being able to buy a house. They look at what their property taxes are, but they had to go up, because we know this government has burdened municipalities beyond belief. OPP policing costs are crippling my riding. They're going to have to increase taxes there. If they have this municipal property transfer tax, if that's the ability given to municipalities to put another tax on a homeowner, that's going to impede them from buying property.

I just don't know how young people are going to be able to afford to buy a house in the province of Ontario. We know they struggle to get a job here. You have the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, the Bank of Canada, the Conference Board of Canada all sending out very serious

signals of what could happen in the province of Ontario with such high debt and deficit, how they're going to balance the books by 2017-18, which no one actually believes they are, except the Liberals, so they must be going to be increasing taxes, or somehow they're getting into your pockets—

Mr. Michael Harris: Carbon tax: revenue tool.

Ms. Laurie Scott: We asked, for sure, today about the carbon tax. The minister for climate change over there said, "Oh, no, no, we're not talking about it." But I don't know if he has talked to his Premier, because the Premier was certainly over in Quebec speaking about a carbon tax. There's only so much tax that you can get out of people's pockets without them throwing up their hands, giving up, either leaving the province, selling their house. We're going to have more renters because no one is going to be able to afford to buy anything in the province of Ontario.

We talked about the cumulative debt, the province of Ontario's being higher than all the other provinces combined. They were given advice. Adviser after adviser have given the Premier advice, and her predecessor advice. They never quite listened to all of it. But it's on the dockets, and they say, "Now we've got this person or we've developed this panel, and we're listening." But, in reality, the debt has gone up; the deficit has gone up. We still have the highest taxes in North America in energy and, I think, the highest payroll tax in North America. You really can't be competitive with that.

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This gesture of Bill 7—because really, it is just a gesture about reducing red tape and building clusters—can all be done. The real, foundational problems in this province are the government's inability to listen to the people and the burden they're under, whether it be energy, whether it be red tape. Now they're trying to do the mandatory pension plan. I just heard from businesses in my riding when they said that, "Well, I guess we're laying off someone. I can't afford to hire anyone else."

We were trying to help them over here in opposition. They have the majority government; all we can do is kind of provide advice, so we do. Thank goodness there's Hansard, so they can, I'm sure, reread all of this later on. But really, this bill is pretty useless. I think they should listen more to the CFIB and listen to the analysis on the energy policy, because it is just taking the best of the province of Ontario, the competitiveness, and thus, our young people are going west.

Mr. Speaker, it has been a long 20 minutes—

Mr. Bill Walker: No, it hasn't. You brought a lot of good things up.

Mr. Michael Harris: Unanimous consent: Add 20.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I got it to 20 to 6. We'll try to—

Mr. Bill Walker: Take it right to 6 o'clock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: To 6 o'clock, no, but another 10 minutes of questions and answers would be good. It's going to be close. Thank you, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm going to try: Kawartha-Brock Lake?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Wow. That's good. It's a long riding.

I was listening to the member from Kawartha—

Mr. Percy Hatfield: Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Holy smokes—and what I think is very telling about this bill is that—and she had mentioned it herself. When she originally stood up, the Speaker said, “Further debate,” waited a little bit, “Further debate,” waited a little bit. Nobody stood up, so of course the member immediately jumped out of her seat to continue this debate, because we're trying to express that this bill seems to be—what we're looking at on the face of it—a marketing tool for the Liberals.

If the Liberals truly believe in this bill—and that's something I wanted to ask them; I don't know if that's out of order when you're in debate. I wanted to ask the members on the other side who are listening to the debate, why aren't you standing up and speaking to this bill if you believe in the bill? If you believe in something that your government puts forward, wouldn't you be passionate about it to sell it, to market it to us so that we can buy into the bill and so that the public can buy into the bill?

I challenge you to stand up and debate your own bill—if that's allowed. Tell me what you find wonderful about this bill, how it's going to make a difference to the climate and make a better business climate for businesses in Ontario. I hope you take my challenge seriously and stand up to speak to the bill. I'd love to hear from a member backing up the legislation that has been presented.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I did listen closely to the original member—

Interjection.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I did. I did listen closely to it. I promise that I did, and I of course heard the member from the NDP caucus, I suppose, challenging our side to stand and defend the bill itself.

I had the chance just a couple of minutes ago in the previous round of debate to talk a little bit about why this kind of legislation is important. Of course, there was a bit of an interruption in my remarks earlier, so I momentarily lost my train of thought at that particular point in time, but what's really important from my perspective is to remember that this legislation, Bill 7, is something that's extremely important to the business community in particular and to those who have a passionate interest in moving Ontario's economy forward.

I think of people in my own community. In the wonderful community of Vaughan, just sitting on the northern edge of Toronto, representatives from the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce—I was at a breakfast a

few weeks ago that the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce hosted. If there's one message I've heard from business leaders in my own community—and I'm sure the other 106 members of this Legislature hear a similar thing—it's that they want an ongoing dialogue and partnership with government to make sure that we make decisions here about where and how we're going to invest in the economy, but also how we're going to intelligently, surgically and sustainably lessen the regulatory burden that they're facing.

