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Monday 9 March 2015

Lundi 9 mars 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 9 March 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 9 mars 2015

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Please help me welcome the grade 10 students and teachers from St. Augustine Catholic High School in the great city of Markham.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I know that all members of the House will want to join me in congratulating the University of Guelph Gryphons men's hockey team on winning the Queen's Cup on Saturday night, beating Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières 4-0. They go on now to play in the Canadian championships in Halifax. I know we'd all want to congratulate that fine hockey team.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Wonderful guests. The member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my delight to introduce one of the oldest and one of the best collegiate institutes in Ontario: HumberSide in the House.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a number of introductions today, some of our pages and their guests. Legislative page Hannah Tang from Mississauga–Streetsville is hosting her family today. Please welcome her father, Hongchang Tang; her mom, Michelle Chen; and her younger sister, Jessica Tang. Hannah is the page captain today. Please welcome them.

As well, on behalf of the member for Eglinton–Lawrence and on behalf of page captain Arlyne James, I'd like to introduce Sheliagh Flynn James, her mother; her father, George James; her brother, Conall James; her sister, Keelin James; her grandfather, Dr. Bill James; and her uncle, Paul James. They will be in the members' gallery this morning. Would members please welcome them.

Hon. Liz Sandals: First of all, I must mention that the member from Wellington–Halton Hills is very modest because he failed to mention that one of the winning members of the Guelph Gryphons is his nephew.

So, what I just wanted to do, on behalf of the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities and myself, is welcome all the members of the Canadian Federation of Students who are visiting with us today. This is the CFS lobby day, so welcome to all the members of CFS, and particularly those from U of G.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It gives me great pleasure to introduce the mom of Julie Darling, Mary Darling, in the members' gallery, from wonderful downtown Castleton.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: It gives me great pleasure to introduce to this House today, in the members' gallery, nine fantastic Portuguese Canadian women who have made significant contributions to our society across various sectors. They are: Ana Ochôa; Ana Paula Ribeiro; Angela Machado; Rosa De Sousa; Lucillia Simas; Suzanne Cunha; Paula Medeiros; and Lisa Fara. Welcome, ladies.

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I am pleased to welcome Katherine Bowes, the mother of Amber Bowes, who is a page from Oshawa. She's here in the gallery today.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am very pleased to introduce today at Queen's Park Caio Penatti, who is a co-op student in my constituency office from Dante Alighieri high school; accompanied by Meaghan Salmons, my executive assistant. Please help me welcome them.

Mr. Han Dong: In the members' gallery, I would like to welcome my former colleague, Kaley Ames, from St. Paul's, and also Avi Ames, visiting all the way from BC. Welcome.

Hon. David Oraziotti: It's a pleasure today to introduce Sylvia Peña and Johnmark Roberts from the Ontario Real Estate Association, who are here.

ANDREW JOSEPH DOIRON

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader on a point of order.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to observe a moment of silence for Andrew Joseph Doiron, a Canadian Forces soldier who was killed in Iraq on Saturday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent for a moment of silence for the fallen soldier. Do we agree?

I would ask that all members in the House please rise for a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank everyone for that kind tribute.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY
JOURNÉE INTERNATIONALE
DE LA FEMME

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that representatives from each caucus speak for up to five minutes in recognition of International Women's Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The government House leader is seeking unanimous consent that we have representatives from each caucus speak up to five minutes in recognition of International Women's Day. Do we agree? Agreed.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Speaker, I'm so pleased to rise and speak to this House today as we continue to celebrate International Women's Day.

I want to take this time to acknowledge the accomplishments of women and the progress that we've made advancing gender equality here in Ontario.

Je veux prendre le temps de reconnaître les réalisations des femmes et les progrès que nous avons faits envers l'égalité des sexes en Ontario.

1040

But before I do, I want to go back to the first International Women's Day. In 1910, at the International Conference of Working Women, a German woman named Clara Zetkin put forward the idea of an international day for women. Her idea was that every year in every country there should be a day for women to advocate for each other.

According to the United Nations, Clara's idea was endorsed by over 100 women from 17 countries who were attending the conference. A year later, the first International Women's Day was held in 1911 on March 19. More than one million women and men participated in rallies campaigning for women's right to work, to hold public office and to vote.

Today, every year on March 8, thousands of events are held throughout the world to inspire women, celebrate our achievements and build momentum for the work we need to do to increase gender equality here in Ontario and all around the world, because we all know that more work needs to be done. More work needs to be done because in 2015 there are still too many women who are told that their opinions don't count. There are still too many women who are intimidated, marginalized and discounted for the simple fact that they're women. They're told that they have no real influence. They're told that they will never achieve their goals. They're told that they will never be equal. And so more work needs to be done to build a better world for women and to build a fairer, more equal society for all, because I believe, Mr. Speaker, that those two go hand in hand.

As a woman, as a mother, as a grandmother and as the first female Premier of Ontario, I'm committed to doing more.

En tant que femme, mère, grand-mère, et en tant que la première femme première ministre de l'Ontario, je me suis engagée à faire plus.

Because when you empower women, when you address issues that disproportionately affect women, you

will strengthen and build up society so it becomes more fair and inclusive for everyone.

I'm very proud to see the efforts reflected in Ontario. I'm proud that we have the most women elected to this Legislature than at any time in our history: 38 women. I'm proud, personally, to have seven women around the cabinet table and 12 more women in our caucus, and I'm proud of the efforts that our government continues to make.

Our government has brought in wage increases for early childhood educators and personal support workers, the majority of whom are women. We have increased the minimum wage to \$11 an hour and indexed it to inflation, helping low-income women, who are the majority of minimum wage earners in Ontario.

We're also supporting parents through Ontario's full-day kindergarten program. In September 2014, full-day kindergarten was fully implemented and is now benefiting approximately 265,000 children across Ontario. Since 2003-04, we've increased the capacity of licensed centre-based child care programs by 57%, and we've increased the Ontario Child Benefit to a maximum of \$1,310 per child per year. Through the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the child poverty rate in single-mother-led families in Ontario has dropped from 43% to 36%. The Ontario Women's Directorate is providing low-income women with the training that they need to get better paying jobs. The Microlending for Women in Ontario program is helping low-income women build and grow their businesses.

Women make up an integral part of Ontario's economy and society, but on average they still do not earn as much as men, which is why our government is committed to leading the development of a wage gap strategy. Recently, Ontario became the first jurisdiction in Canada to require companies listed on the TSX to report publicly on their approach to increasing the number of women on their boards, because that glass ceiling may be cracking, but it is still in place, Mr. Speaker.

We'll continue to call on the federal government to take meaningful action to address the issue of missing and murdered aboriginal women and girls. I want to acknowledge the important work that is being done by the minister responsible for women's issues, who is at the United Nations today as part of the Canadian delegation on the status of women.

Applause.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Exactly.

I also want to acknowledge the member for Haldimand-Norfolk and the leader of the third party both for their work advancing Ontario's Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment. Thank you very much for that.

Last Friday our government launched It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment. The plan will raise public awareness of sexual violence and harassment in Ontario. It will help survivors so that they're better supported when they reach out for the help that they need. It will strengthen our laws to help ensure that workplaces are free from sexual violence and

harassment. Above all, it will challenge the deep-rooted attitudes and behaviours that contribute to sexual violence and harassment in the first place—I'm talking about misogyny and how it is never okay.

This year's theme for International Women's Day is "Make It Happen." I believe that, as a government, we are taking this call to action to heart. We are taking a different approach to government.

Je me suis engagée à adopter une nouvelle approche de gouvernance, et une partie de cela est grâce à la perspective que j'apporte en tant que la première femme première ministre de l'Ontario.

It's a perspective that's focused on people, investing in their skills, their ideas, their capacity for greatness.

In closing, I want to quote from Nellie McClung, a woman in politics and a personal hero of mine. She said, "The women who have achieved success in the various fields of labour have won victory for us, but unless we all follow up and press onward the advantage will be lost. Yesterday's success will not do for today."

Though those words were spoken 100 years ago, I believe they're still important, Mr. Speaker. They remind us how far we've come as women, and they remind us that we have more to do in order to create that fair and equal society that we know is possible here in Ontario.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to speak today on behalf of my PC colleagues in recognizing International Women's Day.

Every year, the government of Canada and the United Nations establish themes for International Women's Day. This year, the Honourable Dr. Kellie Leitch, Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, is focusing on strength with the tagline, "Strong Women, Strong World: Improving Economic Opportunities For All." The theme for International Women's Day, which was proclaimed by the United Nations is, "Empowering Women, Empowering Humanity: Picture it!"

These two themes complement each other. When we look at the inequalities and injustice which many women still face today in our country and around the world, these themes seem very appropriate.

International Women's Day is an opportunity for Canadians to celebrate the great progress which has been made in Canada towards women's equality, but also to recognize the disgraceful treatment of women and the suppression of women's right in far too many other countries around the world. It is disturbing to note just how slow this progress has been.

While collectively society might think this is a relatively new initiative, the first International Women's Day was observed on March 19 in 1911 in Austria, Denmark, Germany and Switzerland.

Some of the basic inequalities which were prevalent in 1911, such as women's suffrage, property and marital rights and even to be legally recognized as a "person" under the law, are still distant dreams in much of the world.

The plight of women in terms of equality are the worst in some of the poorest and most suppressive countries in the world.

The implication of this year's themes is that through the equality and empowerment of 50% of the population, not only would individual women prosper and grow but so would their societies and their countries in general.

In Canada, the progress of women in education, business, government, politics, sports and the arts has benefited the entire country. Much of our prosperity today can be attributed to the ever-increasing roles which women have played in our society. I only have to look in this chamber to see the success that women can now have in politics. Even the Olympics would have been nowhere near as successful for Canada had it not been for our female athletes who, in many cases, outshone their male counterparts.

However, with every shining light there are unfortunately shadows of darkness. It is impossible to discuss International Women's Day and the status of women without acknowledging one of the most hideous scars on our society. Of course I'm referring to the ongoing sexual violence and harassment against women.

In recent years, the degree of this problem has been brought into our living room through a series of tragic incidents. Last November, I raised this serious issue with the Premier on several occasions during question period, asking for the establishment of an all-party select committee to thoroughly investigate the issue of sexual harassment and violence in the workplace.

After a number of weeks, the government agreed to the creation of the committee. Last week, the Premier appears to have pre-empted the work of the committee by announcing a significant program with funding for addressing the issue.

1050

I laud the Premier's actions from last week, but I'm somewhat disappointed that she chose to make this a political announcement rather than fully utilize the work and commitment of the all-party select committee. The method by which this program was announced did put somewhat of a pall over its intent, which is unfortunate. However, regardless of the strategy that was employed, it was a positive step that I fully support.

I want to conclude by congratulating all the female trailblazers for their dedication and commitment to advancing women's rights and equality. International Women's Day provides us with an opportunity to commemorate these efforts, celebrate progress and call for a commitment to continue the push for women's equality.

Next year, we will again offer remarks on the 2016 International Women's Day. I am optimistic enough to hope that, over the next year, we will see significant progress on a number of fronts in both Canada and the rest of the world. However, I am also enough of a realist to be under no illusions that for millions of women, their lot in life will be no better. Consequently, this is not a subject that will ever allow us to let down our guard or bask in

our victory in progress. There is much to be done now and in the years ahead.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On behalf of New Democrats, I'm honoured to rise and speak about International Women's Day. This International Women's Day, we, as a province, have a lot to reflect on as we look at the year that was. It was a year when horrible realities that so many women have faced in their everyday lives were pushed into the public eye.

We have seen the culture of fear and secrecy that exists in workplaces where powerful men are allowed to act with impunity. We have seen how many women's voices can be silenced by a single male voice, especially when they are backed by institutions that are willing to protect them.

We have seen a culture of misogyny on campus, where young minds are being shaped and future professionals are obtaining their credentials. We have seen the explosion of precarious work and part-time work, where women—particularly immigrant women—are over-represented.

We've seen the harassment and stalking that women face online.

We have seen doctors still allowed to practise medicine even after being found to have perpetuated sexual assaults on women patients, and a regulatory body that is not required to immediately involve the police when they learn of these crimes.

We continue to see women with no choices but to return to abusive partners. Women are still dying, and their children are still being traumatized.

We continue to see women paid, on average, 30% less than their male counterparts.

We continue to learn of aboriginal women across our nation who are missing or have been murdered, but we do not see justice for them or their families.

The face of poverty is still a woman's face; disproportionately, an immigrant woman's face.

In the face of all this, it is clear how far we still have to go before we have a just, safe and equal province. We should be addressing the systemic issues that marginalize women. Instead, we have a government that continues to impose deep cuts to services in Ontario.

We know that it is women who disproportionately bear the brunt of these cuts. Across the province, closures of obstetrics wards, support centres for women in crisis and child care centres are leaving women vulnerable. The fragmented and inadequate home-care and long-term-care systems are hurting women, and the explosion of precarious work and unpaid work under this government is pushing more and more women to the margins. So many of the public sector workers already on the picket lines in this year, 2015, are women workers: nurses, educational workers and women who deliver Ontario's public services.

We must do better, and we can do better. New Democrats actually have been demonstrating how we will do better. In fact, we have a caucus now that is 50%

women—the only caucus in Ontario and the only caucus in the country that has ever achieved that goal. I can tell you, as the leader of this caucus, and I think all of my caucus members would agree, particularly those who were around when it wasn't a situation of 50% women in our caucus, that it makes a difference. It makes a difference in the tone that we address ourselves with; it makes a difference in the way that we approach the work that we do here; it makes a very, very positive difference. I think the MPPs who make up the NDP caucus would agree with me in that regard.

This was a year where women refused to stay silent in the face of rape, harassment and assault. We must thank those women for their courage and take pride in the public discourse that it has spurred. As women, we must continue to take up our space, to continue to stand up and speak with our equal voices proudly, anywhere, anytime.

All of us, women and men, must recommit ourselves to speak up and act with women and for women. That's how we can truly celebrate International Women's Day. Thank you.

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

ORAL QUESTIONS

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Premier. Last Thursday, the Deputy Premier did an admirable job of reciting the resumé for the new member for Sudbury, rather than answering my questions.

Premier, you've said that you made the decision to appoint Mr. Thibeault as your candidate on November 30. You also claim that you didn't want Andrew Olivier to find out in the news. Premier, as his future boss, did you instruct Mr. Thibeault to remain in the House of Commons and delay his resignation to avoid Mr. Olivier finding out, or did you instruct Mr. Thibeault to remain an MP until your operatives could sway Mr. Olivier with an alleged bribe?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the member opposite understands that at those moments in a pre-election situation, people make decisions for themselves in terms of their timing, their families and when they will make decisions public.

I also know that the member opposite understands that this whole situation is something we're taking very seriously, that there is an investigation that is ongoing, but that that investigation is taking place outside of this House, and that's where we need to let it take place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Again, back to the Premier. During the same question period, your Deputy Premier referred to you in this way: "She is a woman who thought through very clearly what she needed to do." I would like you to think very clearly about this: The people of Sudbury re-

ceived taxpayer-funded mailouts from your candidate after he announced his intention to run for you.

Premier, will the Ontario Liberal Party reimburse the House of Commons for Mr. Thibeault's self-promoting propaganda mailout?

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I would be happy—if the member opposite wants to have a conversation, we can have a little bit of a comparison about who's getting householders from whom at the federal level. A member of the Conservative Party initiating that conversation I think is an interesting turn of events, but I would be very happy to have that conversation. Maybe we could have a show and tell—we could bring in all the householders that we've got from federal members from other ridings.

The member opposite knows full well that there's an investigation going on and that investigation is taking place outside of this House.

Interjections.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. As I have said a few times, some of the questions are moving slowly away from the topic of government business. I'm going to remind everyone that it's your duty to pull it back into that position. I'm just offering the member a word of advice.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you, Speaker, for the advice.

Again, back to the Premier: I didn't actually expect you were willing to pay the taxpayer back, because wasting a couple of thousand taxpayer dollars is really nothing new to this government when you figure they've wasted \$1.1 billion on the gas plants, \$1.9 billion on smart meters, \$1 billion on eHealth and another \$1 billion on Ornge. A couple of thousand taxpayer dollars might not be a waste for Mr. Thibeault, either. After all, as federal NDP caucus chair, he must have known about the \$2.75 million of taxpayers' money his caucus wrongly spent on mailouts and satellite offices.

Premier, do you agree that this mailout is an example of misspent taxpayer money? Or is it just another example of the cost of your government doing business?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let's be clear that the member for Sudbury remained MP and continued his duties until the end of December. He was the MP for Sudbury; that is the fact. Then there was a by-election, and he was our candidate. That's the reality.

In terms of the other issues that the member opposite raises—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That will do. The minister responsible for seniors has done it again, so he's on my list.

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In terms of the other issues that the member opposite raises, I am quite sure the member opposite understands that it's extremely important that our health system, for example, have electronic health records and that there be connectivity in our health system. If he doesn't understand that, he should go to doctors' offices and he should find out how doctors are functioning now with electronic health records and how they are moving into the 21st century. I'm sure he values that that progress is happening.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Premier. In December 2003, you rose in this House to deliver your maiden speech. You said at that time, "They have every right to expect me to demonstrate that position and status cannot be allowed to undermine fundamental decency, honesty and integrity."

Now, with four OPP investigations in your office, you seem to have cast aside those words. Premier, why have you allowed the position and status of the Premier's office to undermine your fundamental decency, honesty and integrity in the Sudbury by-election?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I challenge the premise of the question from the interim Leader of the Opposition. I have done my utmost at every turn, on whatever issue, to be open with the people of Ontario, to be very clear about what our position is and to be clear about how we are going to move forward.

I know that the member opposite is talking specifically about the Sudbury by-election. I made a statement a couple of weeks ago. I laid out exactly what our position was.

Beyond that, I have been very clear and open that there is an investigation going on and that I will work with the authorities, but that that investigation is, appropriately, taking place outside of this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Back to the Premier: Premier, let me read you a quote. "The government's strategy is obviously to isolate, obfuscate, deny, deny, deny, and hope that everybody just gets tired of it." That statement was from Liberal MP Ralph Goodale, and it was referring to a condemnation of the actions of one of the Prime Minister's senior staff, who, by the way, did the right thing and stepped down.

The Deputy Premier has even called our questioning of the apparent bribery "boring." Well, apparent contraventions of bribery laws are anything but boring to Ontarians. The latest Forum poll shows that an astonishing two thirds of Ontarians know about the issue, and an astonishing two thirds of Ontarians want Pat Sorbara to step down.

Premier, are you hoping everyone just gets tired of the four OPP investigations into your office and that they'll just go away?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just quote from the PC House leader, who said on February 27 of this

year, “Stop interfering in an ongoing investigation, and let it run its course.”

I have been very clear that we will work with the authorities, that there is an investigation going on and that that investigation is taking place outside of this House. We’ll work with the authorities, Mr. Speaker, and that’s as it should be.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again to the Premier: When asked about former Premier McGuinty, you said, “We’re different people, we have different styles and it’s a different time.”

The OPP started two investigations into Mr. McGuinty’s office. Now, under your lead, there are two more. Mr. McGuinty has a chief of staff under OPP investigation; you have a deputy chief of staff under investigation. He had Peter Faist clean up a mess; you had Gerry Lougheed try to do the same. Mr. McGuinty ignored the truths about Ornge, eHealth and the gas plant scandals; you’re ignoring the truth about Sudbury.

Premier, you are no different than Mr. McGuinty. When will you show Ontarians and the Office of the Premier the respect it deserves and the integrity you promised?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, whatever the rhetoric is that the interim Leader of the Opposition wants to pull out, whatever framework he wants to put around this, I need to be true to what I know is the responsible course of action. I have made a statement publicly. I’ve been very clear about our position. I have been clear in this House over and over again that I made a decision about who I believe the candidate should be for us in the Sudbury by-election.

There is an investigation that is ongoing. That investigation is not taking place in this House; it’s taking place outside of this House.

I understand that the opposition wants to try to ramp this up and they want to try to keep it alive. I understand that. That is in their political interest. It is in the province’s interest that we continue to do the work that’s in the best interest of the people of the province while at the same time co-operating with the authorities.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. How many cabinet meetings has Pat Sorbara attended since the police told Ontarians that she was facing OPP anti-rackets squad investigations?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I was very clear, in the statement I made a couple of weeks ago, about the course of action that I was going to take, and that is a matter of public record. The fact is that there is an investigation going on. We’ll work with the authorities; I will work with the authorities; Pat Sorbara will work with the authorities; and anyone on my team who is requested to will work with the authorities. But that investigation is not

taking place in this House; it’s taking place outside of the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: How many government policy or operations decisions has Pat Sorbara been involved in since it was announced that she is facing two OPP anti-racket investigations?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I have said that the investigation is taking place outside this House.

But I want to go back to what the Chief Electoral Officer clearly stated. What the Chief Electoral Officer said in his report is, “I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone’s guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges.”

Those decisions have not been made. I think the leader of the third party knows that, and she knows that the investigation is rightly taking place outside of this House.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: How many meetings with stakeholders has Pat Sorbara participated in since it was announced that she is facing two OPP anti-rackets squad investigations?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, Mr. Speaker, I will give the same answer to the leader of the third party, and that is to remind her that the Chief Electoral Officer, whose report is the only report that has come in at this point, said, “I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone’s guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges.”

In fact, any investigation that’s taking place is happening outside of this House, not inside the Legislature.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: To the Premier: This government is in a mess and it is of the Premier’s making. Ontarians are seeing the same bad ethics from the Liberals that they’ve seen for a dozen years.

This Premier said she was going to be different; she’d clean things up; she’d be open and transparent. Instead, she is in lockdown, and she won’t answer any questions. She’s protecting senior Liberals who are under criminal investigation. In spite of all of the promises, nothing ever seems to change.

Will the Premier finally do the right thing and relieve Pat Sorbara of her duties today?

1110

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, I think the characterization, on the part of the leader of the third party, of what is going on in Ontario is a little bleak. I’ve said to her over and over again that I understand there is an investigation going on and that we will co-operate. But in the meantime, there is a lot of work that is getting done.

I will draw the leader of the third party’s attention to the action plan we released on Friday, which is a significant step forward in terms of our ability to deal with

public awareness of sexual assault and sexual violence. Money will be invested in front-line services. On the day after International Women's Day, I think that's something we can celebrate and make sure we deliver on those promises, which is exactly what we will do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier's top aide is facing not one, but two, OPP anti-rackets squad investigations, not to mention the other two OPP investigations into her government. That's more than Mike Duffy, that's more than Nigel Wright, that's more than Rob Ford. Yet Pat Sorbara is still providing advice to the Premier, because the Premier thinks she knows better than the OPP, better than Elections Ontario, better than the tapes of Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed, which anyone can hear.

Will the Premier admit that she is wrong to keep Pat Sorbara working and have her step aside while these investigations are ongoing? Have her step aside today—just do the right thing.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, what I say to the member opposite is that I've made a public statement. I've been very clear about what my course of action will be. I've said that I will work with the authorities.

But in the meantime, there's very important work that has to be done for the people of this province. There was a very serious rail incident in Gogama this past weekend. Our member for Sudbury was there; I know that the member for Nickel Belt was also there. I also know that it's going to be very important that we, in this House, call on the federal government, as the leader of the NDP federally has done—

Interjections.

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

While the Premier is putting the answer, the injections of the Minister of Agriculture and the deputy House leader are at best annoying, and they will stop.

Please finish.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Our Minister of Transportation will be contacting the federal transport minister and both CN and CP to reiterate our concerns about rail safety. I hope that the leader of the third party will be working with us on that very important file.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Liberals have tried ignoring this scandal. They've tried slinging mud at everybody else. They've tried to change the channel over and over again. But what they haven't done is take any responsibility or answer any questions.

The Premier is taking counsel from staff who are facing criminal investigations, while she refuses to answer simple questions, like who made the decisions in the Sudbury bribery scandal. Does the Premier realize how bad this makes her look? Does she realize the damage that it does to her credibility and to the credibility of her government?

That's my question, Speaker: Does she realize the damage this is doing to her? If she does, why doesn't she just do the right thing and have those people step aside?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I will say that I understand this is a serious issue; I take it very seriously. I have said repeatedly that I will work with the authorities. I have answered over and over again the questions that have been put to me in this House.

But I am also very, very clear that the investigation is taking place outside of this House. The authorities are not here. They are not asking the questions in this House. Those questions are being asked elsewhere. They are being asked as part of the independent external investigation. That is as it should be, and that is the investigation we will take part in.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Premier. The gas plant scandal had the deputy chief of staff and senior Liberal operatives caught in the OPP's radar. The same is true in your Sudbury bribery scandal. It will be the taped words of your deputy and Liberal operative that will be your undoing.

You have stated that you made the decision to appoint your Sudbury candidate in late November, but it seems nobody knew. On December 12, Pat Sorbara told Andrew Olivier that you were "going to" be making your decision. According to your own deputy, you hadn't yet made your decision. The tape doesn't lie. Will you admit that your version and the version found on tape are vastly different?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I will say to the member opposite that there's an investigation going on outside of this House. Much as he would like to be running the investigation, it's not happening.

His House leader said on February 27 that it was a good idea to "stop interfering in an ongoing investigation, and let it run its course." So that's what we're going to do. We're going to let the investigation take place outside of this House.

In the meantime, we are going to carry on the very, very important work of building this province up, of making sure that we work and partner with business, that we provide the home care that people need in their homes, and that we put in place the policies that will keep young women and girls safe and will work to change the culture of sexual assault and violence—and that, Mr. Speaker, in respect of International Women's Day yesterday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Again to the Premier: This is just like the gas plant scandal, where Liberal operatives said one thing, but recovered emails clearly laid out the truth. This time, it's your operatives' words that were caught on tape.

Gerry Lougheed had quite a chat with Andrew Olivier on December 11. He talked about what would happen if Olivier said no to his job offer and instead went out and

sold Liberal memberships. He left the door open for Olivier to run. According to your Liberal operative, you hadn't yet made your decision.

You have been snared by your own story. So which is it, Premier: your version, or the one caught on tape?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I will say very clearly, and I've said this many times—

Mr. John Yakabuski: No Watergate gap in these tapes.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: —that I made a decision that Glenn Thibeault would be the best candidate for us in Sudbury, after my meeting with him at the end of November. I've said that clearly.

I do take this matter very seriously, but I've said that I will work with the authorities outside of this House. That's where the investigation is taking place, and that's where it rightly should take place, because it is an independent investigation. It's not an investigation that is taking place in the Legislature. It's not a political investigation, Mr. Speaker; it's an independent investigation that's happening outside the Legislature.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. The Premier said she wanted to keep a young man involved, and that's why Andrew Olivier was offered a job in exchange for getting out of the Premier's way. But the crimes that the OPP are investigating just don't get excused away. Is the Premier ready to stop offering excuses and start offering explanations?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to go back to a moment on February 27 when this very member made a statement, and he said that "you do have a larger responsibility to make sure you're careful in the use of your words so you don't interfere in any ... way."

That was the member from Timmins—James Bay, so I know that he understands why it's important that we let the investigation take place with the authorities outside of this Legislature. But I just wanted to remind him of that, because he did say that on February 27, so he will then understand better why my answer is, once again, we'll work with the authorities outside of this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Back to the Premier: Those comments were about you, Premier, by the way.

The Premier is a grandmother; I'm a grandfather. The Premier has heard a lot of excuses; I've heard a lot of excuses. As any parent or grandparent knows, excuses don't cut it. That's especially true of the law. Excuses don't make it okay to break the Criminal Code or to violate the Election Act.

Will the Premier stop making excuses and instead start giving answers to important questions like who made the decision to offer Andrew Olivier a job?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me just say once again that I will co-operate with the authorities. The investigation is taking place outside of this House.

But to the quote that the member opposite made, he said, and again I'll just read it into the record: "You do have a larger responsibility to make sure you're careful in the use of your words so you don't interfere in any ... way." I know—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. I wouldn't have stopped the clock, except there was some bantering back and forth from people at the other side. I'm going to ask that that stop so that I can focus on the answer.

Please.

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Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I know the member opposite was addressing that to me, Mr. Speaker. But the fact is there's a principle in that statement and the principle is that interference should not come from us, that we should let the authorities do their work and let the investigation unfold. That's the principle of which I wanted to remind the member opposite.

RAIL SAFETY

Mr. John Fraser: My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. On Saturday, 38 cars from a CN train derailed about two kilometres west of Gogama near the Minakwa River. While thankfully no one was hurt, a number of the cars carrying crude oil caught fire, the rail bridge over the Minakwa River collapsed and two of the cars ended up in the river itself.

This was the second derailment in the area in less than a month. In both cases the resulting plume of smoke could be seen for miles around. People in the community are concerned about the impacts these derailments are having on their air and drinking water, and, quite frankly, they're concerned about the federal rail safety regulations that are supposed to protect them.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change: Could he please provide an update to the House on the situation in Gogama?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I'm very glad to get a question that Ontarians care about. It's very timely and important to so many folks. First of all, I want to thank the citizens and local government in Gogama and the Greater Sudbury area as well as the First Nations who are working so closely with our officials. I want to thank the staff at MOECC, in the federal environment ministry, my colleagues at natural resources and forestry, our OPP, the fire marshal and, particularly, the Sudbury and District Health Unit for the excellent work they're doing to protect our citizens, because the safety of Ontarians is very much our first priority.

This horrifying crash, as my parliamentary assistant, the member for Sudbury, has pointed out, really has to draw attention to the need for greater federal government action to protect our communities and our environment.

I'm happy to report to the House that containment measures are in place in the Minakwa River. Vacuum trucks are on site to pull as much out as possible. We're taking water samples in a number of areas and monitoring air—

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

Mr. John Fraser: I want to thank the minister for providing us with the update on the situation in Gogama. I know I speak for every member of this House when I say that we are very relieved that no one was injured in this horrific incident. It is clear that the federal government needs to do more to improve rail safety to better protect our citizens, communities and the environment. The rail cars involved were new models compliant with the latest regulations, yet still we have this situation.

Could the minister please inform members of this House on what the government is doing to call on the federal government to improve rail safety in Ontario after Saturday's incident?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I want to begin by thanking the member from Ottawa South for this very important question. Saturday's train derailment is, of course, very concerning to our government. As the member mentioned, the transportation of dangerous goods, including oil, is the responsibility of the federal government. I want to assure members of this House that I will be contacting the federal transport minister, Lisa Raitt, as well as representatives from both CN and CP this week to reiterate our government's serious concerns with respect to rail safety.

Rail safety has always been a top priority in our discussions with our federal counterparts over the last number of years. We need to do everything that we can to ensure that another incident like this does not happen in the future. I know my counterparts in the government of Quebec have also been very outspoken and very active on this important file as well.

We will continue to advocate on behalf of all Ontarians on this important issue to ensure the safety of all of those living in this incredible province.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is to the Premier and it's about the Sudbury by-election. Instead of creating a culture which respects and adheres to the spirit and letter of the elections law, the Premier has created a win-at-all-costs culture in her office, even if that means cheating. That was her first mistake.

Then she either delegated too much authority to her Machiavellian staff in political operatives or she signed off on the plan to offer an enticement to Mr. Olivier to get him to stand down as a candidate, or worse, she ordered her staff to make the offer, which can only be called a bribe or a breach of Ontario's election law. That was her second mistake.

The Premier has a responsibility to uphold the integrity of her office. When will she demand the resignations of Ms. Sorbara and Mr. Lougheed?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the members opposite continue to want to run an investigation here in the Legislature. This is not where the investigation can take place. It actually has to take place outside of the Legislature. It's independent. I think it's very important that we take the responsibility not to interfere with that investigation.

I say to the member opposite again: I will work with the authorities, but I will work with them, Mr. Speaker, where they are doing their work and where the investigation is taking place, outside of the Legislature.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: This is a channel that the Premier cannot change. In order to maintain the public's confidence and trust while these two police investigations continue to unfold, the Premier needs to demand the resignations of Ms. Sorbara and Mr. Lougheed. So far, she has steadfastly refused to do so. This is her third mistake when it comes to the Sudbury by-election.

By stating in this House that she believes Ms. Sorbara won't be charged, the Premier has interfered in and possibly compromised the ongoing police investigations—the fourth mistake, because parliamentary democracy requires a clear separation between the legislative branch and the judiciary.

The Sudbury by-election scandal is one that the Premier can't blame on her predecessor or his people. When is she going to take personal responsibility for her role in this and demand the resignations of Sorbara and Lougheed?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, I've made a public statement. I've been very clear about my decision in terms of who the candidate in Sudbury would be, Mr. Speaker. But the fact is, if the member opposite is really concerned about the separation of what goes on in this House and what happens in terms of independent process, then he will understand exactly why I answer this question in the way that I do, which is that it is very important that I not interfere and that the authorities are allowed to run the investigation and let it unfold.

But the fact is that at the same time there is other work that needs to be done, and that's the work of government. That is the work where we make sure, for example, that there are responses to incidents like what just happened in Gogama this weekend. It's very important that we be able to do all of those things at the same time.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Premier. Pat Sorbara said that there were others who were pushed out of the way by the Premier herself and possibly offered bribes. Who are those others?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Again, the investigation is taking place outside of this House, and we'll work with the authorities as that investigation unfolds.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The Liberals have refused to answer this question even though they have insisted that they have done nothing wrong. If they're not telling the whole story, there could be two other bribery investigations out there. In fact, there could be two other criminal investigations.

Will the Premier tell Ontarians who Pat Sorbara was referring to when she told Andrew Olivier on tape that the Premier had personally made at least two other calls to two other people making the same offer as she did to Andrew Olivier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: As the Premier has said over and over again, this is a matter that is being dealt with outside of this Legislature. We should respect all authorities in terms of the work that they're doing. It would be highly inappropriate for anyone in this House to comment on an ongoing investigation. I respect the Premier for taking a principled approach in this regard, and I suggest to the members opposite that they should do the same thing.

It's clear that the NDP is trying to continue to talk about this issue as opposed to real issues because they have a dismal record when it comes to defending progressive issues in this province. They have abandoned anything progressive when it comes to making sure that Ontarians' interests are represented. I just quote Carol Goar in the Toronto Star when she wrote that Andrea Horwath "triggered the election by rejecting the most progressive provincial budget in decades, one that would have raised the minimum wage, increased the Ontario Child Benefit, improved welfare rates, and provided more support to people with disabilities."

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND HARASSMENT

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. On Friday, the Premier released *It's Never Okay: An Action Plan to Stop Sexual Violence and Harassment*. This is a package of initiatives to help change attitudes, improve supports for survivors who come forward about abuse, and make workplaces and campuses safer and more responsive to complaints about sexual violence and harassment.

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We know that one in three women will experience some form of sexual assault in her lifetime. This government has recognized that this is unacceptable. This is a societal problem that has been in the shadows and not talked about for far too long.

Minister, can you please provide this House with an update of the actions that the government has taken to support victims of sexual violence and harassment?

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Thank you very much to the member for Halton for this very important question.

The Premier's announcement last week is the latest in our government's commitment to address the needs of victims of sexual and domestic violence.

As a government—contrary to what was stated by the third party earlier today—we have increased funding by 51% since 2003 for violence against women services. In 2013-14, our government spent \$145 million in this sector. This includes funding for over 2,000 shelter beds for women and their children escaping domestic violence, counselling services for women and children, crisis telephone counselling, as well as local referral services for housing and other supports.

In the 2014 budget, we invested an additional \$14.5 million over the next three years to provide funding to the hard-working front-line workers at the agencies that serve the violence against women sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: Thank you, Minister, for outlining the very real work that this government and your ministry has been doing.

As we continue to better comprehend the complex issue of sexual violence and harassment, we have gained an understanding around victims and perpetrators, learning more about those who are at risk of suffering abuse and also realizing how pervasive sexual harassment continues to be in our society. It is a deep-rooted problem. It crosses all social boundaries. It is experienced by women, girls, men and boys of every age and culture. It can occur at any time, anywhere, any place. It is a crime.

This government has recognized that to tackle sexual violence and harassment, there needs to be a comprehensive plan, a plan to change behaviours and challenge social norms.

Mr. Speaker, in every workplace, every campus, every community and every context, we can and must do better. Tell us about the prevalence, Minister.

Hon. Helena Jaczek: Indeed the prevalence of sexual violence and harassment throughout our society is unacceptable. For example, statistics show that women with a disability are three times as likely to be forced into sexual activity by use of threats or force.

Through our government's new action plan, we're doing our part to establish an Ontario where everyone is free from the threat, fear or experience of sexual violence and harassment.

As part of this action plan, my ministry will be enhancing the focus and action of our 48 domestic violence community coordinating committees on sexual violence awareness. My ministry will also be exploring the use of community hubs to offer services like sexual assault centres, public health units and legal aid offices in one location to address the barriers women face in accessing services.

Mr. Speaker, our government agrees with the member that in every workplace, every campus, every community, we can and must do better.

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mrs. Julia Munro: My question is to the Premier. The Chief Electoral Officer's report confirms what we

have always suspected: that the Ontario Liberal Party will do just about anything to win a by-election.

Alleged attempts to bribe the Liberal candidate have sullied the democratic process. Now, the Premier's refusal to do the honourable thing and remove Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed Jr. from their public positions has sullied the dignity of the office she holds.

Premier, did your zeal for winning the Sudbury by-election also extend to making promises to the Sudbury voters that you had no intention of keeping?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me first of all just say that I think that to second guess the democratic process which took place in Sudbury—the people of Sudbury had all the information. They made a decision. They sent Glenn Thibeault to Queen's Park as the MPP for Sudbury, and they made a decision. I respect that decision that they made.

To the point of what the Chief Electoral Officer has actually said, Mr. Speaker, let me just say again that the Chief Electoral Officer clearly stated, "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence. Those decisions are respectively for prosecutors and judges." That's what the Chief Electoral Officer said in his report, and there is an investigation going on outside of this House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Julia Munro: Again to the Premier: The member from Sudbury said, "Everyone in the north knows someone who has been affected by an accident on the highway." We're talking about Highway 69.

The Highway 69 project, which the Premier promised throughout the Sudbury by-election, is, surprisingly, not a priority, now that the campaign is over. After years of promising its timely completion, we see it delayed for yet another four years. This is just another example of the Liberals saying one thing and doing another, to get votes.

Premier, the first question—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. Sorry for interrupting. I have to bring someone in your own caucus to attention so that I can hear the question.

The interjections of everyone else: I am listening carefully. There was a reference, and I will let you finish the question, making sure that it is germane to the first question.

Mrs. Julia Munro: Premier, the first question I asked you was about integrity. Last week I asked you about unprecedented irregularities. Now I ask you: How good is your word?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I'm very happy that the member opposite asked a question regarding the four-laning of Highway 69.

Last Friday I had the opportunity to be in a community just south of Sudbury, standing alongside my colleague and good friend the member from Sudbury, to update the community with respect to where we stand.

It's important to recognize that there has been extraordinary progress on this particular project, thanks to the leadership over the last decade—and more—of this government. In fact, of the 20 kilometres that are currently under construction on Highway 69 with respect to the four-laning, nine kilometres will be paved and in operation this coming summer. An additional 11 kilometres will be paved and operating next summer. We've already completed 50 kilometres of this project.

There is more work to do, but what's most important for this Premier and our government is to make sure that we get it right so that the benefits of four-laning Highway 69 flow to everybody, including our First Nations partners. That's why we're going to make sure this project gets completed—

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

Interjections.

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

New question.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Premier. On February 20, it was reported that the federal Liberal Party would have nothing to do with Gerry Lougheed or Pat Sorbara during the upcoming election. The federal Liberals obviously realize something that the Premier is ignoring: that bribery scandals are bad for business, and they're bad for democracy.

The federal Liberals also suggest Gerry Lougheed won't be holding any fundraisers for them. Will the Premier or her party be accepting any money from Gerry Lougheed while he is under police investigation?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As I said, I've been trying to listen carefully, and I know this weaves in and out. Make sure that the member brings this to government policy in the supplementary.

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, I restate what the Premier has said clearly, that there is an ongoing investigation that is taking place outside this House. It would be highly inappropriate for any member of the government to comment on that investigation.

We should respect the process and come back down to the issues that are important to people, issues like making sure that we have retirement income security for hard-working Ontarians who do not have a pension plan; or making sure that we are investing in our infrastructure, most importantly public transit and public transportation infrastructure.

Clearly, the NDP have no positions on these issues. They have abandoned these important issues. They do not want to talk about those issues. This is their strategy to deflect. This is something they've been doing since

last year, and we've seen the results of the last election, where people elected a Liberal majority government.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: On December 12, Gerry Lougheed met with Andrew Olivier, on behalf of the Premier, to offer him a job. Since then, the Sudbury police services board has met three times. But in nearly three months, the Premier has yet to remove Gerry Lougheed from the Sudbury police services board. Gerry Lougheed has been making decisions that affect law enforcement in Sudbury, all the while facing a criminal investigation. Anyone can see that's not right.

Will the Premier sign an order in council today to remove Gerry Lougheed, a Liberal nominee to the board, from the Sudbury police services board?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, as I have spoken on this issue before, I think the member opposite very much knows that the boards are made up of both municipal appointees and provincial appointees, and there is a code of conduct by which boards must abide. If boards have any issue, they can refer that matter to the Ontario Civilian Police Commission. In this case, I think we know that the police services board in Sudbury has done so.

Speaker, this just goes to highlight again how the NDP does not want to talk about real issues. This is something they've been suffering from for over a year.

I want to highlight what Martin Regg Cohn said in the Toronto Star:

"Andrea Horwath, meet Stephen Harper—your new best friend and fellow traveller...."

"As leader of Ontario's NDP, Horwath has made a stunning about-face on pensions—betraying the middle class, working class, and everyone in between...."

"Under Horwath, the NDP is no longer activist but obstructionist."

REAL ESTATE INDUSTRY

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Ontario's real estate sector contributes billions annually to our economy, and it supplies the livelihood for some 57,000 people in our province.

Today in the House, we're joined by many of the members of the real estate community and businesspeople from many of our Ontario communities.

All of our communities depend on an ongoing and respectful relationship between home purchasers and realtors, whether realtors are part of larger brokerages or whether they're independent agents.

The Ministry of Government and Consumer Services has identified real estate modernization as a priority. I'd like the minister to explain the measures that Ontario is taking to help ensure a competitive real estate environment that allows for successful business operations and a fair market for consumers.

Hon. David Oraziotti: I want to thank the member from Mississauga–Streetsville for this important question. I'd also like to welcome the Ontario Real Estate Association here to the gallery and encourage members to stop by their reception later today.

The purchase of a home is a significant milestone for many Ontarians, and I'm pleased with the steps that our government has taken to simplify this process. Our Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act makes the real estate market more open and transparent as well as affordable. We've improved real estate transactions by allowing for more appropriate billing and fee options. This reform increases flexibility for homebuyers and sellers to negotiate charges and services with their professionals. We've taken steps to eliminate phantom offers, which inflate prices and undermine transparency. The act requires realtors to provide offers in writing, and this regulation was based on extensive consultations with the sector and received the full support of OREA.

I appreciate the contributions that those who work in the real estate industry make, and I look forward to continuing to work with them, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Minister, the purchase of a home can be a stressful experience. It's the biggest purchase that most families ever make. Our government needs to explore every opportunity to make the process more efficient and easier for individuals and families. Consumers need to ensure the business environment is fair and transparent, and that the interests of the homebuyer and seller are protected.

I know our government has also worked to support an efficient real estate environment by allowing electronic signatures. Members of the real estate industry support this change. My question asks you to confirm that the province will be moving forward with it. Would the minister please inform the House how the Electronic Commerce Act is making the sale and purchase of real estate easier and more efficient for the people of Ontario and for homebuyers and home sellers?

Hon. David Oraziotti: Thank you, once again, to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Ontario's 2013 amendments to the Electronic Commerce Act will allow people to electronically sign paperwork and email it to their real estate agent. The act will support the reliability of electronic signatures on agreements of purchase and sale of land by stipulating that e-signatures must be: reliable, for the purpose of identifying the person who signs the document; permanent; and accessible by people who are entitled to view it.

We're now reviewing the submissions made to the ministry during the consultation period to develop proactive measures and ensure that these amendments will increase efficiency without increasing the risk of fraud.

Our government is committed to an efficient, competitive real estate environment and looks forward to continued engagement with the real estate sector on this matter.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Premier. Is the Premier returning?

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. The tradition is a courtesy in terms of attendance one way or the other. We do not make reference to people's absence. If you would put the question to someone else, we'd appreciate that very much.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's not my position to debate the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. It doesn't matter.

Put your question, please.

Mr. Norm Miller: Thank you for that explanation, Mr. Speaker. I'll address my question to the Deputy Premier, then.

Nearly every time you and the Premier rise in this Legislature, you tell us that you're taking the Sudbury by-election issue seriously. Deputy Premier, you are taking this just about as seriously as you did the actions of Laura Miller and Peter Faist. You let them fly across the country to avoid accountability. Now, you continue to let Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed avoid accountability for their actions that were found to be in direct contravention of the Election Act.

Deputy Premier, will today be the day you finally hold these individuals accountable?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We do take this very, very seriously. The Premier has spoken to it repeatedly, both in this House and outside of this House.

I think the question is: Where should the investigation take place? I don't think there's any question that the investigation should take place outside of this House. It is important that it's independent of this Legislature and takes place outside the Legislature.

Elections Ontario determined that the allegations against the member from Sudbury and the Premier were baseless. Nonetheless, they will continue to co-operate fully. The Chief Electoral Officer clearly stated, "I am neither deciding to prosecute a matter nor determining anyone's guilt or innocence." That's a very important statement: I am not determining anyone's guilt or innocence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Perhaps if the government started answering some of these simple questions, the questions wouldn't get asked anymore.

Again to the Deputy Premier: As we continue to wait for four OPP investigations to conclude, we can only worry what might be next. With your lack of action so far, how can we believe that you're serious about making your government more accountable?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think we've received some very good advice from members of the opposition. We agreed when the PC House leader said a week or two

ago, "Stop interfering in an ongoing investigation, and let it run its course."

When asked about a charge laid against a PC staff member, the PC member from Whitby–Oshawa said, "I really don't have a comment ... because it's before the courts." She repeated this sentiment on CP24 when she said, "I'm leaving it in the hands of the police and the justice system to continue their investigation and I'm confident that they will reach the right conclusion."

We agree with the House leader. We agree with the member from Whitby–Oshawa.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Miss Monique Taylor: Just over a year ago, the Premier stood up and said, "I am the change"—sorry, this is to the Deputy Premier. It seems a bit odd because before the Premier was sworn in, the Liberal government was facing police investigations, and since the Premier was sworn in, the Liberal government is facing even more police investigations.

The culture of arrogance doesn't seem to have changed at all. Will the Deputy Premier ensure that the Premier will keep to her promise and make change by telling Ontarians who was making the decisions in the Sudbury bribery scandal?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services.

1150

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I'll be very happy to answer this question. I remind the NDP what they campaigned on. They campaigned on voting against increases to the minimum wage. They voted against increasing the salaries for hard-working personal support workers. In fact, they campaigned on voting against the hard-working child care workers. They've campaigned to vote against providing additional funding for people with intellectual disabilities. That's the party that claims to be progressive but has voted against one of the most progressive budgets—not once, but twice.

One of the reasons the NDP are spending all this time talking about anything else but real issues, like the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, is because they have no policies, because they do not believe in progressive policies. We're not the only ones saying this, Speaker. The people of Ontario passed their judgment in June, and they elected a Liberal majority government.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Less than a year ago, the Premier promised Ontarians she would "work each and every day to keep your trust..." But instead of trust, the behaviour of the Liberals is making people more cynical. Instead of answering questions about the Sudbury bribery scandal, the Premier is dodging, hiding and trying to distract people.

An editorial published says that in spite of well over 100 questions about the Sudbury bribery scandal, the Liberals have directly answered only one single question—that's less than 1%.

Will the Premier start making good on her promise and keep Ontarians' trust by answering a simple question: Who told Pat Sorbara and Gerry Lougheed to offer Andrew Olivier a job?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Clearly, the NDP has no tangible issues or policies left to talk about. Clearly, they have nothing left for them to go back to their party members and say, "This is what we stand for." Again and again, they have demonstrated that they stand for nothing.

In fact, if anybody, they're really aligned with the Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, when it comes to issues on retirement income security. This is what Martin Regg Cohn had to say in the Toronto Star: "Andrea Horwath, meet Stephen Harper—your new best friend and fellow traveller...."

"As leader of Ontario's NDP, Horwath has made a stunning about-face on pensions—betraying the middle class, working class, and everyone in between."

Speaker, he goes on to conclude in this column: "Under Horwath, the NDP is no longer activist but obstructionist. Not progressive, but reactionary."

"The Prime Minister would be proud."

Shame on them, Speaker.

ORGAN DONATION

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question this morning is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Interjection: A great minister.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: A great minister; that's right.

There are many Ontarians who have loved ones requiring an organ which would save their life. Every day, hundreds of Ontarians wait for the gift of life. Sadly, I have even heard from constituents in my riding of Davenport who are enduring this excruciating wait themselves or for a loved one.

Demand for organ transplantation is increasing due to technological and pharmacological advances, the aging population, and increasing incidence of end-stage organ disease.

Organ donation is a critical part of our world-leading health system. Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: Tell us about our government's organ and tissue donation and transplant system, and how our government plans on addressing the increasing demands for organ transplantation.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I thank the member from Davenport for this important question.