We see repeatedly—and I mentioned this in my earlier remarks—very clear evidence that the plan is working. I talked about what we've done since 2008 and the extent to which we've actually been able to work closely with business to reduce the regulatory burden, and we see the positive results that have occurred here in the province since that time. I talked about the job numbers we saw recently. I talked also about the fact that we continue to have a plan to move the province forward and things like investing in transit and transportation infrastructure. This is what the community out there needs to see. Most importantly, they want to see this kind of legislation get passed so we can move the province's economy forward and keep moving in the right direction.

I look forward to the rest of the debate this afternoon.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to thank my colleague the member for Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock for her wonderful presentation. I found it extremely detailed. One of the words she used at the very end of the speech when she referred to Bill 7 was a “gesture,” and I think that was a very good use of that term, because when you start to look at some of the business organizations—and I appreciate that the Minister of Transportation spoke earlier about chambers of commerce.

I, too, was at one of my local chambers of commerce. In fact, two chambers of commerce had their awards ceremony recently, one in Brockville and one in Gananoque that encompassed both Gananoque and the Thousand Islands. Many of those chamber members were members of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. I note from their recommendations to the government on red tape reduction. If you read the five recommendations, this bill, this gesture of a bill, really only deals with half of the very first recommendation. On the other four recommendations there's silence.

Obviously the half that they've done is, they've introduced legislation. What they haven't done that other provinces have done is prescribe reduction targets, and I think it's very important to be able to put targets within the bill.

As well, the CFIB is recommending that government fully implement the regular review of high-impact regulations. In fact, they're asking the government, encouraging them, to implement the measure across the entire government, to review some of the delegated administrative authorities like TSSA, Stewardship Ontario, rebranding their regulatory feedback form, and also improving services through bizpal.ca.

The CFIB has made a number of recommendations, and with Bill 7, they've really only scratched the surface. I agree with the member. This is a gesture and only a gesture.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's a pleasure to follow comments made by the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, who did a lot of research into this bill. She talked a lot about the need to cut red tape.

I'd like to bring the debate back, if I could, because I know those issues are important in her community. In my community, we keep calling for a real made-in-Ontario solution to the loss of manufacturing jobs and the loss of automotive jobs. What we need is a real automotive policy, a real manufacturing strategy. If the government wants to get serious, they can send a message to Ottawa to either lead, follow or get the heck out of the way, and come up with a policy in Ontario that will force Ottawa to come dragging its heels behind, because we need to do something to protect our manufacturing base in this country—in this province, especially.

Michigan has a real plan. They've proven it. They're doing it the right way. We could clearly follow them, not what this is, a kind of fuzzy, uncoordinated—it's not a blueprint for success, what's on the table, and it's a long way from that. We need a real, focused approach. We need to create jobs and protect jobs, and this bill is falling short of that.

What this government could be doing and should be doing is taking this bill around the province, consulting with workers in the manufacturing sector and the automotive sector, asking those on the line, asking management, asking the people who rely on the manufacturing base in our communities what they can do to improve their lives, and they can come up with a real policy, an automotive policy, a manufacturing strategy that Ontario so desperately needs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our time for questions and comments. Now we have a chance to hear from the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to thank the member from London–Fanshawe; the Minister of Transportation, who

I'm sure is going to hear more from us about the road conditions and the snowplowing mandate for the MTO; the member from Leeds–Grenville, who certainly was right on in saying that the CFIB wants red tape and regulation decreased, but really, this government's bill has only done half of their first recommendation when they made four recommendations.

Mr. Bill Walker: Well, that's a pretty good achievement.

Ms. Laurie Scott: That's actually a very poor report card, for sure. They should listen to the CFIB more. We all know that small business creates the most number of jobs. They're certainly the backbone of rural Ontario in my riding. They're the job creators.

When an organization that's in touch with small businesses makes recommendations, they spend a lot of time and effort. Of course they're not going to oppose this bill, but really, it's half of the first recommendation of four recommendations. I think the government certainly could have done better.

We certainly want them to do better. As I said, we're out there saying, "Here are some ideas." I mentioned many of them when I spoke earlier.

The member for Windsor–Tecumseh, who spoke earlier today, is asking the government still: "Where's the automotive policy?" He's in tune with the people in his riding. He's bringing forward those ideas.

The job losses in manufacturing: Nobody is fabricating that. It's all real. The stats are over 300,000 and possibly more.

I spoke about competitiveness in the province of Ontario. Red tape and regulation—no question they're part of it. It's a hindrance to businesses. But I spoke a lot about hydro, too, and the fact that hydro rates have tripled. They're only going to go up another 42% in five years; you know they're going to go higher. All of that affects small business. So that's how to really help small businesses: Get those things under control.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I'm going to use my prerogative and adjourn the House. I wish everyone a safe trip home.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.
The House adjourned at 1752.

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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 Quioc 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 Quioc Lim

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