Our government developed the organ and tissue donation and transplant system to address three main goals: to maximize organ donations to increase organ transplants and to reduce the wait times for organ transplantation; and also to support an effective, efficient and accountable organ and tissue donation and transplantation system; and thirdly, to meet the need for safe and high-quality tissue for transplantation in Ontario.

Our organ and tissue donation and transplant system is highly effective. It consists of 56 designated hospitals in

the donation infrastructure system, 21 of which are hospitals that provide neurosurgical or trauma services.

I want to take this opportunity to thank our hard-working health care professionals for their work in our organ and tissue donation and transplant system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care for his work with Ontario's organ and tissue donation and transplant system.

I would like to direct the second part of my question to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

As the minister responsible for ServiceOntario, the Minister of Government and Consumer Services plays an important role in promoting awareness of the need for more Ontarians to become donors.

While I'm encouraged by the increasing number of organ donors, I understand that many Ontarians are still on waiting lists for life-saving or life-transforming transplants. I appreciate the work of our health care professionals, who have the skills and knowledge to perform medical miracles; but for them to save lives, Ontarians must donate.

As leaders, we must continue to educate the public about organ donation and register organ donors to continue helping our health care professionals save lives.

Minister, can you please share with us what ServiceOntario is doing to encourage organ donation and how Ontarians can become donors?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: To the Minister of Government and Consumer Services.

Hon. David Oraziotti: I want to thank the member from Davenport for the supplementary question.

I'm certainly pleased with our initiatives in ServiceOntario, in partnership with the Trillium Gift of Life Network and the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, to increase the number of organ and tissue donors in the province. Among our initiatives, we've launched an innovative, easy-to-access, online donor registration; we're ensuring staff at ServiceOntario centres ask customers about registering when they renew their driver's licences or Ontario photo cards; we're including donor consent forms and information brochures in our health card renewal or re-registration notices; and we're using social media to attract more donors. As a result of these initiatives, Speaker, over 3.1 million Ontarians have registered to donate. I am pleased to report that 2014 was a record-breaking year, with over 250,000 Ontarians registering. I'd like to recognize and thank the record number of Ontarians who are registering for this process.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Your Premier is having her credibility eroded on a daily basis, and I know you're bored with these questions about the Sudbury bribery scandal. So I put this to you, would you today—we'll help you—have Pat Sor-

bara step down until this investigation is completed and have Gerry Lougheed removed from the police services board until this investigation is completed? Then you'll be able to change that channel and move on to something that you find more exciting.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I certainly am grateful for the help of the member opposite. I do think there are other questions that citizens of Ontario would like to have raised in this House. The member opposite has already actually given us some good help.

Let me give you the advice that was given that we're taking. His House leader said, "Stop interfering in an ongoing investigation and let it run its course." So that's advice that he gave us, and that's advice that we are taking. But if that's not enough, the member from Whitby–Oshawa said, when asked about charges laid against a PC staff member, "I really don't have a comment to make on this, because it's before the court." Again, she gave us good advice; advice that we are taking. And she didn't just say it once. She said it again in a CP24 interview. She said, "I'm leaving it in the hands of the police and the justice system to continue their investigation. I'm confident they'll reach the right"—

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

Mr. John Yakubuski: Deputy Premier, even the Premier's predecessor once stated, "It is never too late to do the right thing." I would ask the current Premier, and you in her stead today, to finally do the right thing. Your Premier spoke ad infinitum as she came to this House as the first elected female Premier in the province of Ontario—how things were going to be done differently; how she would be accountable, responsible and she would—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Beaches–East York, come to order.

Mr. John Yakubuski:—and integrity would not be in question in this House.

I give her this opportunity. Change this channel: Have Pat Sorbara step down until this investigation is complete; have Gerry Lougheed step down from the police services board until this investigation is complete.

Will you give the House and will you give the people of Ontario that today?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said, you've given us good advice, and we're taking that advice. We're going to do exactly what the PC House leader said to do, and that is to "stop interfering in an ongoing investigation and let it run its course." We're grateful for that advice.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Forestry.

Hon. Bill Mauro: Speaker, I think you're referring to me; I'm not sure.

I'd like to introduce three students from Lakehead University in Thunder Bay who have joined us this mor-

ning: Baffa Yusuf, Ian McRae, and Roman Jakubowski. They're here with us in the members' gallery.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, I'm sure the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change and the parliamentary assistant know full well that Gogama is my hometown—

Interjections.

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

The House recessed from 1201 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's my pleasure to introduce some very special guests who will be joining us momentarily from the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre in Etobicoke–Lakeshore: Mr. Kunga Tsering, former member of the Tibetan Parliament and co-chair of the Canadian Friends of Tibet; Mrs. Doma Tsoh, board member of the Canadian Friends of Tibet; and Mr. Thupten Wangyal, former president of the Canadian Tibetan Association of Ontario.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Ms. Fife assumes ballot item number 45 and Ms. Forster assumes ballot item number 69.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

PALLIATIVE CARE TELETHON

Mr. Steve Clark: I rise to celebrate another remarkable example of the generosity and community spirit that makes Leeds–Grenville a great place to live. Last weekend our community dug deep to help the 30 Hour Telethon for Palliative Care Services at Brockville General Hospital and raised the bar to heights not seen in its 32 years.

Led by event chair Bruce Wylie, his incredible team of volunteers and some amazing entertainers who gave their time and their talent, the telethon raised a record \$250,582.

Applause.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thank you.

Bruce is the long-time host and chair of the event, and there wasn't a dry eye in the house when he announced

he was passing the torch as event chair. It was truly a case of going out on top.

It's great that Bruce will continue to host the telethon, which has raised nearly \$3 million over three decades. These funds ensure that BGH's cherished palliative care program is there to provide compassionate end-of-life care for patients and family support. Every penny of its \$575,000 annual budget is raised locally because the health ministry provides no funding.

I want to echo Bruce Wylie's passionate plea at the end of this year's telethon for that to change. He said that "people are going to support this telethon for as long as we need to support it, until we get a government that's willing to put some money into things that count. This is one of those things that count."

I wholeheartedly agree. Palliative care does count, and I hope that Minister Hoskins is listening to those words.

KIDNEY DISEASE

Miss Monique Taylor: I chose my statement today with a loved one in mind. One in 10 Canadians has kidney disease or failure. March is Kidney Month, with this Thursday, March 12, being World Kidney Day. Often, there are no symptoms of kidney disease until it is quite advanced and most kidney function is already lost. But early detection can be the difference between life and death.

Last year the Kidney Foundation of Canada introduced an online risk-assessment tool, a simple quiz that takes only a few minutes: 10 short questions that help people decide if they should be speaking to their doctor about kidney disease.

Let's not forget about just how important it is to become an organ donor. Life is precious, and as we know, many have been saved because they were able to receive an organ donated by someone who had recently passed. Quite certainly in the case of kidneys, live donors must match and are sometimes quite rare. For all organ donation, it is important that as many people as possible register to be a donor.

Again, you can do it online—it only takes a couple of minutes—at beadonor.ca. You can specify all the organs you want to donate, not just kidneys. One small step can save a life. In fact, it can save up to eight lives. At a time of tragic loss, that is quite a legacy to leave behind. So be a donor.

MODEL PARLIAMENT

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I rise to make a few observations about one of the many excellent youth programs that are offered here in the Legislature; that is, the Legislative Assembly's model Parliament.

Last week, I met up with two students attending this year's three-day event: Nick Barnes and Sebastian Scott from Kingston Collegiate and Vocational Institute in my riding of Kingston and the Islands.

This unique educational experience brings students from each riding to learn about the history of this institution and about legislative processes, through workshops and presentations.

I want to commend this program for encouraging our youth to participate in civic and community affairs and in political decision-making and governance. If we are saddened by the lack of democratic engagement of our youth—and we should be—then the model Parliament is one remedy.

I'd like to suggest another, Mr. Speaker. This House is a living repository of history—a museum of sorts. If I may be so bold, I would like to suggest that our main exhibit—question period—might be retrofitted to bring it up to modern standards. The harsh reality is that people of all ages are turned off by the antics, by the lack of decorum and by the lack of substantive discussion of the affairs that affect their lives. I have a friend in his eighties who, until last week's charades, watched every morning. He's no longer interested. When I worked in a constituency office for seven years, I heard similar comments all the time.

In closing, Mr. Speaker, we must not forget that threats to democracy come from within and from without.

TOM BRADISH

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, I'd like to say congratulations to a constituent of mine, Tom Bradish, who was inducted into the Middlesex agricultural hall of fame last week.

Tom was born in London and raised on the edge of the village of Glanworth, on his family farm. He attended Wheable Collegiate in London. Tom's parents, William and Jessie Bradish, had a dairy farm where William also bought and sold many Holsteins. Tom went to Guelph to pursue his diploma in agriculture from 1965 to 1967, and returned home to work on the farm. Tom and his wife, Helen, have two daughters, Cheri and Kelly, and a son, John.

Since 1961, Tom has been involved in growing vegetables for processing, including peas, green beans, squash and sweet corn. Along with the Fergusons and the Cuddys, he is one of the founding partners of Strathroy Foods, which later became Carriere Foods, which was then purchased by Bonduelle in 2007, which is a family-run business from France.

Now farming with his son, John, Tom's company, Glan-R-Vest, harvests approximately 20,000 acres of vegetables for Bonduelle's Ingersoll and Strathroy locations. The harvesting keeps 25 to 35 employees busy from mid-June to late October and stretches from Chatham to Tillsonburg, from north of Ilderton all the way down to Port Stanley.

Tom's agricultural involvement includes hosting the 1985 International Plowing Match, co-chairing the 2002 International Plowing Match tented city held in Middlesex, and in 2003 he was the vice-president of the world

plowing match at the experimental research farm in Guelph.

We are proud to have Tom in our riding. Agriculture is stronger because of people like Tom Bradish. We wish Tom all the best as he enjoys his induction into the hall of fame.

SKILLED TRADES

Ms. Jennifer K. French: This weekend, I celebrated International Women's Day and attended the Unifor national skilled trades council. I have decided to talk about both events—to talk about women and the workforce.

Speaker, we talk a lot about strengthening our province and our communities, but it's our workers and tradespeople who are the ones actually doing the physical work. They're literally building, shaping, fixing, crafting and strengthening our communities and our economy in a real way. Jobs in the trades and the manufacturing sector are good, solid, stable, well-paid jobs that allow people to contribute to their local economy, allow them to make plans and live with some predictability. We should be prioritizing these kinds of jobs, funding school programs and promoting apprenticeships for our kids and for our girls.

It's one of the many reasons I'm proud to be a New Democrat. New Democrats stand up for equity in the workplace, fight to tear through the glass ceiling, and demand equal pay for equal work.

At the skilled trades council, delegates discussed the importance of encouraging women leaders and involvement in the skilled trades. Yes, absolutely. Our girls need to see themselves reflected in the trades, and they never will if they can't get into them. We must promote career paths and apprenticeships that afford young workers the opportunity to earn while they learn.

If government really wanted to build a solid economy, they would invest in our kids, our girls and our workers.

New Democrats will continue to stand up to unfair policies and to stand up for workers, women and communities across Ontario.

1310

TIBETAN CANADIAN CULTURAL CENTRE

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: The Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre was established in my riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore on October 17, 2007.

On Saturday, February 21, the centre celebrated Tibetan lunar new year with their special guest, Dr. Andrew Bennett, ambassador for religious freedom, from the Office of Religious Freedom.

I'm pleased to say that, over the years, I've had the honour and privilege of being a guest on many special occasions at the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre—most recently, to mark the 25th anniversary of the Dalai Lama being presented with the Nobel Peace Prize. At that

event, I was also very happy to be on hand to help cut the ribbon on the centre's new kitchen, which was made possible thanks to a \$150,000 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation last year. This investment from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and the subsequent kitchen renovation will support the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre's role of providing social, cultural and recreational programs for participants of all ages.

I am very proud to have the first and only Tibetan cultural centre in Canada right in my riding of Etobicoke-Lakeshore.

I also want to make mention of the 56th national Tibet uprising day taking place tomorrow, on March 10. Mr. Speaker, I know that this day is very important to my guests and to all Tibetans across Etobicoke-Lakeshore and Canada.

To my guests today and Tsering Tsomo, president of the Tibetan Canadian Cultural Centre, all of its members and all Tibetan Canadians in Etobicoke-Lakeshore: Lo Sar Bey Delek. I wish you prosperity and goodwill.

COMMONWEALTH DAY

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to speak today, on Commonwealth Day. I was pleased to join the Speaker and others from the various political parties to join together in recognizing Commonwealth Day.

The Commonwealth nations, while autonomous, share a rich history that has given them common values and economic, political and social strength.

This is an especially historic year, as we mark the 800th anniversary of the signing of the Magna Carta, a revolutionary document that is considered to be the foundation for our system of common law. It certainly was a precursor to the Canadian political system of constitutional monarchy.

I'm looking forward to the second reading of my bill, the Magna Carta Day Act. If passed, June 15 of each year would be proclaimed as Magna Carta Day here in Ontario.

I hope that future generations will remember and celebrate our history and appreciate the origins of the freedoms that we enjoy here in our daily life in Canada as part of the Commonwealth.

TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

Mr. Bob Delaney: As travel season approaches, it's time for Ontario families to do an identity check. If you're planning to travel to the United States, you are going to need an updated passport. If yours has expired or has less than six months left until it expires, it's time to renew that passport.

Whether you travel in the United States or within Canada, outside Ontario, ensure that you have supplementary health coverage for everyone travelling.

Seniors need a special identity check, and their families have an important role to play. Ensure that every senior has an updated Ontario health card. Within a year,

the old, obsolete red-and-white card will have been phased out.

Too many seniors do not have any up-to-date government-issued ID. An expired Ontario driver's licence is not valid identification. Seniors who no longer drive should have an Ontario photo card. Their families need to assist by ensuring that seniors have valid identification cards.

As well, check each senior's and each family member's birth certificate. An old certificate of baptism needs to be upgraded to an official Ontario birth certificate if you were born here. You can do this online and/or by mail.

As our precious Ontario warm weather approaches, Speaker, it's time for all Ontarians to do an identity check.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

Mrs. Cristina Martins: As I'm sure many of you in the House know, yesterday, Sunday, March 8, marked the celebration of International Women's Day. Since 1914, this important occasion has been celebrating women around the world. This year's theme, set by the UN, was "Empowering Women, Empowering Humanity."

To pay tribute to this significant occasion, we have with us in the members' gallery nine fantastic Portuguese-Canadian women who have made significant contributions to our society across a variety of sectors.

Organized by Ana Ochôa, and in light of the Pan/Parapan American Games, a torch relay was initiated to commemorate International Women's Day. This torch was passed to 10 women who have made significant contributions to the Portuguese-Canadian community and to our province. The relay importantly highlights the contributions of women of Luso-Canadian origin across diverse sectors in our province.

All of these strong women deserve our unreserved praise in this Legislature this afternoon. They are as follows:

- Representing the financial sector is relay organizer Ana Ochôa;
- From education, Ana Paula Ribeiro;
- Angela Machado is here for the charitable sector;
- Representing cultural promotion is Rosa de Sousa;
- Katia Caramujo is representing youth and volunteering in the not-for-profit sector;
- Representing our community as a pioneer is Lucillia Simas;
- Suzanne Cunha, for community associations;
- The public service, Paula Medeiros; and
- Lisa Fara is representing the armed forces.

Lastly, the torch arrived at my office here at Queen's Park this morning, as I am the first Portuguese-Canadian woman elected in government to this Legislature.

Applause.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you.

Mr. Speaker, I'm very happy to host these incredible women here at Queen's Park, and I'd like to thank Ana Ochôa once again for this great initiative.

Ladies, stand up.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): She made them stand up faster than I stood up.

I thank all members for their statements. It's now time for petitions.

The member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, stand up really quickly.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry, sorry.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That threw me off so much, I couldn't help it. I've got to get back into routine proceedings.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

HOUSING SERVICES CORPORATION ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015

SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION DE LA SOCIÉTÉ DES SERVICES DE LOGEMENT

Mr. Hardeman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 74, An Act to amend the Housing Services Act, 2011 and the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996 /
Projet de loi 74, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2011 sur les services de logement et la Loi de 1996 sur la divulgation des traitements dans le secteur public.

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. Ernie Hardeman: This bill will increase accountability and reduce the waste and misuse of affordable housing dollars. It amends the Housing Services Act, 2011, in the following ways:

First, section 150 is amended to permit the Auditor General to audit the accounts of the Housing Services Corp. and each of its subsidiaries.

Second, section 151 is amended so that members of the Housing Services Corp., such as service managers and local housing corporations, are not required to participate in any of the corporation's programs or activities. This will save social housing providers money by letting them purchase natural gas and insurance at the best price.

The bill also amends the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, 1996, to specify that the Housing Services Corp. and each of its subsidiaries are employers for the purposes of the act, which means they will once again have to report salaries over \$100,000.

MICROBEAD ELIMINATION
AND MONITORING ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'ÉLIMINATION
ET LE CONTRÔLE DES MICROBILLES

Mrs. Lalonde moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 75, An Act with respect to microbeads / Projet de loi 75, Loi concernant les microbilles.

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

First reading agreed to.

1320

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for an even shorter statement.

M^{me} Marie-France Lalonde: Merci, monsieur le Président. C'est un honneur pour moi de présenter aujourd'hui mon premier projet de loi.

The Microbead Elimination and Monitoring Act, 2015, will serve to ensure industry and manufacturers in the province are mindful of the use of synthetic plastic microbeads in their products and begin identifying alternatives. Microbeads are non-biodegradable, solid plastic particles measuring less than one millimetre in size that are used in cosmetics, soap or similar products.

In addition to ceasing production of microbeads, the bill will require the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to undertake a microbeads monitoring study in the Great Lakes and publish the results on their website. I believe Ontario can and will be the first province in Canada to phase out microbeads to protect Ontarians and our wildlife today and in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I move to motions, just a point to make: that you should be reading from just the explanatory notes of bills. If they are long, you condense them and we avoid any kind of complication of statements being made.

It is now time for motions.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot items 37 and 42 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Naqvi moves that notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot items 37 and 42 be waived. Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mr. Bill Walker: "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 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 and will affix my signature and send it with page Fardin.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS

Ms. Jennifer K. French: I have a petition here from people across Ontario to end the exploitation of unpaid interns.

"Whereas there are an estimated 100,000 to 300,000 unpaid internships in Canada each year, depriving young people of economic opportunity and potentially displacing paid workers; and

"Whereas unpaid internships perpetuate poorer labour market outcomes for marginalized groups and those who cannot afford to participate; and

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

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Protecting Interns and Creating a Learning Economy Act, 2015, which:

“(1) extends basic protections under the Employment Standards Act (ESA) to those currently excluded;

“(2) requires that posters with information about interns’ rights in Ontario be conspicuously displayed in the workplace;

“(3) requires that employers provide interns with written notice about conditions of work, length of employment, hours of work, and job description, to be submitted to the ministry to enable the collection of data on internships; and

“(4) creates a system to allow anonymous and third-party complaints about unpaid internships.”

I wholeheartedly support this, affix my name and will send it with page Riley.

CREDIT UNIONS

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

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

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

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

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

“—maintain current credit union provincial tax rates;

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

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

I agree with the petition, will affix my name, and give it to page Julie to bring forward.

WINTER ROAD MAINTENANCE

Mr. Norm Miller: I have over 200 signatures in support of improved winter road maintenance. It reads:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the area maintenance contract system has failed Ontario drivers the past two winters;

“Whereas unsafe conditions led to the maintenance contractor being fined in the winter of 2013-14, as well as leading to a special investigation by the provincial Auditor General;

“Whereas the managed outsourcing system for winter roads maintenance, where the private contractor is responsible for maintenance, but MTO patrols the region and directs the contractor on the deployment of vehicles, sand and salt, has a proven track record for removing

snow and ensuring that Ontario’s highways are safe for travellers;

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

“That the Ontario Ministry of Transportation take immediate action to improve the maintenance of winter roads based on the positive benefits of the previous delivery model, where MTO plays more of a role in directing the private contractor.”

I support this petition.

LGBT CONVERSION THERAPY

Ms. Catherine Fife: It’s my pleasure to read this for the first time in the House.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas in 2013 the fifth edition of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5) removed transgender and gender non-conforming identities from the mental disorders category;

“Whereas LGBT youth face 14 times the risk of suicide compared to their heterosexual peers and 77% of trans respondents in an Ontario-based survey had seriously considered suicide with 45% having already attempted suicide;

“Whereas an Ontario study found that transgender youth aged 16-24 have a 93% lower suicide rate when they feel supported by their parents in the expression of their gender identity;

“Whereas LGBT conversion therapy seeks to prohibit gender and sexual orientation expression, has no professional standards or guidelines in how it is practised and is condemned by all major professional associations of health care providers; and

“Whereas Ontario’s Ministry of Health currently funds LGBT conversion therapy through OHIP;

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

“That the Ministry of Health immediately cease funding all known forms of conversion therapy.”

It’s my pleasure to affix my signature and give this to page Niko.

WATER FLUORIDATION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further petitions? The member for Etobicoke–Lakeshore.

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was starting to get worried for the follicly challenged.

I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly:

“Whereas fluoride is a mineral that exists naturally in virtually all water supplies, even the ocean; and

“Whereas scientific studies conducted during the past 70 years have consistently shown that the fluoridation of community water supplies is a safe and effective means of preventing dental decay, and is a public health measure endorsed by more than 90 national and international health organizations; and

“Whereas dental decay is the second-most frequent condition suffered by children, and is one of the leading causes of absences from school; and

“Whereas Health Canada has determined that the optimal concentration of fluoride in municipal drinking water for dental health is 0.7 mg/L, providing optimal dental health benefits, and well below the maximum acceptable concentrations; and

“Whereas the decision to add fluoride to municipal drinking water is a patchwork of individual choices across Ontario, with municipal councils often vulnerable to the influence of misinformation, and studies of questionable or no scientific merit;

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

“That the ministries of the government of Ontario adopt the number one recommendation made by the Ontario Chief Medical Officer of Health in a 2012 report on oral health in Ontario, and amend all applicable legislation and regulations to make the fluoridation of municipal drinking water mandatory in all municipal water systems across the province of Ontario.”

I am proud to affix my signature to this petition and submit it to the Clerk.

LANDFILL

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I have a petition here signed by a great many of my constituents.

“Whereas many of the resources of this planet are finite and are necessary to sustain both life and the quality of life for all future generations;

“Whereas the disposal of resources in landfills creates environmental hazards which will have significant human and financial costs for;

“Whereas all levels of government are elected to guarantee their constituents’ physical, financial, emotional and mental well-being;

“Whereas the health risks to the community and watershed increase in direct relationship to the proximity of any landfill site;

“Whereas the placement of a landfill in a limestone quarry has been shown to be detrimental;

“Whereas the placement of a landfill in the headwaters of multiple highly vulnerable aquifers is detrimental;

“Whereas the county of Oxford has passed a resolution requesting a moratorium on landfill construction or approval;

“Therefore be it resolved that we, the undersigned, humbly petition the Legislative Assembly as follows:

“To implement a moratorium in Oxford county on any future landfill construction or approval until such time as a full review of alternatives has been completed which would examine best practices in other jurisdictions around the world;

“That this review of alternatives would give special emphasis on (a) practices which involve the total recycling or composting of all products currently destined for

landfill sites in Ontario and (b) the production of goods which can efficiently and practically be recycled or reused so as to not require disposal in landfills.”

I affix my signature as I agree with this petition, Mr. Speaker.

FIRST RESPONDERS

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

“Whereas emergency response workers (paramedics, police officers, and firefighters) confront traumatic events on a nearly daily basis to provide safety to the public; and

“Whereas many emergency response workers suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder as a result of their work; and

“Whereas Bill 2 ‘An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder’ sets out that if an emergency response worker suffers from post-traumatic stress disorder, the disorder is presumed to be an occupational disease that occurred due to their employment as an emergency response worker, unless the contrary is shown;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to unanimously endorse and quickly pass Bill 2 ‘An Act to amend the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997 with respect to post-traumatic stress disorder’.”

I couldn’t agree with this more, Mr. Speaker. I’m going to affix my name to it and give it to Rachel to bring to the Clerk.

IMMIGRATION POLICY

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

“Whereas Ontario is a province of immigrants, representing over 200 countries and speaking more than 130 languages; and

“Whereas Ontario is the primary destination for newcomers to Ontario, receiving more immigrants than the combined total of most of Canada’s provinces and territories; and

“Whereas Ontario is dependent on skilled immigrant labour to fill jobs, 2.5 million of which are estimated to be created in the next 10 years; and

“Whereas a stronger immigration partnership with the federal government will allow Ontario to work with employers and communities to assess labour force needs and bring in highly-skilled workers;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act, 2014.”

I fully support the petition, Mr. Speaker, and I give the petition to page Natalie.

HEALTH CARE

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

“Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care’s lack of leadership is forcing the closure of the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site; and

“Whereas it is ignoring evidence that the restorative care program has had major successes since its inception three years ago; and

“Whereas it has helped over 300 patients to increase their quality of life by helping them regain strength, balance and independence; and

“Whereas it has improved patient outcomes for over 80% of patients who returned home feeling confident of their recovery; and

“Whereas the loss of this critical care will see patients readmitted to hospitals, emergency room visits or having to stay in acute care beds longer, representing the costliest options in our health care system; and

“Whereas vulnerable seniors in our communities take the position that there is evidence of funding cuts for home care services; and

“Whereas our senior and all other vulnerable patients deserve access to compassionate care and treatment as close to home as possible;

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

“To provide the necessary base funding to keep the South Bruce Grey Health Centre restorative care Chesley site in operation so that the health and welfare of our most vulnerable patients remains intact.”

I fully support it, will affix my signature and send it with my buddy Dhairya.

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: This is a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

“Whereas the community of Windsor–Essex county has one of the highest unemployment rates in Canada resulting in stressful lives and financial inadequacies for many of its residents and businesses; and

“Whereas recently the Ford Motor Company was considering Windsor, Ontario, as a potential site for a new global engine that would create 1,000 new jobs (and as many as 7,000 spin-off jobs) for our community; and

“Whereas partnership with government was critical to secure this investment from Ford; and

“Whereas the inability of Ford and the Ontario [government] to come to an agreement for partnership contributed to the loss of this project;

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

“To insist that the Ontario government exhaust all available opportunities to reopen the discussions around the Ford investment in Windsor and to develop a national

auto strategy and review current policy meant to attract investment in the auto sector.”

I support this petition, and I will sign it and give it to you, page Riley.

DISTRACTED DRIVING

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

“Whereas the Ontario government is committed to ensuring the safety of drivers, passengers and pedestrians on Ontario’s roads and making the province North America’s most cycling friendly jurisdiction; and

“Whereas, on average, one person is killed on Ontario’s roads every 18 hours, and one person is injured every 8.1 minutes; and

“Whereas drivers who use cellphones while driving are four times more likely to be in a crash than non-distracted drivers; and

“Whereas evidence has shown that Ontario’s impaired driving laws need to be strengthened to apply sanctions for driving under the influence of alcohol to those impaired by drugs;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly of Ontario pass and enact, as soon as possible, Bill 31, the Making Ontario’s Roads Safer act, 2014.”

I fully support the petition. I give my petition to Inaya.

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 it, will affix my signature and send it with page Morgan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time we have available this afternoon for petitions.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTERIM SUPPLY

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that the Minister of Finance be authorized to pay the salaries of the civil servants and other necessary payments pending the voting of supply for the period commencing April 1, 2015, and ending on September 30, 2015, such payments to be charged to the proper appropriation for the 2015-16 fiscal year, following the voting of supply.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I look to the minister to lead off debate.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker. I very much appreciate you giving me the opportunity to rise today to move the motion on interim supply.

1340

I would like to remind members of this Legislature and, of course, viewers at home that this motion is both routine and important. It is routine in the sense that the government seeks interim spending authority from the Legislature before the beginning of every fiscal year. This motion is important because it would provide temporary spending authority to make payments for all government ministries and offices as well as legislative offices after the new fiscal year starts on April 1.

Essentially, it would ensure that the government has the ability to continue to make important investments in programs and services that Ontarians rely on. That includes spending on important priorities including health care, education, supporting our most vulnerable citizens and, of course, growing the economy.

Speaker, I will take a moment to highlight a few points about the interim supply motion. Firstly, the spending authority is temporary. It would cover a period of six months from April 1, 2015, through September 30, 2015. This temporary spending authority is necessary to allow the government to operate while the Legislature conducts its review of the government's detailed spending plans through the work of the Standing Committee on Estimates. All expenditures incurred under the authority of this motion would be consistent with the upcoming 2015 budget and 2015-16 estimates, and these expenses would eventually be authorized in the Supply Act for the 2015-16 fiscal year.

The interim supply motion means that government would be able to keep our long-term-care homes, hospitals and schools running. In short, it means the government would be able to continue to provide essential public services province-wide and support the quality of life of all Ontarians, who we work for every single day.

I look forward to hearing from my colleague the parliamentary assistant for the Treasury Board secretar-

iat, the member from Etobicoke Centre, as well as from members of the opposition on this important, yet administrative, matter.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I want to speak for the next 10 minutes on this chapter. I'm going to start with the Ontario Chamber of Commerce because they have released two papers. The first is called A Straightforward Guide to Ontario's Debt and Deficit. It's called How Bad Is It? That's the title of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce document. The fact that they've had to entitle a document How Bad Is It? should quickly tell you: It's bad.

Ontario's current fiscal situation is revealed in this document that talks about how the province ended up so deep in debt. It starts off by saying in the last fiscal year, "the government of Ontario spent \$10.5 billion more than it collected in revenue." Speaker, that's up from \$9.2 billion the year before and it's going to be surpassed in this year's budget. "This deficit will increase the province's net debt to \$267.2 billion. To service this debt, Ontario will pay \$10.6 billion in interest payments," or interest on the debt.

We have the highest net debt of any province in Canada. The Auditor General told us recently that the individual amount of money that each Ontarian owes is over \$20,000 and it will hit \$24,000 in the next two years.

The chamber of commerce not only produced a document called How Bad Is It?; they only recently came out with their annual Emerging Stronger document to talk about Ontario's path from recovery to growth. But our path has veered in a terrible trajectory this year.

In a global context, their 60,000 members were asked, "Do you believe the Ontario economy is going in the right direction or the wrong direction?" Here is how many thought the economy was going in the right direction: In 2012, it was 41%; in 2013, it grew to 42%; but last year, it tumbled to 29%. That's how many people in the chamber of commerce membership think the economy is headed in the right direction.

The next question they asked was, "How confident are you in the Ontario economy right now?" Again, three years ago, it was 44%; two years ago, it grew to 48%; and this year it tumbled. The business community's confidence tumbled again, from 48% to 29%. It is very, very serious, when you've got these kinds of numbers coming out from the job creators in Ontario.

Now, sadly, there were 2,700 fewer businesses in Ontario last year than the year before, and we can look directly to a couple of areas why. Number one, we have the highest industrial power rates in all of North America. Number two, we have the highest payroll taxes in Canada. Nobody disputes that; those are facts.

Let's look at some of the statistics from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business and what they're talking about in terms of, "How supportive are you of the commitments that political party leaders make during the election campaigns?" What they're asking them is,

“What are the most important issues to you right now?” The number one issue for the Canadian Federation of Independent Business was red tape. Of their members, 94% believe that red tape is the number one issue.

The number two issue—at 93%, a close second—was energy costs. No surprise when you’ve got 2,700 fewer businesses: companies like Wrigley, General Mills, Kellogg’s, Caterpillar and Heinz all leaving Ontario. They still make chewing gum, they still make baking products, they still make cereal, they still make earth-moving equipment, they still make ketchup—just not necessarily here.

The third most important issue was balancing the budget by 2017-18, at 91%; paying down government debt, 91%. The list from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business goes on and on.

With respect to the main cost pressures on business, they’re asked, “What input costs are causing difficulties for your business?” Here again, tax and regulatory costs are the number one issue—red tape. The number two issue, closely behind, is fuel and energy costs. No surprise. These are key issues that are not being tackled by this government.

Part of the problem with this government is that they’re in denial about the facts. You can hear the Minister of Economic Development continually talk about the jobs that have been created. However, of critical importance, cabinet was told in a confidential pre-budget document just last year, “The economy has not yet regained the strength of pre-2008,” the recession.

This is from the Ministry of Finance: “[There are] fewer jobs relative to the population and more unemployed. Per capita output of the economy remains below its pre-recession benchmark.” So when the minister says to us, “We created X thousands of jobs last month or last year,” they may be cherry picking a correct number, but our population has increased so largely that there are fewer jobs relative to our population. That’s from the Ministry of Finance.

So part of the problem, we understand, again from the Ministry of Finance confidential advice to cabinet—the new members of the Liberal caucus especially should be going through those controversial files; I’d be happy to turn them over to you anytime.

1350

Here’s what the Ministry of Finance said to cabinet. These are quotes: “Changes since the 2012 budget show a deterioration in the fiscal outlook beyond 2013-14.” This is really disturbing because they want to go ahead and spend this money, but they have no idea where it’s coming from.

This is from the Ministry of Finance: “Over the medium term, we have notional targets by sector that add up to the deficit numbers, but not yet plans to deliver them.” So what they’re saying here is, “Yup, we know that we have to, but we don’t know how.”

This is their own ministry: “For the extended look, neither targets nor plans yet exist.” So tomorrow, we know where we’ve got to be better than where we are

today, but we don’t know how to get there. For the day after tomorrow, we don’t even know where we need to be, let alone how to get there.

This is their own Ministry of Finance, which provided these documents to cabinet to give an awareness, an awakening, a sense of urgency to the Liberal government that all is not well. They didn’t seem to remember last May when Moody’s downgraded their outlook. That didn’t help. It was, “Damn the torpedoes. Full steam ahead!” They didn’t seem to react adversely when Fitch downgraded our credit rating. They did not seem to react with any changes whatsoever when Moody’s had a negative outlook only a few weeks ago.

This followed very shortly after the Auditor General said, in December 2014, “Folks, you’ve got to change the way you’re headed.” Your deficit is growing. Your debt is the highest it has ever been. In fact, it has doubled in the 11 years the Liberals have been in power. You’ve got to take drastic action and change the direction you’re headed. The Auditor General, the Bank of Canada, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, their own Ministry of Finance: All of these organizations are telling the government, “You’ve got to stop what you’re doing, turn the ship around and head in the right direction.” Sadly, we haven’t seen any change in direction from this government.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It’s my pleasure to stand up to give some context and some debate to the interim spending motion that’s before us. Actually, some of my comments may complement the PC finance critic because we are all concerned about jobs.

Today in this Legislature, the Canadian Federation of Students is here. They are lobbying for equal access to education. I think that all of us in this House know that we will never address the failing economy, the drag on the economy and the lack of productivity unless we seriously address the inequities in access to post-secondary education and colleges. I think they’ve made a very compelling case here. They have a report that I’m sure all MPPs will be getting. It’s called *Turning the Page: A New Chapter for Ontario’s Post-Secondary Students*.

From my riding, we have the Wilfrid Laurier University Graduate Students’ Association, but from my alma mater—I’m a proud Carleton graduate—the Carleton University Students’ Association and the Carleton University Graduate Students’ Association are here, and they make what I would consider a compelling case.

Before, when the House leader stood up, he said that this motion will allow us, as a Legislature, to address our priorities of health care, of education, of economic development, of jobs and of the economy. Unless we take a serious step back and look at the funding priorities of this government, the Liberal government of Ontario will be spending a good deal of its time trying to bite its own

neck, because you will not be able to address those priorities in this province unless you look at where the money is going.

I'm new to the finance critic portfolio, but I really like it. I want to tell you why—and you have no choice; I'm going to tell you anyway. It's because it's not about ideology. It's about where the money is going, where the investments are going, and what is making a difference in the province.

Clearly, the Canadian Federation of Students is addressing long-term, systemic issues around post-secondary education, which obviously has a direct impact on jobs and the economy. They have called on this government to develop a long-term strategy for the progressive reduction of tuition fees in the province. They've presented a plan: a one-year plan, a three-year plan. The three-year plan has zero in year one but a 16.3% reduction through a reallocation of funds from the Ontario tuition grant, which is not really working despite what we hear, and the provincial education tax credits, and then \$500 million in years two and three, which would result in an 8.3% reduction per year. This would be a total cost of \$134 million, but they make the financial case for increased access, increased jobs, increased productivity, and one of those core priorities that the House leader says this government cares about, which is education.

I'd like to remind people in this House that in an economy where over 75% of newly posted jobs require the completion of college or university, it is not surprising that an increasing number of students and their families view higher education as less of an option and more of a necessity. We share this view completely. But let's also remember that tuition fees climbed from an average of \$1,464 in 1990 to a staggering \$7,235 in 2013, with no sign of stopping soon. So this is a crisis of affordability.

As we discuss this motion in the House today, we have to be really clear that post-secondary education—those doors are slamming shut in the faces of youth in this province of Ontario. At the same time, we have to consider the way that those educational services are delivered. I think my colleague from London West has presented a private member's bill around integrated work opportunities, learning and work opportunities, and addressing the scourge, and the growing issue in this province, of unpaid and illegal internships.

This group obviously has put into context the rhetoric of what we have heard about post-secondary education and the reality. I think that's the valuable part of groups coming here and actually lobbying us.

There was a freeze, though. There was a moment of hope, and I want to give the government from 2004 to 2006 credit for that freeze. But then that was abruptly lifted and tuition fees have been on track to double under the Liberal government. Instead of addressing the core issues affecting post-secondary education in Ontario—increasingly cumbersome upfront costs, deteriorating quality and crumbling infrastructure—decision-makers

have thrown students' finances and futures around like a ball to score political points.

We share their concerns in this regard, and we think that affordable and accessible education is one of those key priorities that we could work on together. But, unfortunately, in 2013, the provincial government introduced a new four-year tuition fee framework, and under this tuition fee framework they can increase by 3% for most programs and 5% for graduate and professional programs. So there's definitely a disconnect between talking about valuing post-secondary education and stating that those doors need to stay open for the growing income inequality in this province to be addressed—I think it's important for us to know that, by 2016-17, tuition fees will have increased by up to 108% since the Liberals took office in 2003. It's worse for professional programs, and we know that professional programs are a major obstacle for this province. We need those professional jobs—engineers. China, India—engineers are coming out of those countries, besides being disproportionate to population, like you wouldn't believe. It's incredible. We need the engineers, we need the doctors and we need the professions that are going to help us get climate change on track, help us make for a fairer justice system.

I think the Canadian Federation of Students has made a very compelling case for this government to seriously look at where you're investing and look at the return on investment for education. Education is always worth fighting for, Mr. Speaker, and it's a pleasure to bring that point to this Legislature.

1400

The second issue is health care, which the House leader also raised. The finance committee got to travel around the province—six Liberals, two Conservatives and me. It was a great deal of fun, I must tell you. We were able to address and listen to, first-hand, not the press releases, not the ribbon cuttings, but the lived experiences of people in this province, who we work for, who we are supposed to be accountable to. There was one woman in particular, up in Sudbury, who told a story of her 93-year-old grandmother who was in the hallway for three days. Medical procedures were being done on this poor woman. It's definitely an issue of integrity. The nurses of Ontario have raised the new phenomenon of hallway nursing. This is the new norm. One of the members from the committee said, "Well, wasn't she getting care?" We need to set the benchmark higher than medical procedures being performed in hallways in hospitals in the province of Ontario. That can be addressed by finding that balance between the community health teams and the hospital budgets.

Those hospitals are being inundated because this government has not acted on their promise of funding those LHINs accordingly. All that's happening in our communities is that those local health agencies are competing for the same pots of money. There's that saying: When the water hole gets lower and lower and lower, the animals start looking at each other a little differently. It's a crisis in health care right now.

We're big proponents of early intervention and prevention because it's a smart place to invest money—upstream, not downstream. It's more ethical. It's a principle that this entire province was built on: that when you go to a hospital or a doctor, you have equal access to that health care system. It's the same principle in education, which is why, when the House leader stood up and said that today's motion has to do with the priorities of this government, we should be adhering to those priorities. The government should be acting on the promises that they made, and they should be doing so in a financial way. We've called on ending the freeze on hospital-based operating budgets in order to stop the bed closures and front-line staffing cuts that obviously negatively impact patient care. We have called on this government—and our health critic, France Gélinas, who's dealing with a tragedy in her community and can't be here today, has raised the issue of the need for dental coverage for children. This is something that should totally be a non-partisan issue. The consolidation of those six agencies to deliver health care—and she has talked to those front-line people, and they have said that this will reduce access for children to preventive dental care, which in turn leads to long-standing issues, health care system issues, missing school. Everybody in this House has experienced dental pain. Why would we not be proactive and “progressive”? Why should we not be talking about the importance of early intervention and prevention on dental care? It makes sense. So we've called on this government to cancel its plans to reduce preventive dental coverage for children and to maintain preventive dental care in Ontario, public health standards, and maintain full funding for Children in Need of Treatment, the CINOT program. We fear, as has already been revealed through our health critic, that these changes will reduce access, and all of us in this House should have a concern about that.

The last issue on health care—I know that when the House leader brought up this issue, he identified it as a priority. We've heard a lot about shifting the culture of wellness in this province, which indicates that this government is looking at early intervention and prevention, and yet we have seniors who end up in emergency room facilities because there is such a crisis in underfunding of home care services and long-term care. It costs more. That's the message: It costs more.

On public education, though, what I forgot to mention is that we have enough data now—we have enough reports, going back 15, 17 years to the Rozanski report, which highlighted the \$2 billion in cuts. This government continually points to increases in education, but you've got to follow the money, because that money has gone to new programs, like the full-day kindergarten, for instance. I have nothing against it. I only wish that you had actually followed through on the original report, *With Our Best Future in Mind*, by Charles Pascal. If you had done that, you would see a huge increase in school-based child care, and you could have transferred that money to community-based child care instead of closing 18 centres across the province.

This is about policy and legislation affecting the bottom line. This is about where money is going in the province. Actually, Hugh Mackenzie just came out with a report and highlighted the new spending priorities and that traditional, systemic underfunding in issues like special education, for instance—those systemic gaps in funding still exist, and you can't deny it. You can point to the big number over here, but it's going to new spending priorities; it's not going to where the front-line services are.

If there's a smart place to invest in education, again, it's earlier. If you get to a learning disability earlier in the life of a child, that child will see huge positive returns in that their educational experience will be better; it will be more positive. That has a financial positive at the end of it as well.

Finally, the issue of economic development, employment and infrastructure: I have to tell you, Mr. Speaker, on this file, when I look at where the money is going in this province, and where the Auditor General flagged where the funding is going, I think we should have a full stop right now on how infrastructure is being invested, because it is going to places which are not benefitting the people of this province. We all have some understanding of how big that infrastructure gap is, and it's growing.

The Auditor General made some recommendations, and because we are talking about funding, I need to address some of those. The Auditor General says, “Infrastructure Ontario should, in conjunction with the Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure, gather data on actual cost experience from recent public-sector infrastructure procurements and alternative financing and procurements (AFPs) and revise its” value-for-money “assessment methodology to ensure that the valuation of risks assumed to be retained under both the AFP and public-sector delivery models are well justified.”

What have we heard from this minister? It is the sound of silence. If I was the minister, I would be going right now to Infrastructure Ontario, as was recommended by the Auditor General, to review this practice. I would look at who is doing the value-for-money assessments and who is benefitting from doing the value-for-money assessments. If I was this government, I would be looking for money to meet the priorities that you talk about, like climate change, like education, like health care.

The Auditor General points out that the financing cost for AFPs was \$6.5 billion. We spent \$6.5 billion more on financing for P3 projects than we needed to. This isn't about ideology; it's about where the money is going. How much more infrastructure can we build for \$6.5 billion? How many more hospitals and front-line health care can we ensure people have access to with \$6.5 billion?

This report that the Auditor General shared with this government essentially puts all the other scandals to shame. Ornge was \$1 billion; eHealth was \$1 billion; the gas plants were \$1.1 billion, originally predicted at \$40

million. This is \$8.2 billion. It warrants the attention of this government.

It defies all logic, Mr. Speaker, that the rhetoric we hear back from this government is that P3s are more efficient, which is not true, and that they're less costly, which is not true. They build in a cost overrun right at the beginning. They say that the risk is actually being transferred. But at the end of the day, it's our money, so what risk is being transferred? We're still on the line for the costs. We have to take a good, hard look to dispel the myths around publicly funded infrastructure projects, and then we have to counter with those P3 projects, of course, that have cost overruns.

1410

Just in the newspaper over the weekend, the consortium Ontario Sports Solutions—and this is Hamilton's Pan Am Games stadium. "Subcontractors on the project say they haven't been paid in full." You know what actually happens—I know you don't like to hear it, but the transfer gets passed down to the smaller and smaller and smaller subcontractors, and they don't get paid. At the very top, everyone's got their share. They've got their millions of dollars.

I just want to remind people in this House, when you talk broadly about projects, about AFPs, that this P3 project, Hamilton's Pan Am Games stadium, was supposed to be completed last June. So it's not on time. The senior consortium partner, a French-owned company, Bouygues Building Canada, is in a financial stand-off right now.

"A much larger entity is taking advantage of the sub trades in our opinion," said Scott MacKenzie of Brascon, which says it is owed \$133,000." The dispute, of course, now has been—they end up back at Infrastructure Ontario, the government agency, as we all know, that awarded contracts to Ontario Sports Solutions for building the Hamilton stadium under what is known, obviously, as an AFP.

We hear lots of information about how efficient, how less costly, how innovative these P3 projects can be, when we've seen example after example that that's not a consistent truth in this province of Ontario.

If I were the government and I had this Auditor General's report in front of me, and she identified with great clarity where this province could save money and where that money could then be syphoned or directed to the priorities that this government says that they value, that would be very, I think, beneficial.

The government is probably going to come back with the Spadina extension. That Spadina extension—that's a cursed project, I think. It has been overseen by every single government for years now. It is not the project that you hold up as, obviously, the best project in the province of Ontario. I can tell you that much.

But we know better today. We know better. Finally someone, the Auditor General, the independent officer of this Legislature, highlighted the fact that private project managers also tend to charge higher legal and management fees, which are more costly. As well—and this is

the big part—they must return profits to their owners. So profit is still the driving factor in AFPs. Those who really like public-private partnerships insist that while all of this may be true, privately managed projects are far more likely to come in on time and under budget. Well, if you build a 30% buffer on any project—any contractor in the province of Ontario is going to say, "If you build in a 28% profit margin, I could get that done on time." That's just what they'll say to you. It's ridiculous.

The minister without portfolio, who is not here today, likes to say, "Bob Rae and the 407—he used a public-private partnership." Yet in the end, the Rae government had to borrow the \$1 billion itself and then pass it on to the consortium. The private sector partners just couldn't raise cash as cheaply.

If I leave you with anything, it is this: Why is this government borrowing money for infrastructure at credit card rates when the government can get the best interest rate in the province of Ontario? Why is that money going to those lawyers and those consultants and those financial companies when we know better in 2015? There is a moral imperative, never mind an economic imperative, to ensure that we invest in infrastructure so that it benefits the people of this province, that we invest in infrastructure so it strengthens the economy and that we invest in infrastructure in a fiscally responsible manner. The Auditor General has called into question the way that AFPs are determined, who is doing the value-for-money assessments and the modelling of those value assessments.

If I was the government, I would be taking this report, I would be going down to Infrastructure Ontario and I would be following up and making sure that some better practices, more transparent and more accountable practices, are put into place so the people of this province are better served through infrastructure investment. I would just like to leave you with that, Mr. Speaker.

Health care, education, economic development, infrastructure: This province will not recover in an economic manner without addressing these key issues of where taxpayer money is invested, and we will spend the next three and a half years watching this government bite its own neck.

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

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's my pleasure to speak today on this interim supply motion. I'm going to be speaking about the process here a little bit, but I do want to start off with a brief summary of what this motion is.

This motion grants the government unfettered authority to spend money from April 1 of this year to September 30 of this year—for six months. For six months, the government will have the absolute authority to spend money even before the budget has been introduced, let alone passed, without any oversight or any transparency. For half the year, the government will have authority to spend money.

Now, we know in this fiscal year, they're planning on spending \$127 billion. I don't know what they're plan-

ning for this coming fiscal year, but their track record would suggest that they plan on spending more in the next fiscal year than they did this year. This House will not have any way to measure or examine that.

This is where I want to go back to the process. A lot of people in this province ask me, and they wonder, why is it that Ontario always finds itself mired in wasteful financial scandals? I don't have to repeat the names; we all know the names of these financial scandals. But I do want the members in this House and the people listening today to understand why it is that Ontario always finds itself mired in scandal. It is a simple reason: Our process and our standing orders actually prevent this Legislature from evaluating and examining the financial transactions of the government.

I'll start off with a couple of things. In estimates committee—a lot of people may not understand this—this year, we got to examine six ministries, the expenditures of six ministries, and that's all we were allowed to look at. Every other ministry was deemed to be passed. There's 27 ministries; we got to look at six of them.

A number of the expenditures of the House, all those offices that show up in the estimates volume 2, are prevented from being examined by this Legislative Assembly. Even the Office of the Legislative Assembly, which appears in volume 2 of the estimates: This House is not allowed to look at its expenditures. We are the only province and the only Parliament in the country that has this process that limits the number of ministries that we're allowed to examine, but also then deems all others to be passed. We're the only such Parliament in this country.

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Even the House of Commons is limited to seeking interim supply for a three-month period. This motion, which is in agreement with the standing orders, gives half a year of expenditures. Does anybody want to know why? Our standing orders.

Let me give you a couple of other examples for members in this House.

In Newfoundland, estimates not examined by the estimates committee are moved to the Committee of the Whole on supply.

In Nova Scotia, they're limited to five ministries to be examined by estimates, but then all other ministries are referred to Committee of the Whole.

Alberta has no limits on the amount of ministries or agencies that come before public accounts. This year, Alberta brought 15 agencies and ministries before their estimates committee; we were allowed to examine six.

BC also has no limit on the amount of ministries or agencies under review.

Saskatchewan is probably one of the best Legislatures in this country for allowing examination of financial transactions, and I say that to give you a bit of a rundown on just how the standing orders of this House prevent and restrict financial oversight.

As I mentioned, expenditures that show up in volume 2 of the estimates cannot be looked at.

I would say, as I'm talking to everybody in this House today: How many people here have actually gone through and looked at the public accounts of the province?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I have.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I see that one hand has been raised of somebody who has gone through the public accounts.

Now, I should put this out: Have you gone through all three volumes or just one of the three volumes? There's a lot of information in here that records and documents the financial transactions of the government. However, they're all documented in here—or quite a bit of them are—but then this House refuses to allow us to look at them.

In Quebec, the time allowed for considering the main estimates is 200 hours—200 hours. This year, we had approximately 45 hours to examine the main estimates and that was over the six ministries. In Quebec, you can examine any ministry for up to 20 hours. These are all important rules.

And I'll just take us back a little bit. The primary function, the primary duty and responsibility of this House is to take its responsibility, examine and then provide concurrence that the government expenditures are appropriate. Well, we've really tied not one hand behind our back; we've tied both hands behind our back because we're saying, "You're allowed to look at a couple of ministries, but if you haven't gotten them done by the middle of November of each year, all those expenditures will be deemed to be passed."

That brings us back to this interim supply. Not only have we done an absolutely pathetic and poor job of examining—been prevented from examining the financial transactions of the government in this current fiscal year under the standing orders; we also go out and grant the government complete, arbitrary authority to spend money for six months, even before a budget has been introduced.

I understand the time frames. I think the federal House of Commons has got it right. There is a window, but a very small window, when government can spend money without the agreement of Parliament—a very small window, not half the year.

We need to start taking a look at what our rules are here and how our rules actually work in opposition to our responsibilities. We do have that responsibility to ensure to our constituents that we have examined government expenditures. It's not just the role of the opposition. It is the role of every backbencher in the Liberal Party to examine the expenditures of government. It is the role of every minister to examine the expenditures of their ministries. It is a job for all of us that we ought to take seriously. But we can't take it seriously if there are going to be only one or two of us in this House who actually look at the public accounts; if there are only one or two of us who actually read the estimates; if there are, indeed, whole ministries and offices of Parliament where we are prevented from examining their expenditures.

Speaker, my call-out to the Liberal government is that they will get this interim supply, but it's time that we all stand up and do our job, represent our constituents well and start examining the financial transactions and ending the financial mismanagement that this Liberal government consistently always gets this province into.

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

Mr. Yvan Baker: I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak in support of the motion for interim supply for the 2015-16 fiscal year. In this Legislature, every day, we debate a range of issues that are important to our constituents because we believe they will improve the quality of life for people in our constituencies and across our province. Today, I speak to a motion that is important to ensuring that we continue to make those investments to preserve the services that Ontarians rely on every day, to support the quality of life that we all enjoy.

As mentioned by the government House leader earlier today, this motion is fairly routine but it is important. It is an important part of the fiscal cycle. It provides the government with temporary spending authority in order for the government to continue to fund important programs and services during the beginning of the new fiscal year which starts on April 1, 2015.

Specifically, this would ensure that we can continue to implement the government's plan to support a stronger Ontario. The plan, of course, is built around a number of pillars: investing in people, building modern infrastructure, supporting a strong and innovative business climate—but all of this on a foundation of fiscal responsibility. As the PA to Minister Matthews at Treasury Board, I can vouch for the fact that that's exactly what we're doing, that we're trying to invest while on a foundation of fiscal responsibility.

We are committed to responsible fiscal management, making sure that every dollar counts as we work towards balancing the budget. That's one of the things that I heard from my constituents when I was out in the community during the election campaign. I've heard it a lot since, and I hear it in my constituency office. They're asking me and they're asking all of us here to make sure that we're getting maximum value for the dollars that we invest on behalf of the people of Ontario, whether that be in education or in health care or anywhere else. I know Minister Matthews and all the ministers who are here today, and those who aren't present at this moment, are working towards that objective.

We know that the road ahead won't always be easy. There will be challenges along the way. But I think we have a plan that we can be proud of, a plan that invests in the people of this province and the programs and services that they rely on.

What I want to do in the few minutes that I have is just talk about some of the highlights of the plan for fiscal 2015-16 and beyond. The government has made substantial progress on its plan to build Ontario up and to create a fairer and more prosperous province. We're committed

to building opportunity, creating jobs and ensuring long-term security for people across the province, again by investing in people's talents, by investing not only in the present but also in the future. We talk about investments for the future. We're talking about things like infrastructure—like roads, like transit—and also creating a dynamic and supportive environment for business. That's critical, because that's what allows us to create jobs in this province—to preserve jobs, to create jobs—and to provide for and support the prosperity that Ontarians deserve.

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Ontario's economic performance has demonstrated that many of these policies are bearing fruit. For example, Ontario saw an increase of about 1,300 jobs in the month of January alone. Since the low point of the recession, in June 2009, we've added 508,700 jobs, and almost 348,000 of these jobs were in the private sector; so, a lot of jobs, a lot of growth since the recession. I think this is a reflection of the hard work of Ontario and the hard work of this government, which is implementing policies to support that recovery and economic growth. Unemployment is down to 6.9% from a high of 9.5% in June 2009.

This is good progress, but there's more work to be done. In that vein, I just want provide a few highlights of the work that is being done.

In 2014, the Premier led a trade mission to China, and secured almost \$1 billion in new investment. This will create more than 1,800 jobs in communities across our province. The Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade and the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs will be leading a mission to China next month to help small and medium-sized Ontario businesses engage successfully with the Chinese market.

I talked earlier about the importance of not only investing in the present but investing in the future. To help with increasing population growth and demands on infrastructure and services, we're also investing \$130 billion in public infrastructure over the next 10 years, including \$29 billion for transportation. This is important, because it will ease congestion across the GTA and Hamilton area and support the building and maintenance of roads, bridges and other critical infrastructure.

This supply motion supports the continued funding of this plan that provides these critical supports to our economy and to our infrastructure and services across Ontario. Just these investments alone that I talked about, particularly the ones in infrastructure, will create more than 110,000 jobs this year.

When I think about the priorities of the people of my riding—the people of Etobicoke Centre—and all across Ontario, I also think about our health care and education. Our government has committed to invest in hospitals but also to expand funding to home care, something that is so important in so many of our ridings but particularly in my riding, where we have one of the highest proportions of seniors of any riding in the country.

We've also committed to continuing to strengthen the quality of our education system here in Ontario. Our Minister of Education is here with us today, and I know she's doing excellent work on that front.

We're going to do all these things while continuing to work to eliminate the deficit, knocking it down to a forecasted \$8.9 billion on our way toward a balanced budget in 2017-18. But we're going to do that responsibly.

The Premier's Advisory Council on Government Assets was asked to find ways to increase efficiencies and unlock the value of government assets, and we look forward to receiving the council's findings, which will inform our decisions to increase revenue and reinvest in priority infrastructure projects.

The supply motion we're talking about today allows us to continue forward with this plan. That supply motion and that plan will not sacrifice important public services with across-the-board cuts. At the same time, we do recognize the importance of spending restraint. Due to the government's efforts, program spending is projected to grow at an average rate of 0.8% through to 2017-18.

Ontario continues to have the lowest per capita program spending among provinces, and the lowest total government revenue per person among the provinces, including funding for federal transfers. I think this is a sign of the work this government is doing.

In addition, we'll continue to make every dollar count, ensuring that Ontarians get value for money. The program review, renewal and transformation initiative that Minister Matthews is leading will look at how every dollar across government is spent. We're going to use evidence to inform our decisions and improve outcomes for people. We're working across government to find the best way to deliver programs and services, again, always seeking the best value for the people of Ontario.

The program review is building on previous action taken by our government, including the implementation of recommendations from the Drummond commission. We're also going to take a strong but fair approach to managing public sector compensation and benefit costs.

Speaker, on a personal note, I am honoured to be working with Minister Matthews and Treasury Board to protect important services by working toward a balanced budget and ensuring that we maximize value for taxpayers' dollars.

Mr. Speaker, I started by speaking to the fact that we're here to improve the quality of life of Ontarians. I think that we are. To do so, we need to continue to support the government's plan that I just spoke of and support the key services that Ontarians rely on every single day. That is why this interim supply motion is so important. The supply motion would give our government the necessary spending authority to finance important public services that Ontarians rely on.

I encourage all members to support this motion so that we can continue to provide the best and most dependable public service possible and to continue to improve the quality of life of all Ontarians.

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

Mr. Norm Miller: It's my pleasure to have an opportunity to speak on the supply motion, which really, as I'm sure you'll agree, lets me speak about whatever I might like to speak about—one of the beauties of speaking to it.

I thought I'd start out by just talking a bit about something that's a big concern to me, and that's the general finances of the province of Ontario. We keep hearing about how the government is, in their own words, over-achieving. They make budgets and then they do better than their budgets. They talk about how prudent they are and how wonderful everything is. But if you actually look at the numbers after things have passed, we seem to be going in the wrong direction. This year the budget deficit is forecast to be \$12.5 billion. This year it's more than all the other provinces put together, and it has gone up in the past three years, so we're trending in the wrong direction.

I recommend to everyone the Auditor General's annual report, which comes out in December each year. It's a pretty thick document. There's certainly good information in it. The Auditor General, Bonnie Lysyk, takes the unusual step of talking a fair amount about the growing debt of the province of Ontario and the concerns with the affordability of that debt. I think that is certainly noteworthy. In round numbers, she said that the debt is on its way to being some \$340 billion, I believe, by the time the government predicts it may balance its budget, in 2017-18. But really, it's how you measure whether you can afford that debt that I think is key. The measure that's usually used is net debt as a percentage of the gross domestic product of the whole economy of the province of Ontario. Back when the current government was elected in 2003, that was about 27% of the gross domestic product; the debt was 27% of the gross domestic product.

In the auditor's report, she goes on, and I'll maybe just read this so I get it exactly correct. She says, "Our key commentary in chapter 2 is on Ontario's growing debt burden. Although the focus on eliminating Ontario's annual deficit is important, we think that government should provide more information on how it plans to achieve its longer-term objective of reducing its net debt-to-GDP ratio to its pre-recession level of 27%. Ontario's net debt-to-GDP ratio is projected to reach a high of 40.5% in 2015-16, after which the government expects it to decline. The net debt-to-GDP ratio is a key indicator of the government's financial ability to carry its debt relative to the size of the economy."

She goes on: "In fact, net debt (the difference between the government's liabilities and its total assets) and total debt (the total amount of borrowed money the government owes to external parties) are both expected to continue growing in absolute terms even after the province starts to run annual budget surpluses"—and that's a big "if"; I'm putting in some commentary there. "This important fact should not go unnoticed by the members of the Legislature and the public. We estimate that total

debt will exceed \$340 billion by 2017-18 (it was at \$295.8 billion on March 31, 2014).

“By 2017-18, the year the government projects it will achieve an annual surplus, Ontario’s net debt will have more than doubled over a 10-year period, from \$156.6 billion in 2007-08 to over \$325 billion by 2017-18. To put this in perspective, to eliminate Ontario’s 2017-18 estimated net debt, every man, woman and child in Ontario would need to contribute \$23,000 to the provincial coffers. We recommended that the government provide information on how it plans to achieve its target of reducing its net debt-to-GDP ratio to a prerecession level of 27%.”

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In the auditor’s own words, that’s something that is of real concern to me. Again, I think we need to highlight that as often as we can.

I also want to briefly talk about other issues that have been raised. I note the member from Nipissing went through the Canadian Federation of Independent Business’ survey, which is always a useful tool. They’re surveying people who are in business to see what their big concerns are. The number one concern was red tape. I believe he said that 94% of those voting said that was their number one issue: the time, if you’re in business, you spend trying to comply with the various regulations that we come up with in this place.

But the number two concern was energy costs: 93% of the people were concerned with energy costs. That’s certainly something that the Auditor General speaks to in her annual report as well. Particularly, there’s a whole section on smart meters and the implementation of smart meters that I would recommend people to read, where it points out that it was supposed to cost \$1 billion. It actually cost \$1.9 billion, and it’s not actually achieving its goal of shifting electricity demand. The big reason is because of the huge subsidies being paid for the feed-in-tariff contracts, mainly for wind and solar power, and just the huge numbers those are expected to be.

In her own words, talking about the global adjustment, she states that it “now accounts for 70%” of electricity rates and people don’t see that on their average bill. They just see their electricity rates going up. They don’t actually know that 70% of it is the global adjustment. The global adjustment was 0.4 cents per kilowatt hour. The global adjustment is now 5.5 cents per kilowatt hour. It’s gone up some 1,200%. When you look at the absolute numbers, they are huge numbers. It was \$8.5 billion that people were paying on their hydro bills in 2014 for the global adjustment, \$9.4 billion in 2015, and predicted to be, for 2006-15, \$50 billion—huge numbers that people are paying on their hydro bills. That’s just a very big concern when you see from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business that energy cost is one of their biggest concerns.

You look at the fact that in Ontario we’ve lost companies like Xstrata in Timmins, where there was a smelter, and the 700 jobs moved across the border to Quebec. You have to ask yourself, with the Ring of Fire,

whether there’s ever going to be a smelter in Ontario with these high energy costs. I have in my own riding Kimberly-Clark in Huntsville, a tissue mill, and their number one issue is cost of energy and reliability of energy. It’s a very big issue that affects creating jobs here in the province of Ontario.

I just have a minute left and I wanted to briefly mention, as a critic for mining, that the Fraser Institute’s report on mining came out recently and, unfortunately, it’s not good news for the province of Ontario. They have a measure that is called the investment attractiveness index that gets feedback from all over the world on the mineral potential, the geology and also the policy perception, to look at the policies of the government and how they’re affecting investment in mining. Ontario, last year, was 14th, which wasn’t that great, but the bad news is, from last year to this year we’ve gone from 14th up nine spots to 23rd. We’re absolutely going in the wrong direction, and we see very little activity happening on the Ring of Fire. The bad news there, of course, is that Cliffs Natural Resources has pretty much got their operations for sale and essentially—

Interjection.

Mr. Norm Miller: Yes, they’ve left the country. I think we need some better mining policy.

I see my time is up, Mr. Speaker, so I will end it there. Thank you.

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

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thanks for allowing me to speak here today. There are two issues I’d like to highlight to the House and my fellow members.

The first one is around GO train services to Niagara Falls. I’ve raised this issue in the House a number of times. I’m going to speak to it again. The Niagara region is united—the keyword there is “united”—in its ask to the province to provide daily two-way GO service all the way to Niagara Falls.

Make no mistake about it: GO is a game-changer for Niagara. We have thousands and thousands of people commuting from Niagara to Toronto every single day—50,000 every day. Our highways are clogged, and the commutes are terrible. I drive the same route from Queen’s Park back to Niagara Falls. What used to take an hour now takes three. We have workers in Niagara who need to leave three hours early just to be able to get to work.

I look across the floor here—I see everybody listening intently on this issue—and it was one of your Liberal members from St. Catharines who was here with me last Friday. We left at 3:10 and 3:15, almost the same time. It took us over three hours to get to St. Catharines. That’s your member. So nobody can say that this isn’t happening when people are trying to get to Toronto to work.

Think about this: We have one of the highest unemployment rates, and it makes no sense. When you’re trying to make sure that you’re going to get rid of the deficit, what better way to do it than to put people back to

work? We can do that in Niagara through tourism. The wine industry is growing by leaps and bounds. Craft brewers are growing.

Take a look at what has happened to our dollar over the last little while. Our dollar was at \$1.10; it's now down to 80 cents, 78 cents. What is that doing to the auto industry? In Niagara, we have General Motors, where they still have 2,500 people working right in the plant, and that's not counting the other spinoff jobs that are in the community. So now you're talking 10,000 or 12,000 jobs. That's what can happen if we can bring GO to Niagara.

Daily two-way GO service is the economic boost our region needs, but, quite frankly, it's the economic boost that Ontario needs. It's something that can make Niagara the economic driver of all Ontario. It will connect Niagara with the GTA. People can travel to Toronto to work, tourists can come and see Niagara, and we'll take them off our highways. Wouldn't that be nice? Think about it.

I've listened to the other side over the last few weeks with Bill 31. They talk about improving the environment. What better way to improve the environment than getting people out of their cars and into GO trains?

The Premier—not Wayne Gates—said during the election that the GO train to Niagara was a “very high priority.” The chair of her caucus, again, from St. Catharines, said he could see it coming to Niagara in 2015. Well, it's 2015.

I'd like to let the Premier and all the members of this House know that there's going to be a rally in Niagara Falls this Friday. It begins at 11:30 a.m., and you're all welcome to come, all three parties. It's going to kick off our public campaign to bring GO to Niagara. Here's what's important on this: All the mayors—it doesn't matter if they're in St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Thorold, Welland, Grimsby, Wainfleet, Port Colborne—will be there. Their elected regional councillors will be there. The city councillors of all those communities are going to be there. And they'll all be there to show support for what? For GO. Because they know it's a game-changer for us. We're hoping that the Premier will see this rally and follow through on what her party said they would do during the last election.

This is not something that can wait 10 years. Quite frankly, the economy of Ontario can't wait 10 years. It needs to happen now, just like they said: 2015.

Bringing the GO train to Niagara can create good-paying jobs right here in Ontario. It can create economic activity. It can allow smart—I'm going to say that again: It can allow smart and talented young people to work in Toronto and live in their home communities. It can allow people from Toronto to visit our excellent wineries that we have in Niagara-on-the-Lake and the amazing sites that we have in Niagara Falls—unfortunately, the agriculture minister probably just left—and the race track in Fort Erie, where we need more racing dates—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I have to remind the member for Niagara Falls not to make reference to the absence of any other member. We're all

occasionally not in the chamber, so that's why we ask everyone to observe that rule.

The member for Niagara Falls has the floor.

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Mr. Wayne Gates: I apologize.

GO is a game-changer. Our rally on Friday will show that the public wants it and that they are united behind it. I hope this government will honour their commitment for daily two-way service to Niagara Falls. It will support the 450,000 residents and the province of Ontario.

I have one other thing I'd like to talk about—we've already talked about it a little bit—and that's education. I'd also like to touch on Parliament Oak Public School in Niagara-on-the-Lake. As many of you know, the community group there, Citizens for Accountable and Responsible Education, also known as CARE, is trying to preserve their access to education and now have to go to court to try to save their school. Parliament Oak is the heart of the old town. The community there wants the school to stay open. It will attract young families to settle in Niagara-on-the-Lake and make sure the town keeps growing. Yet the CARE group continues to have to fight to make sure their kids can go to school somewhere close to home.

At first, there were some who were hoping this issue would die in a courtroom. They were hoping that by the time the parents and the community of Niagara-on-the-Lake got their turn to speak in court, the school would already be closed.

This, however, didn't happen. The CARE group won an expedited trial and have a tentative date set for March. While all this is going on, the board continues to be indifferent to the concerns of the parents.

This isn't just parents from Niagara-on-the-Lake anymore; it's parents from small communities across the province of Ontario, communities that don't want to see their schools closed and their education taken away from them. On top of that, we're now hearing that the Minister of Education has not given enough funding to the Crossroads Public School to build the original four classrooms requested by DSBN. Now, they have even less space to deal with even more kids if the school closure happens.

Mr. Speaker, the parents and the children in Niagara-on-the-Lake have been clear: They want to keep Parliament Oak school open. I call on this government to support them and to support education in all the small communities right across the province. We need a fund to keep schools open, not a fund to close them. Schools are the heart of the communities, the heart of the families who go to these schools. Let's keep rural schools open in the province of Ontario.

I'm not sure how much time I have left, but I'm going to talk about one more issue: the hospital in Niagara Falls. In Niagara Falls we're going to have a new hospital. When I was running in a by-election almost a year ago to the day now, I guess a year and a month—I think I've been here a year and a month; time goes quickly when you're having fun.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It feels a lot longer, eh?

Mr. Wayne Gates: No, no. It's been quick.

We're going to build a new hospital, but here's the problem we have, and the Auditor General talked about it: They want to build it as a P3, even though we know now that P3s are more costly, to a tune of \$8.2 billion. So I'm saying to this government: Let's build a hospital in Niagara Falls, let's get it done, but let's build it as a publicly funded, publicly delivered hospital, where you can borrow money at the cheaper rate.

And think about what they did in Peterborough. They built a hospital similar to St. Catharines. St. Catharines was a billion dollars, give or take a couple of dollars. The same hospital, very close to the same size—a few beds less—was built in Peterborough for about \$340 million. So, if you use the same type of thing, imagine what we could do if we build it as a publicly delivered hospital and take the \$600 million or \$700 million you're going to save and reinvest that back into front-line health care for our seniors and for long-term care. Now, wouldn't that make sense to people? That's how the hospitals should be done.

The last thing I'm going to say—because I talked about this very early when I got up here and talked—we have one of the highest unemployment rates in the province of Ontario. There's no need for it, absolutely none. We're going to have an opportunity to build that hospital. Why don't we, when we build a hospital, build it with local workers, local architects, local engineers, local skilled tradespeople, and put those people back to work using our own tax dollars—our own tax dollars putting people to work. Guess what happens when you put them back to work? They pay taxes. How does that help the deficit? They start paying taxes to reduce the deficit. It works. It's how the cycle should work.

So two things on the hospital: Let's build it publicly funded, publicly delivered, and let's utilize the \$600 million or \$700 million dollars we may save by putting it back into front-line care. And let's put Ontarians, let's put people living in the Niagara region back to work and get our unemployment rate down. Thank you very much for the few minutes.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: I really appreciate the opportunity to debate this interim supply motion. I do wish to remind the members of this Parliament that Ontario's Auditor General, Bonnie Lysyk, has put out a challenge to all of us—to legislators, to this government and to people in Ontario. She presented this during her annual report at the end of last year, and she has asked all of us to start thinking about the debt.

There has been so much conversation about the deficit, the ongoing, to-and-fro debate about the deficit. The government's projections for the deficit are never accurate. They always are out by several billion dollars. Our Auditor General has indicated to us that it is essentially time to cut to the chase, take a look at that debt and give

serious consideration to how we can start paying down that debt, a debt that, year by year, continues to grow.

Why has she put this out? She gave as her primary reason the fact that interest rates, believe it or not in the present climate, will eventually rise, meaning that the interest cost to service Ontario's debt will rise dramatically. Again, this is the main message from Ontario's Auditor General with respect to the finances of the province of Ontario.

There's an example that I use with respect to those of us who have credit cards. I'm sure most of us try to pay them off month by month. You keep in mind, when you do get behind—and so many people do, regrettably—interest compounds quickly. When you miss a payment, or when you only make a minimum payment, unpaid interest, obviously, is added to your debt. For many, this has become an almost impossible cycle to break. The same can be said for governmental jurisdictions right around the world, really, and certainly including the province of Ontario.

For the past few years, much of this present government's spending has been with borrowed money. They're spending it when we do not have the money, in spite of the fact that in my view, and I hope to talk about this a little later, we don't have a revenue problem.

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So the latest figures: Ontario is scheduled to go another \$12.5 billion in the hole this year—that's more than the deficits of all the other provinces combined—and is scheduled to boost the total debt to over \$340 billion by the time the books are promised to be balanced by 2017-18.

There are others who paint an even more dismal picture. This government's hand-picked economist, Don Drummond, brought out his report in 2012 and projected that the deficit in 2017-18 will not be zero, as Kathleen Wynne has promised. He has indicated that in 2017-18, it won't be zero; we're going to be \$30.2 billion in the red, with the way we're going now. Drummond also projected the 2017-18 debt coming in at a whopping \$411.4 billion, not the \$340 billion that has been bandied about this winter.

We all know that Dalton McGuinty doubled the debt during his tenure and has that moniker—down my way, he's known as Dalton the Debt Doubler. He earned that mantle honestly. Kathleen Wynne herself will see a doubling of the debt by 2017-18 from that recession level of \$156.6 billion.

Speaker, as we debate Minister Matthews's motion, I ask everyone here to consider the Auditor General's past three annual reports. She commented on the growing debt; she highlighted a number of points. Debt servicing costs reduce funding for other programs, obviously, with potentially reduced funding to pay civil servant salaries—the interim motion we're debating this afternoon. Her second point, as I've mentioned, is greater vulnerability to interest rate increases. Third—I know that our finance critic made mention of that this afternoon—are potential and ongoing credit rating downgrades. These

increase borrowing costs, the most recent example being the concern from the investor credit rating organization Moody's.

Speaker, as debt grows, so does the amount of cash needed to pay the interest on the debt. Ontario now spends more on debt interest than it does on post-secondary education, and these interest costs continue to grow. In fact, the interest on the debt is projected to be the fastest-rising cost for this government over the next four years. To my way of thinking, down the road, this means even less money available for civil servant salaries and programs. By 2017-18, when the total debt is expected to be more than \$340 billion, the government expects to have to spend nearly \$1 in every \$9 of revenue to service that debt. In 2007-08, only \$1 of every \$12 of revenue collected was required to pay the interest.

After the provincial budget was tabled again, in July of last summer, the credit rating agencies reaffirmed their existing ratings for Ontario. However, they have indicated that a downgrade will be almost inevitable eventually, unless the province implements measures to address its higher debt level.

Let's go back to Moody's. In July 2014, Moody's changed its outlook for Ontario from stable to negative and warned of a possible downgrade. Also in July 2014, S&P—Standard and Poor's—reaffirmed its AA-minus rating, with a negative outlook.

DBRS confirmed its rating of AA-low but, similar to Moody's assessment, DBRS noted that the province's medium-term outlook has weakened.

And—this was mentioned earlier—just before Christmas, Fitch also downgraded the province's credit rating to AA-minus.

All the credit rating agencies are keeping an eye on the province of Ontario. They're watching our deliberations, the debate we're having this afternoon, about the need to meet payroll in the coming several months.

Ontario's Auditor General not only put out a challenge; she put out some benchmarks for us to follow, and has recommended a long-term debt reduction plan linked to the target of reducing the net debt-to-GDP ratio to the pre-recession level of 27%. I don't think it's going to happen, from what I see in this House.

I will say that many of those in the know—the Bank of Canada, the Conference Board of Canada, the credit rating agencies that I've mentioned—have very little confidence that this government has the ability to rein in spending.

Moody's, again, brought out a report very recently and noted that Ontario's debt burden has gone up every year since 2009. They compare to it Quebec, where debt has remained stable: "Given such high levels of planned spending, it is our expectation that there will be non-significant reductions in Ontario's debt burden for the next five to 10 years...."

"Moody's rating for Ontario is Aa2 negative and Quebec's Aa2 stable." As I mentioned, "The rating firm downgraded Ontario to negative from stable in July last year, just before the budget" was brought in.

Just to wrap up, I think it's very important for us to dwell on this negative outlook for the province of Ontario. Very simply, in my reading—I've been involved in the study and in readings of the dismal science for something like 40 years now—everybody is telling this government the same thing: Stop the spending. What are we seeing? We're seeing increases in spending.

Here we are today debating a motion to pay the salaries of civil servants. We're talking about paying civil servants' salaries with money we don't have, money we have to borrow.

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

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Boy, what silly games the Liberals play, I must say. Anyway, it's Inside Baseball, so I won't even comment on it.

Let me just say a couple of things on interim supply in the four minutes and 23 seconds I've got left. I was very interested to read the story—was it on Friday?—about what was going to happen to Highway 69. Was it Friday?

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: If we dial back about five or six weeks ago, there was a by-election in Sudbury. This is related to interim supply, because the money would have to be paid by this assembly. Anyway, back then, there was a by-election, and the government and the then-candidate for office, Mr. Thibeault, got up and made a solemn promise to the people of Sudbury: "If we're elected, if you get this guy of ours elected, if you get our choice candidate, who is the anointed one, elected as the person to represent us in Sudbury, we will deliver Highway 69 by 2017—2018 at the latest," I was told.

There are people who said, "Jeez, we've been promised this before by Rick Bartolucci how many times? But maybe this time—maybe this time—the Liberals really mean it. Maybe the Liberals are not going to break their word on Highway 69 like they did for three elections, and a whole bunch of other issues like PET scans and others." So they thought, "Well, you know what? Let's just give them the confidence, because after all, one of these days, the Liberals have to not"—I can't use the words "lie" or "deceive," because they would be unparliamentary.

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Sorry—that was kind of weird. I would just say the point was that the people of Sudbury thought, for once, "We have hope. We have to have hope that one day the Liberals are actually going to do what they promise they're going to do," unlike the last three or four times when they promised these things and never did them. So, people went to polls, and I'm sure that weighed on them when they came to the decision: "If we have Glenn as a member of the government team, he's going to be able to deliver. He's going to be part of the government team, and everything is going to be wonderful."

It took five weeks and they broke their promise. I can't believe it. They ran up to Sudbury and made an announcement on Friday saying, "Not 2016-17, not 2018, not 2019, but 2020."

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Sorry, I'm off by a year: 2021. Let's do the math here. Not in this term of office, for sure, and not likely the term of office after. What kind of promise is that? You would think the government would at least be holding to the promise they made to Sudburians on Highway 69 for, now, the fourth time. I find it, quite frankly, just reprehensible that the government would do this over and over again.

I guess it goes to show that Liberals will say one thing in an election—they will tell you what you want to hear. They will try to sound one way, but when it comes to actually delivering, they do the complete opposite.

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On that point, I've just got to say to the people who travel Highway 69, if you're not going to get your four-lane highway on time, remember who promised it and remember who didn't deliver it for the fourth time.

At this time, I'd like to acknowledge my good friend Mr. Glenn Thibeault from Sudbury, who used to be a federal member of Parliament, who got to break the promise for the Liberals. He left the New Democrats and became a Liberal so he can break a promise. I've got to say, that is just an amazing thing that he was able to do.

What I also want to just speak to very quickly is the agricultural bill that we have before us, and we spoke about this the other day. There is nothing in this interim supply bill—and there will be nothing in the interim supply motion—that deals with making sure we have money for the risk management plan that the government is going to expand. All members of this House have agreed that the risk management plan, as proposed by the government, is something we can support, but there is not one piece of money that has been attributed by way of the estimates, the interim supply and, I will argue, the final supply bill that puts in place the money we need to make sure that we have a real risk management program that allows us to be able to do what needs to be done to protect farmers.

Again, it's the same thing as the Highway 69 announcement: this time, a promise in the Legislature to do something, but all we really got is a title and no money attached to it. So it's more Liberalism.

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

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The other parties have no time left. Further debate?

Mr. Naqvi has moved government notice of motion number 16. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

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

All those opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell—unless I receive a vote referral document, and I have from the chief government whip. This asks that the vote be

deferred until tomorrow during the time of deferred votes.

Vote deferred.

ONTARIO IMMIGRATION ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR L'IMMIGRATION EN ONTARIO

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 2, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 49, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 / Projet de loi 49, Loi portant sur l'immigration en Ontario et apportant une modification connexe à la Loi de 1991 sur les professions de la santé réglementées.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): When we last debated this motion at second reading, the member for Scarborough—Agincourt I believe had the floor, so we now go to questions and comments with respect to her speech.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, I just want to say bravo, about time that the province step up and do what we should have done a long time ago, which is having a greater say about immigration policy in this province.

I know that my colleague Michael Prue, the member for Beaches—East York, advocated that for many, many years because it's really hard to understand why the largest province, Ontario—the most populous province, the province that has most of the immigration coming to it—would not, a long time ago, have decided to take on some of the responsibility for immigration.

We will know in this Legislature that the province of Quebec has been doing so for a long time, and I would argue to great effect. The Quebec government has been able to have an effect on immigration that has been beneficial to them when it comes to making sure that they're able to deal with the economics of who comes over as far as the economics, the jobs, culture etc., which is able to reinforce the province of Quebec.

For example, if I look at the area I come from, there was a conference up in Thunder Bay, I think it was on this weekend, where francophones got together and talked about immigration in northern Ontario. In northern Ontario, especially in the northeast, there is a very large contingent of francophones. We find ourselves to be in the majority in most communities that we live in in the northeast. One of the things that we would hope is that there would be policies in place that at least let francophones who are moving into the country from whatever French country it might be around the world know that northern Ontario would be put on the map when it comes to an option, because if you're French speakers and don't speak English as a second language, you can pretty well live in French in many of the communities that I represent, where there are third-generation and fourth-generation francophones who have a hard time being able to speak English.

It would make some sense for us to have some say when it comes to being able to deal with the issues around immigration as they apply to the province of Ontario. I certainly look forward to this bill to go to committee so we can deal with some of those real issues.

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

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'm happy to have a couple of minutes on Bill 49. One of the goals of this legislation, if passed, would include a vision and objectives for immigration to Ontario, recognizing the long history of immigration etc, and it goes on to speak about a broad vision that it has.

As has been mentioned, one of the goals of this legislation will be to enhance the ability that Ontario has to control its immigration policies, as has long been the case in the province of Quebec. It makes me think, as has been mentioned, about how this has occurred over the last 50, 80 or 100 years. I think about my community of Thunder Bay—Atikokan as well.

It makes me smile, I must say, when we think of and talk about multiculturalism. I think it's fair to say that people in southern Ontario have a bit of an idea that it took root in the bigger centres across Canada. But if you think back on the recent history around the city of Toronto, for example, I think Toronto in the early 1970s was deemed to be one of the most WASPish, if I could use that word, communities that you could probably find, certainly in Ontario and perhaps in the entire country. It has only been in relatively recent history—the last 30 or 40 years—where we've seen a significant multicultural component come to the city of Toronto.

Contrast that to what happened in my community of Thunder Bay: When people talked about multiculturalism, I used to say all the time, "Here in Thunder Bay—Port Arthur and Fort William before we amalgamated in 1970—we were multicultural before people were even talking about multiculturalism." We were multicultural in Port Arthur and Fort William and then in Thunder Bay before it became an official federal policy. We've been doing it for a very long time. We know what it means. It enhances your community. It's a good thing on a variety of levels. My ethnicity being Italian, I can talk at length on the contributions that the Italian community has made in my home community of Thunder Bay.

This legislation is a great piece. It goes a long way to enhancing Ontario's ability to control its own policy, and I hope others will support it.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure to speak to this, and I'll be having a few more minutes later in the day. I think what I want to put on the record is one thing. It's interesting and I'm glad to see—it's a small step forward, but again, I have to bring to light that it has been 12 years of this government in power. I'm wondering why it's so late to the table doing this. We've had issues for these last dozen years that they could have been working on. It

seems almost like with the feds introducing their expression-of-interest policy—or the intent to do that in 2015—that this has actually finally propelled them. I'd say it's a good step in the right direction, but I certainly would like to see it.

I'm also concerned that there are a lot of other environmental challenges that we're experiencing right now that are forcing some of these immigrants to either not stay in Ontario or to go to other provinces. Our high price of power is certainly one of those detriments, the red tape and administration costs, and I think just with the fear of the debt and the deficit, of where our province is, a lot of companies are choosing to go elsewhere and a lot of the new Canadians who are coming here are picking provinces other than Ontario.

I was pleased to see that there is a piece of the bill that references the Regulated Health Professions Act amendment. This bill will amend the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, to allow for the creation of regulations that speed up the process of registering as a member of the college. One of the things we all continually hear is—certainly when I'm down in the city; I travel a lot and I talk to a lot of people down here—people are still very frustrated with the qualifications that they come to our country with. They've gone through all the proper training and yet they're years and years and years getting the equivalent here and sometimes are never able to get that. They have to leave their chosen occupation, have to not utilize the services and the skills and the expertise that they have had in their own country, bring them here—that we could be utilizing and leveraging. So that saddens me.

I hope when the government are doing this and when we can get it into committee, we can talk about some of those things to ensure that those new Canadians are bringing all that they can. We've had a lot of great immigrants who have provided a great deal and contributed greatly to our wonderful province and country. I think we need to do more to encourage that.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to stand and comment on G49. It's hard for me not to think of Mr. Prue, of course, in the context of this bill because he spoke with such great eloquence around it. He was a former immigration officer and knew this file inside and out. He expressed the frustration, I think, that some of us feel—perhaps all of us on this side, anyway—that it has taken so long for this legislation to come forward. That said, of course we're supportive. This is a piece of legislation that needed to be updated and modernized, if you will, for quite some time.

I'm very supportive of some of the comments around updating the health regulations for health professionals. What a lost opportunity for us, not to welcome new immigrants with certain professional skill sets and not have them reach their potential in this province. I think that there are certain regulations contained within this piece

of legislation which will, of course, address that gap in service, and they're much needed.

When I was attending Harbord Collegiate, I was one of the only two Anglo-Saxon people in my class. Everything is context. When you grow up in a very multi-cultural and multi-ethnic community, that is your world until you leave it, and then you know how fortunate we are to live in this province and experience the diversity and culture. It is our strength, I do believe. When I left home and went to Cape Breton, I went to a high school called Sydney Academy. It was like going back in time, literally and figuratively, especially around the demographics of that area. It gave me a renewed appreciation for multiculturalism, which needs to be strengthened through this piece of legislation.

I'm happy to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Scarborough—Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to wrap up this round of debate. I want to thank the Minister of Transportation, the member from Ottawa—Orléans, the member from Mississauga—Brampton South, the member from Timmins—James Bay, the Minister of Natural Resources, the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound and the member from Kitchener—Waterloo with regard to their comments on this proposed bill.

Mr. Speaker, we know that every member in this House right now has some ancestry that comes from different places, unless we're First Nations. Having said that, I was very pleased to hear the member from Timmins—James Bay talk about Quebec—Quebec being the only province right now in Canada that has been granted the sole responsibility of selecting economic immigrants and refugees to their province.

If the proposed legislation is passed, it will provide the province of Ontario, known for its immigration practices, greater autonomy and more control on this whole immigration policy.

Our colleagues from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound and the member from Kitchener—Waterloo just mentioned the importance of regulated health professionals having their credentials so they can continue to pursue the profession that they've been trained for overseas. If this proposed legislation is passed, the RHPA will be revised, but more importantly, it will make sure skilled professionals have been trained to have the credentials they need—and furthermore, making sure of the timeliness of the decisions. There have been concerns raised about the lack of transparency and the timeliness of the approval process. If this proposed legislation is passed, Mr. Speaker, those pieces dealing with registration practices will be improved.

At the end of the day, I'm very pleased to hear all members of the House are supportive of the principle of this proposed legislation.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's absolutely a pleasure and a privilege to speak to Bill 49, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991.

Mr. Speaker, I want to start by thanking all immigrants who are part of our cultural mosaic for all that they have contributed to our communities, our province and our country. I'm proud and privileged to live in the best country in the world. I'm proud of the diversity, the openness and the welcoming spirit of inclusiveness. And I'm honoured to wear the Canadian flag—and be recognized worldwide as a country that has open arms for all.

Up until recently, Ontario was welcoming about 135,000 immigrants a year, mostly to the greater Toronto area, Ottawa, Hamilton, London, Windsor and the region around Niagara Falls. But that number is slowly declining, and it sits at about 100,000 newcomers a year. The number of skilled immigrants settling in Ontario is dropping significantly. Today, newcomers are choosing provinces like Manitoba and Saskatchewan over Ontario. In those provinces, immigration rates have doubled because of bigger and better economic opportunities.

Mr. Speaker, I'm saddened to say today that we have the highest electricity rates in North America. We have enormous amounts of red tape and regulation that, again, prohibit businesses from coming here, staying here and expanding in Ontario. We have the highest debt and deficit of all the provinces combined. That's not very inviting to businesses and certainly not to new Canadians coming to our country.

I think when they start looking at us—we used to be the economic engine; we used to be the land of prosperity and opportunity. Sadly, I believe today that because of the government's mismanagement over the last dozen years, we are not seen in the same light by many people. We are seen as an underserved community, in many cases. We're seen as someone who has their hand out, looking for federal transfer payments, as opposed to the province that used to be driving most of that.

It's a challenge to attract new immigrants to our wonderful province. I think they just have to look around and start comparing. Sadly, there's a lot of work that needs to be done to get us back there.

I'm proud of Ontarians. I'm proud of our resolve that we'll get back there. We're trying to do our best, on this side of the House, to push the government, to keep them accountable, to improve some of the ill-informed decisions they've made, so we can get back on track, so we can be that land of prosperity and opportunity for new immigrants, new Canadians, to come here again.

Cities like Saskatoon, Winnipeg and Fort McMurray are growing every day and attracting newcomers, who are filling labour shortages and helping grow the economy. Their growth is projected to persist, because they are in fact taking full advantage of their economic potential.

Since being elected and spending a bit of time in the GTA each week, I've had the pleasure of getting out to many different communities—Brampton, Mississauga,

Vaughan and Markham, just to name a few—and experiencing new and diverse cultures that I had never experienced before. They’ve been absolutely welcoming—

Mr. Bob Delaney: You came to Mississauga and you—

Mr. Bill Walker: Mississauga as well—I’m waiting for your invitation, Mr. Delaney.

I’m excited to meet with new Canadians, and I’m very excited to continue to be part of that outreach process. It’s important, I think, that we all work together and collaborate, to ensure that we have the best opportunities available.

I felt privileged, and continue to feel privileged, to hear personal stories about why people have chosen to make Ontario a new home for them and their families, and why they want to establish here and leave their own country of origin, to come here and make this truly their home.

My wife, Michaela, in fact, emigrated from England when she was about eight or 10 years old. We’ve been back a couple of times. It’s interesting, because she now says, “I’m not certain I would ever return to England as a full-time resident. I really, really appreciate everything that we have in Canada.”

I can only imagine, because I was born and raised in Ontario, Canada, and will probably never leave here, Mr. Speaker. I can’t imagine, really, for someone who was born in another country, how hard it must be to leave some of their own culture, or what they want to believe is their roots, and leave a lot of family members. But people are doing that, and I’m proud and pleased that they do that. Part of the reason for being a politician is to be able to ensure that we set the table, that we become, and continue to be, welcoming and open to all of the people who want to come and make Canada their home.

I take special interest in the stories about career and job challenges facing newcomers. It’s always interesting to ask someone, “Why did you come?” They say, “I came, and I’ve got a lot of background. I’ve taken my training. I was”—whatever it may be, from whatever occupational pursuit that they may have had in their own country.

It saddens me at times when I ask them, “Are you practising that profession here?” and they say no, and there is a myriad of reasons. Some of it is just a slow and bureaucratic process to get equivalent qualifications. I certainly respect, Mr. Speaker, and feel that we need to have balance, to make sure that there are equivalent criteria, but I do believe we need to be ramping up the process. We need to make that as efficient and as timely as possible, and not find administrative glitches to hold people back, particularly in the area—I’ve had the privilege since I’ve been here to be deputy critic of health care, and that’s one of the areas where we continue to hear that we have surgeons, doctors, family practitioners and specialists from across the health care spectrum that have come from their country of origin and are not able to practise here in Ontario, yet we continue to hear of

shortages in a lot of varieties of medicine out there. That’s just one.

I hear of engineers who have come here and have not been able to have the same designation, or get the equivalent, and be employed. I hear engineers who tell me every day—not every day, but certainly on an occasional basis—of trying to get that equivalent so that they can practise in their profession.

I think we need to ensure that we’re doing things in a timely manner. We need to be looking at those and making every effort. That’s why, in my last speaking to the member from Scarborough–Agincourt—I’m concerned that it has been 12 years of this government, and now we’re just getting to this. It would have been great to have known that they started this 12 years ago and it was a slam dunk and we weren’t still talking about just implementing it.

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For this reason, our caucus supported the move to have all candidates assessed before they arrive in Ontario. That would mean disclosing exactly what kind of opportunities await them in Ontario and, most importantly, what kind of professional upgrades they will need to be considered as a job candidate. This is not happening right now. As I’ve mentioned, we have doctors, engineers, nurses and a multitude of other professionals who don’t realize the employment obstacles facing them until they move their family here. This is costing us.

The Conference Board of Canada estimates that underutilizing their skills costs us between \$3 billion and \$4 billion in lost productivity. This is simply not fair to the applicants or to their families, and it certainly isn’t fair to us here in Ontario as well. We need to know exactly the type of people that we need to be attracting. We need to be fair and upright and straight with them, saying, “If you come and you have these qualifications, here’s what you’re going to need and here’s how long the time frame will be.” We need to ensure that those people aren’t given a false hope, move from their home to here to make a new home and we put them through that and they end up out doing a multitude of jobs that aren’t in their classification that they have to pick up.

To their credit, a lot of them will do whatever it is because they are just so happy—and you can see the passion on their face—and privileged and fortunate to be in a country like Canada and a province like Ontario.

But we need to do our job. We need to be fair so that it’s efficient and good for them. It’s much better for our province and our productivity, and, most importantly, it’s about them. They want to come. All of us should be able to aspire to do what we wish to do. We want them, particularly those with skills and qualifications who have spent that time and education and money and resources and the family commitment to become educated in a very specific occupation of their choice—we want to ensure that when they come here, we have an opportunity for them to practise that and, certainly, to maximize those skills and experiences.

A very particular specific issue is the provincial nominee program—and I'll reference it most of the day here—better known as PNP; although it will cut my word count a little, I'll do the acronym.

Nationally we have a yearly quota of allowing about 250,000 new permanent residents to settle in Canada. Ontario has asked for a bigger role in selecting which ones settle in Ontario and that its provincial nominee program, PNP, double its share to 5,000 from the current 2,500.

The provincial nominee program deals with fast-tracking economic applicants. This is a step in the right direction, but we need to clarify something. The problem currently with PNP isn't just the number of spots that Ontario has allocated—and I've alluded to this earlier in my address; it's that this current government is doing a poor job of making sure that the 2,500 spots are allocated to fit our economic needs. They're not doing a great job to ensure we're a thriving, prosperous province so that those people have the ability to find good, prosperous jobs and remain here in Ontario.

In other words, this government is doing a bad job of keeping the PNP applicants after a few years. People come; they're allowed and welcomed into Ontario, but at the end of the day, particularly in the last number of years, with the way things have gone economically, with the poor decisions and the waste that we see in our government, the debt and deficit that continues to climb, people are making choices to say, "You know what? Ontario isn't the land of prosperity," as other provinces may be compared. So they are leaving. They're going west. They're going to other provinces, and there are a number of reasons for that.

High taxes are certainly some of those—the overall cost of living in Ontario. They make other provinces that much more attractive. In this House, we've talked continually about the highest cost of energy in the country. In fact, in North America as a jurisdiction we've got the highest energy rates, and those are projected to climb three to four times again in the next four years. How enterprising is that for a family, particularly if they have to come and work in an occupation that may not be of their professional designation, where they may not be making the level of income that they were accustomed to or able to if they were in some of those professional occupations? It becomes very daunting for a family to say, "Do I stay here? Do I try to make a go of it or do I go somewhere like the west where things are more attractive, the rates are lower, in many cases, and the cost of living is lower?" And certainly, the oil sands were booming; they're slowing down a little bit, but there's still an awful lot of opportunity out there.

We want to ensure that Ontario, at the end of the day, doesn't continue to lag behind other provinces. We need to turn around some of our policy and thought processes. Certainly on this side of the House, it's part of our job as the official opposition to be critical where critical is warranted. Sadly, there's a lot of that; I could probably spend half the day talking about that. But we won't go

there. I'm not going to get off track today. I'm going to stick to the topic at hand. I'm going to talk about our immigration policies.

I just want to reinforce that again, a lot of people—we have the 2,500 quantity who are allotted to come to Ontario. The question is, can we retain them? At this point, I would challenge the government to ask if 2,500 a year are definitely staying in Ontario because we are the province that they purport us to be.

Our allocation of the provincial nominee program spaces should be higher, but before that happens, this government needs to prove that it can make effective use of the 2,500 spots it has now—make it a province where people want to say, "You know what? I'm not leaving here no matter what, because this is absolutely the best province."

If we can bring some of that administrative burden down, if we can bring some of our taxes down, if we, certainly, can bring energy rates down and stop demolishing, if you will, a lot of our industries—we've had 350,000 manufacturing jobs leave our province. They've decimated the horse racing industry. We've had fiascos like the gas plants, where we wasted a billion dollars. Those things can't continue if we're going to continue to attract the brightest and best immigrants, whom we want to come to our province.

This means, generally, that we need to improve the opportunities for new Canadians in Ontario. We need an environment that is creating jobs and improving foreign credential recognition for internationally trained professionals.

I support the idea of having a provincial registry to match employers with select workers. That's a good idea. We need to know that we need X, Y, Z of those. If there are people applying, those people should—and I think will—get priority because they're going to be able to walk right in, find a job and start becoming productive members of our community, of our society. Not only is that good for us, that's good for them coming in. Everyone wants to get up in the morning with a sense of purpose—that I belong and I'm making my fair contribution—particularly those who have made that huge, monumental decision, to say, "You know what? I'm coming to make this my home. This is going to become the home of my family for generations to come."

I understand this registry is mostly in response to the regulations being developed by the federal government and making Ontario compliant. I'm not really caring if that's the case. If that's what it is and that's what propelled them to do it, I'm okay with that, and I applaud the federal government for putting an initiative into place that's getting them to at least jump on the bandwagon and come up with this. This is also in line with recommendations from the Ontario Chamber of Commerce.

Ontario's unemployment rate remains significantly high. We need to ensure that we're bringing in people with the skills and experience that we need to match the gaps that we currently have. There's no sense bringing in volumes of people who already have skills and qualifica-

tions in areas where we don't need them and leaving people out, who aren't able to access our country and our province, with skills that we need to fill those gaps.

The last statistic was that Ontario's unemployment rate has been above the national average for some 80 months—that's eight-zero months, Mr. Speaker—almost seven solid years of being above the national average. That can't be a stat that anybody in this House can accept and be happy with. This is because of the hit on our manufacturing base, which is where some of our new Canadians, certainly a lot of people coming here, look for manufacturing opportunities—there are a lot of skills in the skilled trades—and where most of the pink slips were handed out: namely, Heinz in Leamington, which was the second-largest Heinz plant in the world; Kellogg's plant; Caterpillar's Electro-Motive in London; General Motors; Ford; Linamar in Guelph, Canada's second-largest auto-parts maker, whose CEO herself declared, "Tens of thousands of shop-floor jobs are disappearing."

The reality is that all of these companies are still producing the product that they're famous for; they're just not doing it in Ontario anymore—a sad state of affairs. It's sad that they've moved out of those communities and moved jobs to other places. Ontario is no longer the leading car-producing province it once was.

Once upon a time in Ontario, back to the Davis years—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Okay, I think the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound has the floor, and I'd like to be able to hear him.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once upon a time in Ontario—and I can hearken back to the Bill Davis era—Ontario was booming; everything was moving forward. There were lots of jobs and very low unemployment. The province was doing exceedingly well. We had shipments worth \$63 billion and production units of more than 2.5 million. Seven of the world's largest vehicle manufacturers operated 14 plants in Ontario. Sadly, that's no longer the case. Investors aren't creating jobs in Ontario because of high energy rates, red tape and administration, the debt and deficit—and a government that is under four OPP investigations cannot be helping. It simply is something that has to be looked at in light of a company that wants to come here or a new family that wants to come here and ask, "Is that the province?" when you see the spectrum of what we have across Canada, with all of our great provinces. We need to be the leader, we need to be the best and we need to set the bar higher. Like newcomers, they're looking to western provinces to set up shop, and they're doing it because of lower tax rates, a lower cost of living, less administration and just the pure fact of where they'll have more opportunity in the future.

In my next few minutes, I'm going to talk about co-operation with our federal counterparts. Our aging populations combined with our low birth rate means we have to rely on steady immigration to fill the gap. Ontario has expressed that it wants more control over immigrant

selection. Specifically, Ontario wants 70% of its immigrants to be economic class, as in the case of most other provinces.

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I'm pleased to see that the federal government has made extensive changes to Canada's immigration system, including the Federal Skilled Worker Program, the provincial nominee program and their termination of the provincial-territorial temporary foreign worker agreements in June 2015.

In January 2015, the federal government planned to introduce expression-of-interest immigration reforms to make the immigration system more responsive to labour market demands. This could increase the role of the province and employers in finding qualified immigrants to fill gaps in the labour market. The federal government is encouraging provinces to develop systems that will allow them to participate in the new expression-of-interest system.

Ontario must still jointly share that responsibility with the federal government, whether or not this legislation passes, but I'm pleased to see that the federal government is pushing it. They've identified it and are leading that charge. Regardless of why the current Liberal government has chosen to jump on, I'm pleased to see that it is.

A question that arises—and our caucus, under our critic, has not been able to get the details yet—is whether this proposal is revenue-neutral, as it establishes a government bureaucracy of inspectors and investigators. Yet again another program, another sound bite that sounds good, but is the devil in the details? As we've asked many times in this House of the government, in estimates committee, the supply motion debate just before that—a number of my colleagues asked questions about: How can you do this? Where are the facts? Where is the plan? What's the accountability measure that you're putting in place? This is one of those bills, again, that sounds good at the outset, but we need to understand: Will it be revenue-neutral? Is it going to cost us more than we can afford to implement it?

This government has mismanaged, as I said earlier, immigration policy for a decade, when it could have been working with the federal government to ensure that Ontario's economic needs were met by new Canadians. I'm not going to say that the government is only doing it because the federal government has forced their hand with the introduction of the 2015 expression-of-interest program, but it certainly looks that way, that it could be a component of why they finally stepped up.

It's a small nod in the right direction, Mr. Speaker. Ontario's inability to manage the economy and create jobs is deterring immigrants and certainly companies from coming to Ontario, necessarily, as their first choice. They are making other choices. Some are coming here, as I've alluded to in my earlier remarks, and they are not remaining in Ontario all the time. They're going to other provinces because of other economic opportunities that are there.

I talked a little bit earlier about the Regulated Health Professions Act amendment. As I say, I like this piece of it. I like that the bill amends the Regulated Health Professions Act to allow for the creation of regulations that speed up the process. There's no reason why we can't be talking to people and ensuring that they understand that there is a path for it, how quickly we can get them through there, and we expedite, particularly if it's merely qualifications.

In some of my work as deputy health critic, we've heard that other provinces accept the professional designation and yet Ontario puts them through more hoops and loops. That isn't to say that we will ever water down. We want the highest standards and the most stringent requirements. But I can't fathom that any of the other provinces are going to be thinking any less about the health and safety of their residents. So if there's something that four, five, six or seven other provinces have studied and said, "Yes, this meets it," why does Ontario have to continually hold back, lag behind and keep these people out of our workforce? There are wait-lists in health care that could be addressed with some of these people being able to get through the system, and we want to ensure that we do that in the most timely and effective manner possible.

We need to ensure that as we go forward, we get this bill to committee. We need to address the long-standing problem of ensuring that highly trained immigrants are able to work in their professional field when they move to Ontario. We only need to look to the statistics—30% of Ontarians are considered new Canadians and speak neither English nor French at home—to understand how important it is that we get this bill right.

As I stated in my opening remarks, Mr. Speaker, I am extremely proud to be a Canadian. I'm extremely proud to be an Ontarian and a Canadian in one of the most inviting cultural mosaics in the world. We are the best country in the world. We are open. We are inclusive. I'm proud that we're a province and a country that ensures that we allow others to come and make this their home, our home, and we collaborate together to ensure that that cultural mosaic is always there. I'll always fly the Canadian flag, as all Canadians will.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a pleasure to rise in this House, on behalf of the people I represent in London West, to respond to the comments from the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound on the Ontario Immigration Act. I think that the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound had it right in terms of his focus in his remarks on labour market opportunities for newcomers when they arrive in our province. On Friday in London, I had the honour of attending the release of a labour market needs assessment that was conducted by the African Canadian Federation of London and Area. It looked at issues around the labour market integration of immigrants from African countries into London. One of the really troubling statistics they reported was that the unemployment rate among African Canadians in London is about 35%.

That's five times higher than the overall unemployment rate. This is an incredible loss of talent, skills and credentials that these newcomers are bringing into our community.

The other thing that the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound did not address, and that I think is important to keep in mind as we talk about International Women's Day, is the disproportionate impact of the immigration process on women. When we looked at the statistics that were presented on Friday, African women had even higher unemployment rates than men in our community—40% unemployment—and African women were more likely to say they felt disconnected and excluded from their community. Thank you.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: I listened with great intent to the speech by my colleague the honourable gentleman from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. But let me put Bill 49 in context from a Peterborough perspective. Saturday night, my wife, Karan, who is the hard-working principal at St. Patrick elementary school in Peterborough—I say hello to her in case she might be watching this afternoon—and I were at the Friends' Indian Dinner in Peterborough on Saturday night. Karan and I were doing a couple of Bollywood steps, which I won't say I was particularly good at.

What was interesting was to see the guests who were there that evening. These were individuals from the four corners of the world who have come to Peterborough for new job opportunities. They were cardiologists, radiologists and cancer care specialists who have come to Peterborough to practise medicine at the Peterborough Regional Health Centre. Beyond that, a group of engineers were there—again, coming from the four corners of the world. They're engineers at the GE Hitachi nuclear division, which is headquartered in Peterborough, and they're also employed at Siemens in Peterborough, another great success story.

I want to talk about the new director of radiology who just came to the Peterborough Regional Health Centre. This is an individual who came from Saudi Arabia and trained at Harvard and Stanford, but wanted to come to Peterborough, Ontario, to fulfill her destiny as director of radiology at Peterborough Regional Health Centre.

The notion that people from around the world are not coming to Ontario is frankly nonsense. Anytime the members of the opposition want to come to Peterborough, we'll do a tour and we can sit down and chat with these extraordinary individuals who know that Canada, or Ontario, is the place to be in the 21st century. This is a message that I'm prepared to take to all corners of Ontario. Thank you so much.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to join the debate. What a fine speech by the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. It was—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Very inspiring.

Mr. Steve Clark: That's the right word, member for Simcoe North. It was very inspiring. I'm also glad that I get to follow the Minister of Agriculture. You know, I spoke to the minister earlier today about a petition response I got about Kemptville College. I talked to him specifically about what the government has done to Alfred College, and allowed for dollars to flow for a new cohort of students in 2015-16. I asked him specifically whether Kemptville College was also going to have that new cohort of students, because I think that's a key component to the future of agriculture education in Ontario.

When we talk about an immigration bill and the need to provide jobs and fill needs in our communities, it takes me back to a report I quoted on another bill, Bill 49. It was a report called Planning for Tomorrow for OAC; Input From Industry. When we talk about agriculture jobs, demand exceeds supply right now in the province of Ontario by three to one. For every three jobs that are there, we lack the supply of new students.

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When I talk about Kemptville College, one of the suggestions that comes forward is the fact that maybe we should be going out to foreign students. Maybe we should be looking to expand our horizons and our opportunities to keep that 97-year tradition continuing to serve students in the eastern Ontario agricultural population.

When I hear some of the debate, and I especially hear the previous speaker, the Minister of Agriculture, talk about jobs, I'm going to continue to apply what he says to Kemptville College because I really think the government needs to step up and make that commitment.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: It's an honour to be able to follow the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound and the member from Leeds-Grenville, because immigration, especially in agriculture—on a personal note, one of the reasons that I was forced to sell our dairy farm was because we couldn't find people. We could find people to work; we couldn't find people to manage it. There is a huge shortage in this province. The Minister of Agriculture and the Premier constantly talk about the jobs that agriculture is going to create. Do you know what? It's not going to create them if the people who have the qualifications to do them aren't there.

Is this act a step in the right direction? Yes, but I'm hoping that they're actually going to take this seriously. The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound brought up a point—if there's going to be any money spent here. It says that the minister “may” do this and the minister “may”—well, the minister should do some things because there are things here that need to be done.

Specifically in my riding of Timiskaming-Cochrane, people think that we're way out of the immigration loop when actually a lot of my riding has a mining component. I was knocking on doors in Cochrane in the last election, and at one door there were people from Argentina and next door were people from South Africa. I got into quite

a conversation with them. He was complaining about—this was last fall. He was complaining about the winter, how the winter was so terrible in Cochrane.

Mr. Steve Clark: I thought he was going to complain about the Liberal government.

Mr. John Vanthof: No, no. He was complaining about the winter in Cochrane. I said, “Well, sir, it's not that bad all the time. Last winter was a really bad one.” He looked at me and he said, “Now I know that politicians are all the same in all countries. I've been here for three winters and they're all bad.” It was an interesting conversation.

This is a really important subject. Everyone in this House has got something to do with immigration. At some point, we all came. Even the First Nations came, and that was before we really had policies, but Ontario won't grow without immigration.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We now have an opportunity for the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound to reply.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. Before I go through the colleagues who have spoken on behalf of this, just one thing that I missed in my notes was that I had the privilege of working at Bruce Power, which really is a mosaic in an area like ours in rural Ontario that shows just what immigrants bring to our province, to our country and to the prosperity. They're wonderful people. They're very, very qualified and very skilled, and I think that's a model that we can all build from, to show we're bringing in people with very specified skills to fill what's needed, and those are very prosperous.

I want to thank the member for London West, Peggy Sattler. She echoed something that I have concerns about—five times higher than the national unemployment rate currently with this government. That's simply sad. We need to be very cautious, careful and strategic when we're bringing people in to fill the roles where there are gaps.

I want to thank the member from Leeds-Grenville, Steve Clark, and Timiskaming-Cochrane, Johnny Vanthof. They have both touched on that whole agricultural component—absolutely critical to our economy and critical to our community. I thank the member from Leeds for calling me “inspiring.” That's a feather in my cap coming from you, our House leader—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: That was me who said that.

Mr. Bill Walker: And also Mr. Garfield Dunlop from Simcoe North.

He talked about Kemptville College and Alfred College. There's a reality right now that there are three jobs available and only one person to fill them. Timiskaming-Cochrane jumped right on the back of that and said the exact same thing. So there are huge opportunities, but the government is failing in bringing in those people.

The Minister of Agriculture wanted to talk—and he did talk—about a great event in his riding and the wonderful things that are happening in immigration. Do you

know what? He's absolutely correct. There are a lot of great things happening, but just how much better could we be, Mr. Speaker? How many more health care jobs and services could we provide, how many more educational opportunities to provide those agricultural students with jobs that they want, how much more affordable housing and apprenticeships for the skilled trades—which are sadly lacking—if we were spending \$12 billion a year on those programs, services and opportunities, as opposed to interest payments on our debt?

It's a pleasure to work with my colleague Todd Smith from Prince Edward county and all of my colleagues with all of the immigrant communities across our great province. I look forward to doing it. I'm a proud Canadian and will always be inclusive and open to all of those new Canadians.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Point of order, Mr. Speaker?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I want to recognize the member for Oxford on a point of order.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, I'd like the Legislative Assembly to recognize Russell and Carolyn Wilson from Salford, who are here this afternoon with their two boys, Scott and Derek.

I also want to point out to my nephew John that Russell is an expert in running dairy farms. He may want to talk to him before he gets away.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That was not a point of order but I enjoyed hearing it nonetheless. Thank you.

Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an honour always to stand in this House and to debate, particularly representing the culturally and racially diverse riding of Parkdale–High Park. In fact, at one point we were the most racially and culturally diverse riding in the entire North American continent. Because of gentrification, because of housing costs in downtown Toronto, that's not the case anymore. I know at Parkdale high school at one point there were 65 different mother tongues spoken—that's in one high school in my riding. That's how diverse we are.

I want to talk a little bit about the context of this bill and a little bit about our history as Canadians when it comes to do with immigrants. Of course, like everybody else here, I'm the daughter of immigrants. My father's side is Italian; my mother's side is English.

My grandmother came over at the turn of the last century. They settled in Lloydminster in Saskatchewan. They were homesteaders. My grandfather was a small-town doctor. There she was in the middle of the prairies, having come from a family of 12 children in England, to raising four completely on her own. It was a hard existence, and they survived.

My father came from Sicily, and arrived in Toronto. His parents started a fruit and vegetable stand on the Danforth, which, again, is a very common immigrant story. I don't want to focus on his experience. Again, they came over at the same time, the beginning of the last century.

At that time, it was the done thing—luckily it's gone now—where you tried to forget your mother tongue as quickly as possible—

Interjections: No, no.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Yes, it was. You tried to amalgamate; you tried to merge into the city.

Interjections.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The turn of the last century, my friends—the early 1900s.

There was incredible racism in the city of Toronto. Let me give you some examples of what was happening back then. Number one, on the boardwalk in the Beach, there were signs: “No Jews nor dogs.” That was at the Beach. That's my father's Canada and the Toronto in which he grew up. In my father's Canada and the Toronto in which he grew up, as a semi-pro boxer and an Italian, he could walk in the back door of the Granite Club but he was not allowed in the front door.

My father, as a Roman Catholic immigrant, witnessed the birth of the United Church of Canada—of which I am a clergy member—in 1925. The bright side: It was a uniting church that was brought into being by an order of the government of Canada—if we could imagine such a thing. The shadow side of that was that one of the reasons all the Protestant churches were uniting was to fight back against the Roman Catholic immigration that was happening from southern Europe. He experienced that first-hand.

He also remembers the Christie Pits race riots in Toronto.

He also remembers a time when we turned away boatloads of Jewish immigrants fleeing from the impending Holocaust in Europe. We turned them away and we sent them back to certain death.

He also reminds me—and reminded me back then—of apartheid itself. That was, by the way, invented in Canada and exported to South Africa. They copied our system of reserves in South Africa.

So that's the backdrop. Whenever we speak about immigration and whenever we speak about racism in this House, I think we have to do a little mea culpa first before we continue on because that's also the backdrop in which we speak.

1600

Sadly to say, as we look at what's happening federally, we seem to be reverting a little bit back. I'm going to quote from an article that I think makes some very salient points about what is happening federally, because, after all, immigration mainly and mostly is a federal matter:

“Today, there are over 480,000 people entering the country as temporary workers,” and these temporary workers don't have access to the most basic benefits. “Migrant workers can now legally be paid 5% to 15% below the average wage.

“At the same time, there are over 500,000 undocumented people without access to good jobs, health care, education, child care, housing, shelter, justice or dignity, living in Canada, most of them in the greater Toronto area.”

I want to talk about one such family. I'm not going to mention their names, because they're still on the run. They lived in sanctuary in one of the United churches in my riding, and they lived in hiding. Why did they live in hiding and in sanctuary? Thank goodness for the goodness of strangers. Because the Harper government was about to deport them. Why was the Harper government going to deport them? Because they were Roma, Mr. Speaker.

One of the biggest groups that has come into south Parkdale in the last little while has been Roma immigrants. They are escaping some of the most repressive and racist laws in Europe, in the countries from which they come: Hungary, Czechoslovakia and others that have anti-Roma laws on the books. That's what they're escaping from. They escaped to a place they thought was going to be safe, that they thought was going to welcome them as refugees, with good refugee causes. Such was not to be the case.

This was after we had spent almost a million dollars in my riding, recruiting those who spoke Hungarian, translators for the children at schools.

As Harper began to deport the Roma from my riding, some 200 students from one school alone—now, think about what that means. Think about what that means, to have a place that you think is safe. You're a child with your family, and one day you're uprooted from school; you're uprooted from everything you know. You're on the run. You're either in hiding or you're living in a basement somewhere. You're trying desperately not to have the immigration forces find you and deport you. That was after being welcomed in.

That's what happened to Roma in my neighbourhood. We lost some 200 students from one school alone. We lost teachers as a result. It totally was disruptive. For the first time, it gave folk in my neighbourhood a really lived historical experience of what it must have been like to be, say, in Germany in the 1930s or 1920s, where your neighbours just disappear and you don't know where they've gone. You don't know what has happened to them. You can't say goodbye. They're just missing in action, and there is no way to find them and there is no way to contact them to even find out if they're okay.

That's what immigration looks like right now in Canada. That's what it looks like right now. It's not a pretty picture.

The family reunification program, under the current federal government, has been modified to actually deter reunification. Currently, there is a complete moratorium on parents and grandparents getting a visa. Again, this is a dramatic change in Canada in immigration. This is a dramatic change, from what we've been used to, as a welcoming country, to this.

Refugee acceptance rates have been cut each year, and halved in the last two decades alone. As of November 1, 2012, 68% of refugee applicants had been denied in the fiscal year 2012—68% of refugee applicants had been denied. So those are the stories, like the Roma stories from my riding.

For years, immigrant rights groups have called for the establishment of a refugee appeal division, as one was created by the Liberals but in fact never, ever implemented.

We have another galling example. Maybe we've forgotten this, but I'm going to remind us of it. In August 2010, nearly 500 refugee claimants arrived on the MV Sun Sea off the coast of British Columbia. Instead of allowing them access to the refugee determination process, they were jailed. Families were broken apart, and children seized by the Ministry of Family and Child Services. I mean, this is a vindictiveness; this is the arbitrariness of the refugee process at the federal level.

The latest attack, by the way, is Bill C-31, which gives the minister the power to single out for special punishment refugees who are suspected of having fled their country by means of smugglers. Mr. Speaker, it's not the refugees' fault—it's the smugglers' fault—yet the refugees are the ones that are being targeted.

You heard from the member from London West about the dire circumstances of those who are lucky enough to actually be settled here, to actually get jobs here. Migrants of colour, we know, earn 40% less than their white counterparts. In Toronto, the number of immigrants who are poor has grown by 125% over the past 20 years alone, and almost 60% of poor families are from racialized groups.

Another instance we remember since I've been elected: In December 2009, four migrant workers fell to their deaths in Toronto while working in unsafe conditions. In September 2010, two migrant workers died while working at an apple processing facility.

Remember, migrant workers are not allowed to bring their families. They're forced to be alienated. They're completely alone and completely at risk.

If we think those immigration raids are something that we see just south of the border—not so, Mr. Speaker. We see them right here; we see them in the GTA. They happen all the time.

I was sitting in Dufferin Mall one day and I saw a sweep. It was like something out of a movie. People came; we didn't know who they were. It's a place where many Portuguese gentlemen sit and have coffee and just hang out in the food mall at the Dufferin court. It's in the middle of a very Portuguese neighbourhood. All of a sudden, strange people came. They weren't necessarily in uniform. They were harassing these men. Nobody knew what it was about. They were asking for ID.

That's what a sweep looks like. It's scary; it's terrifying. It's not just men; it's women and it's children too. This is happening, and it's happening in our city and in our country right now. Do we have an issue? Yes, we have an issue, a real issue, with not only our image in the world vis-à-vis refugees and immigrants but the reality of that lived experience here.

Let me tell you, the provincial government isn't immune to the problems. One of the issues I've been raising since I was elected is the fact that we force newcomers to wait three months to be covered by OHIP. As far as I

know, we're the only province that does that. This is not only not compassionate; this is downright foolhardy and dangerous. We live in an era of Ebola. Imagine forcing newcomers to stay away from our hospitals, stay away from our doctors, and not give them coverage. This is ridiculous.

In fact, meeting with the Canadian Federation of Students—as I know many of us are today—they pointed out that it's even worse for international students. International students not only don't have newcomer coverage, as all newcomers don't, but they also have to pay if they're going to have coverage at all at any point, even if they're here for years and years. They pay through private insurance. Again, is that compassionate? It's not the case elsewhere in Canada. It is the case here in Ontario. Why do we do that?

Why do we charge them tuition when they create jobs? These are the same international students that tend to stay, graduate and work here, yet we're charging them billions more for tuition.

We're also forcing them to get private insurance. I thought that public insurance was something that the greatest Canadian, Tommy Douglas, fought for, and I thought that all Canadians were very proud of our public health insurance. Not so for international students, who are forced to go private. That's something we should be extremely ashamed of.

There are other instances, and I know that others have spoken about the lack of employment opportunity, the lack of being able to get into your chosen profession, as an immigrant.

Again, a story from my riding: this incredible gentleman, who's a surgeon who came from Iran and very much wanted to live here. He certainly wanted his children raised here. He moved his entire family here and was working as a baker. He was working as a baker, at just slightly over minimum wage, when he was a qualified surgeon in Iran.

He was told it would take him at least 10 years to qualify—he was already in his 40s—10 years to qualify. Of course, the qualification process was expensive. He couldn't work to support his family and also go through the qualification process and afford it, or have the time to do it, quite frankly. He was completely misled, and there he landed, in my riding, with his family.

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We tried everything. We tried to talk to the governing bodies, with no luck. Do you know what he does now? Do you know what he does now in the province of Ontario, where we are in desperate need of doctors? What he does now is travel back to Iran for six months of the year and works, and then he travels back here to be with his family for six months of the year. That's what we're forcing him to do when we need doctors. Most people don't have a GP, and yet we're forcing this very qualified immigrant to do that.

To the bill: Is it a step in the right direction? Yes, it is. My goodness, though, I've been here—I'm in my ninth year. For 10 years we've been waiting for something—10

years we've been waiting for something. For 10 years we've been waiting for the government to do anything on this file. Certainly, we should have a voice. My goodness, there are over 13 million people in Ontario. We are the centre for much of Canada's immigration, and yet this government has been silent on this file until now.

There are still some problems even with this. Recognizing that the federal government is really where immigration tends to happen, that still remains paramount. And there's nothing that guarantees the federal government will even go along with this legislation. Again, it doesn't address the long-standing problems of ensuring that highly trained immigrants are able to work in their professional fields.

It certainly doesn't say anything about the dire poverty into which many newcomers come. It doesn't say anything about housing. It doesn't say anything about the settlement services we have in our communities, which, by the way, never get stable funding. I know we're very aware of this problem with settlement services in our communities, some of which do get provincial funding—it's not all federal funding. They have to reapply and reapply and look for little loopholes and caches of money here and there because they're not the recipients of stable funding.

Why can we not grant stable funding, not just in the area of immigration and refugees, of course, but for all our social services? Certainly, where immigrants are concerned, it's a huge concern. Of course, this doesn't talk at all about non-economic-class immigrants. Again, whom do I see in my riding? I see a great many of them.

To get back to where we started, we come from a country that is really just one generation away from incredibly repressive—one might say racist—laws about immigrants. We're just one generation away from that. I'm the one generation away from that. We see a federal government that is reverting to the past in terms of their repressive measures around immigration. Let's face it: We are not the friendly, welcoming country we once were. We're not. We haven't been since Harper has been in power. And by the way, the Liberals before him didn't do that much either. But things are getting worse federally.

Finally, 10 years later, the Liberal government in Ontario decides to make a small step, and that's Bill 49. It is a good step, but it's a small step, and it neglects many of the issues that we've raised, many of the issues that affect the people in my community. The surgeon who is still going back to Iran to work six months of the year, the Roma family that is in hiding—it doesn't help them; it doesn't help either of them. It doesn't help the newcomers who come, possibly with diseases we don't know about, because they're kept out of our health care system for three months. Why is that? It's not only not compassionate, as I've said; it's downright dangerous. It's dangerous. Because they don't have the money to pay for the services, they're out of the loop.

The labour standards: Are we really looking at what our temporary workers or our migrant workers are living

through and getting? I've had many come into our office—I'm sure many of us in the downtown core have had these stories—where they're not being paid minimum wage, and where the labour standards are not being upheld. Why? Because they're frightened that if they speak up about an employer who is abusing them, they'll get deported—they'll be sent back—or they won't be able to get their spouse over. Something will happen.

This is not a happy situation, this is not a healthy one and this is not, I would argue, in the spirit of the Canada we like to present to the world. It's not a compassionate one.

As long as those stories exist right now in my community, I'd say that this bill, although it takes a small step, doesn't solve the problem. It doesn't begin to address the problems.

I look forward to amendments. I look forward, for example, to extending OHIP coverage to newcomers; that's the very least we could do. I look forward to the situation of international students being addressed, who have to get private insurance to be able to stay and who pay exorbitant tuition fees, where our universities and colleges are really balancing their budgets on their backs—of course, on the backs of those workers out on strike as well, but certainly on international students.

I look forward to a real conversation on the way that we vet the qualifications for international immigrants who come here with qualifications and can't work anywhere close to their fields. I look forward to all of that. Unfortunately, I don't see all of that in this bill. Let's hope they make it stronger, with lots of amendments.

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

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I listened very carefully to the comments from the member for Parkdale–High Park, and I certainly recognize that this is a very important issue related to her constituents, as it is to mine in northern Ontario as well, which I don't think is always as well understood.

May I say that I think I heard the member say that she would likely be supporting the legislation and that the party would be looking for some amendments. I know that the member remembers or recalls that in late 2012 the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration launched *New Direction: Ontario's Immigration Strategy*. This legislation, Bill 49, clearly supports very much the implementation of that strategy. The member outlined a number of priorities, and certainly they are for us as well, with recognition of the changes that are being made in terms of federal immigration policies and programs, and they are substantial and having, obviously, an impact. Again, I think that makes it all the more important that we have brought forward Bill 49. I think our previous bill was Bill 161, so this will indeed respond to that.

There obviously are so many key issues that in a two-minuter one can't get into, other than, certainly, having a vision and objectives for immigration in Ontario. We're recognizing the long history of immigration to Ontario

and the extraordinary economic, social and cultural value of immigration to all of us.

Again, may I say that one recognizes how important it has been to the entire development of our province, but again, from someone who comes from northern Ontario, who watched the building and the history of our community being developed on the backs of so many immigrants, I can only say that we recognize how important this piece of legislation is and seek the support of all members of the House.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: To the member from Parkdale–High Park, I listened very closely to her remarks and I'd like to compliment her on them, talking about Christie Pits and some of the events that took place in Toronto many years ago. I've read about it and—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: —was a tragic time in our place, yes.

In fact, in Sarnia–Lambton we border Michigan. You wouldn't think immigration would be a big issue there, but in fact my office has been working with a restaurateur there—East Indian food—and he has been having a real struggle to try to get a professional chef in there. We've been working to try to navigate our way through the provincial nominee program to secure one of those few spots. I'm going to talk about it more; I think I'm speaking to this bill today or tomorrow.

My riding is home to over 182,000 residents, and we have a greater percentage of adults over 50, I think, than anywhere else in Ontario. For the last number of years, there has been a consistent loss of young adults aged 20 to 29, mainly because of outward migration to either the western provinces or even the US because of the economy and because of opportunities in the oil and gas industry.

Now, some of those people, unfortunately, because of no fault of their own, could be returning home, but of course the local economy is suffering too. It could be better. I know that we're maybe in better shape in Sarnia–Lambton than others. But because of our connection to the oil and gas industry, that's why many young adults have left there.

Also, overall, Lambton county has a lower proportion of recent immigrants compared to the province, and visible minorities only represent 2.7% of our local population. However, that 2.7% is very important to that local population. Over the years, they've contributed, starting way back in the 1940s—I'll talk about that more in my full remarks—when they built Polysar, which was because of the war effort, replacing the rubber plants in Manila.

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Anyway, Mr. Speaker, we will be supporting this legislation when it comes to the floor for a vote, but we want to see it go to committee and be improved with many improvements and amendments.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's indeed a pleasure to stand on behalf of the constituents of mine in Windsor–Tecumseh today. I'm especially proud this afternoon to follow the comments made by the member from Parkdale–High Park. I am so proud of the NDP caucus and its leadership, and Ms. DiNovo is certainly one of the leaders of our caucus. She comes with her point of view and speaks off the cuff for 20 minutes on issues that she has dealt with—let alone her nine years in the House—for a very long time in her community, one of the most diverse ridings in the entire province. She talked about the problems that immigrants have in this province.

I took a train home on Thursday night and caught a cab from the Walkerville station home. I was talking to my driver, who was originally from Lebanon. He came to Canada and studied biomedical engineering. He went to Polytechnique in Montreal, got his master's in biomedical engineering and is now driving a cab. He can't find work. He's well-trained, well-spoken, well-educated—and no jobs. That is a problem that many in our immigrant population have.

We encourage people to come to Canada. We welcome them with open arms, and rightfully so, and yet we don't do enough to help them find employment.

We don't put enough security, as the member from Parkdale–High Park has suggested, on the OHIP file as well. We make them wait until they can qualify for benefits.

The bill is good, the bill needs to be passed and the bill needs to be improved before passing.

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

Mr. Han Dong: I have to say that I'm quite pleased to be able to stand and comment on this bill and on some of the members across who commented on this bill.

I'm perhaps the newest Canadian in this House, so this issue is dear to my heart. I have to say that I'm very excited about this bill, Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act. Ontario has come a long way. Some of us remember that, in 2006, we started with 500. We had a say in the selection of 500 to nominate to become future Ontarians, and then 1,000.

In 2012, as the Minister of Northern Development mentioned, we came up with a strategy that we went up to 5,000 in terms of selections for immigration. When you look at a province as big as Ontario—we welcome around 100,000 immigrants every year—5,000 is still a small number. This piece of legislation, if passed, will give us the tools to have a bigger say when it comes to what types of immigrants we're looking for in Ontario. We welcome all, but when you look at the economic immigrant percentage compared to the national average, we're way below the average. I think that's why we need a bigger say when it comes to immigration selection.

I just want to focus on one fine point I heard the member from Parkdale–High Park mention, and that is the international student portion. They contribute so

much to our society. With this bill, we will be able to attract more international students and convince them to stay. Quite honestly, they're one of the best kinds of potential immigrants we need in this country.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, everyone who took part in this debate. Just a couple of issues: One of the things I didn't have a chance to say, especially in light of International Women's Day, is that of course there is a gender lens on this, because the ones who suffer most are the women who are newcomers to this country and new immigrants. One of the ways in which they suffer most is the very fact that Ontario will not extend OHIP coverage to newcomers for three months. That means that if a woman is trying to escape sexual violence, or trying to escape domestic assault, there is not that interface. She's not covered by OHIP—not to mention the communicable diseases that we should be concerned about. It's a danger to everyone. But on the file of wanting to do something about domestic violence and sexual assault, we fall flat when it comes to immigrant women and racialized women. So there's that.

The member from Trinity–Spadina talked about international students. Yes, we need them. So why don't we treat them well? Why don't we look at the amount of tuition we charge them and why don't we also look at extending OHIP to them? Because they don't ever get it. They don't have to wait for three months; they have to wait forever. They have privatized health insurance. We, sir, Mr. Speaker, are a country that believes in public health insurance. That's what makes us Canadian, in large part. Why do we not extend that to our international students? If we truly welcomed them, then maybe more of them would come here and more of them would stay here.

All in all, what can Ontario do? I decry the Harper government and what they've done. They've moved us back on the immigration and refugee file. There's no question that what they're doing is shameful. But what the Ontario government could do is to make larger steps forward. Yes, talk to the Harper government and tell them they're shameful. Yes, do more to combat the poverty and housing files and necessities for new immigrants. Finally, extend OHIP to newcomers like the other provinces do.

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

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's a pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon to speak to Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act. There's a very long history of immigration to this province. As others have said, with the exception of those who are First Nations, everybody in this House is an immigrant or a son or a daughter of immigrants or a grandson, granddaughter and so on.

Immigration to this province has brought great economic, social and cultural value over the generations. In fact, Ontario is the most multicultural province in this

country. More than half of all new immigrants make this province their home.

Ontario has a very strong reputation as being a land of opportunity. It's a prosperous democratic society built by the hard work of generations of immigrants. I have to relate that to my own family. My parents immigrated to Canada from Poland. They immigrated to Quebec. They settled in Montreal. My father was an engineer. After a few years of working in Quebec, there were not the opportunities for professional accreditation back then in the 1960s in the province of Quebec that there were in Ontario. So he and my mother moved to Toronto, where he was able to fairly quickly have his engineering credentials from Poland accredited and become a professional engineer here in the province of Ontario.

That speaks very well to the approach that this province has always taken of welcoming immigrants and giving them the opportunities that they so rightly deserve to try to make the most of their skills and their abilities.

This legislation is a very necessary first step to Ontario being able to chart our own course when it comes to attracting more skilled immigrants to drive our economy and keep Ontario strong. If passed, it will put the necessary tools in place to help Ontario welcome the skilled immigrants it needs to meet future labour demands as well as improve compliance and enforcement measures and increase the transparency and information sharing to improve immigrant selection. These measures will lay a foundation for Ontario to operate a larger and more robust immigration program now and in the future.

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On the subject of accountability, I'd like to speak to how this bill continues to reinforce the government's commitment to transparency and accountability.

This bill ushers in changes that will greatly improve the decision-making mechanisms when it comes to the provincial nominee program. The provincial nominee program is an immigration program through which Ontario nominates individuals and their families for permanent resident status based on a pre-approved job offer from an employer in this province. The bill proposes to remove the existing ability to waive eligibility criteria for this program, thereby making it more equitable and fair for all applicants.

Often, people wonder why Ontario is engaging in this. Surely, immigration is just under federal jurisdiction. But this bill shows how provincial action on immigration can be very relevant, even though it's really part of a federal responsibility. Immigration is a shared responsibility, and the provinces have an important role to play. That's especially true, because this is the number one destination for newcomers in Canada. Our government believes that a strong partnership between Ottawa and the province is a key to the successful integration of newcomers into our communities and our workforce.

Immigration is inextricable from the economic strength of this province, and the 2013 budget affirmed that Ontario's Immigration Strategy will respond to the province's demographic and economic realities, and the

province will be proactive in attracting the best and the brightest in the world to Ontario and helping immigrants and their families to settle and prosper.

That's exactly what we are doing with this bill: We're being proactive on immigration. The types of opportunities that were afforded to my parents' generation, when they came to this province, will continue to be afforded to future immigrants to Ontario.

I'll be sharing the balance of my time with the members from Scarborough Southwest, Beaches–East York and Sudbury.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I recognize the member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's a pleasure to be able to speak this afternoon to this bill involving immigration and other points as well.

I guess what we're just trying to do is establish more power, or more authority, when it comes to the immigrants that come to Canada and, especially, that come to Ontario. Right now, most of it is done federally. Quebec does it differently. They can filter out, or decide which immigrants to Quebec should be allowed in. I think what we're trying to do with this bill is copy that, but not as much as Quebec.

I understand Quebec's position, where they want mostly French-speaking people to come to their province. In Ontario, we want people to come to the province, and we want to be able to provide them with language training and other skills as well, so they can integrate faster into Canada and into Ontario. I think it's a reasonable request. It makes a lot of sense. This bill, if passed, hopefully, will catch the attention of the federal government, and they'll say, "You know what? Ontario is right. They should have more to say when it comes to immigration."

The other issue that I want to bring up, because I only have a few minutes to speak on this bill, is my own personal experience. As the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore just said—my parents were also immigrants, but they weren't from Poland; they were from Italy. My father came to Canada in 1953. He was 22 years old. He worked hard. After four years, he went and grabbed my mother, who was in Italy, because it was expensive for two people to live here at that time. He brought her to Canada, and eventually they would buy a house. They stayed here, and they had five children and raised a family.

The beautiful thing about Canada, and the beautiful thing about Ontario, is that everyone has an opportunity to do well. I never felt that more than when I was called to the bar. When my parents came to this country, there were no restrictions. It wasn't, "You know what? You've got to go up north and work on the farm or work in the lumber yards and cut down trees" or something of that nature—or become a miner. My dad was able to choose what he wanted, and I was able to go to law school and graduate and become a lawyer here in Ontario, as well as becoming first a city councillor and then a member of Parliament. There were no restrictions, which is the

beautiful thing about Canada: Everyone has the opportunity.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: How many years had you been a councillor?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I go back to 1988. I was elected as a councillor, as my friend from Brampton West tells me. It's a long history. I'm now into my 27th year as an elected official: 15 at the city and almost 12 here at the province. There are no barriers saying that a person who comes from a certain country can't do things. But it would have been helpful if my mother and father had language training.

My dad learned English while he worked at a lumberyard, talking to some employees who spoke English. My mother—it's kind of a funny story—stayed at home to watch the kids, and she always said to me, "I learned English by watching I Love Lucy shows." I guess that's the way she learned, as others do too. The other one was the Three Stooges. I don't mean to crack a joke here, but she was probably the only female I know who liked the Three Stooges. She would watch them and get a good laugh, and she learned to speak English.

So, every opportunity is here. What Ontario is trying to do is make sure they can help out too in the program so that everyone can learn and become an immigrant in this country, and especially in this province, who can contribute to the country the way I have the opportunity today and the way my father did, working in a lumberyard for 35 years, and how my mother did, to be able to raise five children. She kept a good eye on all of us and made sure that all of us were well educated and able to leave the nest at home and move on with our lives being perfectly skilled or perfectly prepared to face the challenges of the outside world.

My time is limited. I could speak for hours on this. I think that Bill 49 is really important. If Quebec can do it, I think Ontario should have the same right at the end of the day.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I too am delighted to follow my colleague from Scarborough Southwest, whose riding is directly east of mine, Beaches–East York, to speak to this bill, Bill 49, An Act with respect to immigration to Ontario and a related amendment to the Regulated Health Professions Act.

How appropriate it is that this bill has been brought forward by the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade, himself a new Canadian who came to Canada and established himself and established roots in our country as a country of choice, where he now has an opportunity to go forward on a revised immigration strategy for Ontario under his leadership and tutelage. I would like to thank the member profoundly for his work in this regard.

I too am the child of an immigrant. My mother came here in the mid-1930s from Brighton, England, settled with her family and met my father, who was actually originally from Saskatchewan. But his father was from

Edinburgh—so some Scottish heritage—through Cornell University, where he studied agriculture. He was a professor of dairy husbandry, which I may have mentioned before.

He came to this country and settled in Saskatchewan, because that way he could be close to the sweetheart he had met and married, who lived in Montreal. I used to say that my grandfather knew much more about agriculture than he ever did about geography, because he settled so far away from her. But they had an opportunity to come here and make lives for themselves.

Now, having come from Great Britain, I appreciate that the challenges they faced coming to this country weren't nearly those we see with so many others who come to Canada nowadays. In my own riding of Beaches–East York, I'm delighted to say that we have a very vibrant multicultural community. I have a number of community organizations in Beaches–East York, like WoodGreen Community Services, Bengali Information and Employment Services, Bangladeshi-Canadian Community Services, Bangladesh Centre and Community Services and Neighbourhood Link, which provide invaluable assistance to new Canadians as they come to Canada and become Canadian citizens, to help them integrate, to help them with employment, to help them with housing and help them with all the important social measures they need so they can fully integrate into our society.

If you were listening closely, you would have noticed that three of those organizations are of Bengali origin. That's no secret in my neighbourhood, because in Beaches–East York, particularly in the northern part of the riding, Bangla is the second most widely spoken language, right after English, of course. About 58% of the residents in the last census indicate that English was their mother tongue, whereas the Bangladeshis, about 7%, speak Bangla as a first language.

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What we've seen as a result of that is an incredible richness in that community, as being the highest concentrations of Bengalis in Canada. I have had the chance, and so many opportunities, to integrate with them in a number of adventures, not the least of which was that we celebrated just yesterday at the East York Community Centre, as they unveiled a new design for a monument for International Mother Language Day. This is a program that they've been initiating over the last five or six years with strong community support.

They were able to reveal the winner of the design, Mr. Monir Hossain, with his colleague Apurbo Bhoomik. What was incredible about this design is how it so closely resembles the monument in Dhaka with a great Canadian spin, because this is a monument that will represent all Canadians and their mother languages. Mr. Hossain, it is interesting to note, was the very first person in Bangladesh, before he came to this country, who could use computer-automated design software: AutoCAD. He self-taught himself AutoCAD back in Bangladesh, and then was able to immigrate to Canada and was able to get

work in Canada in this new, emerging world of AutoCAD.

I was delighted to be able to meet with him and see this exciting, exciting design that he'd been able to put forward, and what an honour, as he spoke at great length about the great honour that he, as a new Canadian, having chosen Canada, has been benefiting from the opportunities we've provided in a multicultural world.

It's no secret, and in her previous statement the member from the opposite side talked about some of the difficulties new immigrants and refugees may be having in Canada nowadays under the current administration. Because so many of the people we're speaking of now came here under rules that were introduced through the 1960s and 1970s and benefited from the great work done by Pierre Elliott Trudeau and the Liberal government of the day. We're hoping to see more of that. This bill will give us an opportunity to set a framework of discussion with our federal counterparts, and we look forward to seeing its speedy passage so that we can get on with this important business.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Sudbury.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and I'd also like to thank my honourable colleagues from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Scarborough Southwest and, of course, Beaches–East York for their great presentations.

It's my pleasure to rise before my colleagues to further the debates on Bill 49, the proposed Ontario Immigration Act. I would like to focus my presentation today on the work that this government is doing to help newcomers find jobs that match their skills and experience, and on how our proposed bill will strengthen these efforts. This is something I hear about in my community almost on a weekly basis, when I visit facilities like the Sudbury multicultural society and other organizations that are working to try to ensure that they can find this work, those types of jobs, for immigrants that match their skills and expertise.

Now, if we are to achieve our immigration goals in this province, we need to improve foreign qualification recognition for internationally trained professionals. Further to that, Mr. Speaker, we must strengthen the settlement and integration programs that we have in place to help immigrants succeed.

Ontario's immigration strategy clearly articulates the need to strengthen these programs as a means to growing an economy that is globally connected. For example, our Ontario bridge training program helps thousands of immigrants each year to get licensed and find work in their fields by providing training and valuable connections to their sectors. Just last year, Mr. Speaker, our government committed \$63 million over three years to support Ontario bridge training because we know how vitally important it is.

One of our goals is to get highly skilled immigrants out of what we call "survival jobs" and into the workforce at their full potential: get them out of the cab and back into the lab, as we say. So Bill 49, if passed, would

align requirements in the Regulated Health Professions Act with those in the Fair Access to Regulated Professions and Compulsory Trades Act, Ontario's landmark legislation that continues to address the recognition of foreign credentials. This means that registration practices must be transparent and objective, and that decisions must be made in a timely manner.

These proposed changes underscore our commitment to increasing the number of immigrants licensed in their professions. We want to increase the percentage of internationally trained professionals who get licensed in this province. Like I said, the faster we can get people working at their full potential, the greater the benefit to Ontario.

Ontario's labour market is diverse. Changes are happening in local economies that are making us think about the way that Ontario looked yesterday, what it looks like today, and how it will look in the future. What we know for sure is that Ontario needs skilled people to take us forward. By passing this piece of proposed legislation we will be more attractive to the skilled immigrants that we need in the future and we will strengthen our ongoing efforts to make sure skilled immigrants can work in their areas of expertise.

I can talk a lot about Sudbury and the great work that many of our small businesses are doing in our community when it comes to mining, specifically. What we need are more skilled immigrants who can come to our community and work in the mining profession. We see so many of our new immigrants coming and looking for this opportunity to be paired with this great job, and the jobs are out there. This government is working hard on creating those great jobs, and it's working.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: The Ring of Fire.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: The Ring of Fire is a great example. Once that starts moving forward, we're going to be able to start moving on that.

Let's help more skilled immigrants get their licence or certification or connect to their sector so that we may increase their opportunities to resume their careers here in our province. Let's maximize the benefits of global talent; let's maximize the benefits of Ontario.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this bill today.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It has been a delight to listen to four members of the Liberal caucus over there. I'm just going to try to summarize all of their comments quickly. I'm going to start off with the most recent speaker from Sudbury stating just how wonderful the Ring of Fire is.

Interjection: It's on its way.

Mr. Bill Walker: On its way? So is Santa Claus. It has been 12 years. How much longer do we have to wait? Cliffs has left the province; have you not noticed that? I can't believe you're that delusional. If immigrants are using that as their poster board to come to Ontario, we'll never have another immigrant come to this province in the next 20 years.

“This is the land of opportunity,” is what another one said. They’ve had 80 months of higher unemployment levels than the national average. How much confidence does an immigrant have coming to our province hearing those types of stats?

What I want to know is how accountable they’ll be when they do this. It’s great to ensure that we have opportunity. Absolutely; we’re all on board that there needs to be opportunity, but certainly their actions do not meet what their words are.

We’ve had 350,000 manufacturing jobs leave the province of Ontario. Those are jobs that immigrants wanting to come to this great province and country of ours could be looking forward to.

The highest energy rates in North America, the highest taxes, the highest levels of red tape and bureaucracy: We need to ensure that we have the environment.

I am pleased to see the act come forward. I am pleased to hear a number of the members over there talk about working with the federal government. That is a nice change, rather than dissing them and slamming them at every opportunity.

I’d like to suggest that it would have been nice in their 10- to 12-year reign of power that this immigration problem would already be here, not “It’s coming” like the Ring of Fire. “It’s on the way.” Holy smokes. I just can’t get over that they actually believe that that Ring of Fire is their panacea to solve the world’s ills. I truly hope that the immigrants do have opportunities to come to Ontario. We need them, Mr. Speaker.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I’m pleased to stand on behalf of the people I represent in London West to respond to the comments from the members for Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Scarborough Southwest, Beaches–East York and Sudbury.

I really want to focus my brief comments on the remarks that were offered by the member for Sudbury, particularly around bridge training programs. Just this January, January 2015, the Fairness Commissioner released a report. She really focused on the requirement for Canadian experience as a huge barrier for immigrants to enter the workforce, and called for all regulators to remove the Canadian experience requirement except in very rare circumstances. This repeats a call that had been made earlier by the Ontario Human Rights Commission. We know that this is a real barrier for newcomers to integrate into the labour market and that bridge training programs can ease that transition.

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Unfortunately, the funding that is provided for bridge training programs is not sustainable. These programs start up and they close down, and there’s little certainty for immigrants as to where these programs will be offered and when they will be offered. They’re also very, very expensive. It can cost up to \$12,000 for tuition to participate in a bridge training program. So saying that

these programs are available is not the solution to help immigrants integrate into the labour market.

The Fairness Commissioner also called for sustainable funding for bridge training programs, which is something that we need desperately if we are going to really assist newcomers to integrate into the Ontario labour market.

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

Ms. Sophie Kiwala: I’m pleased to join the debate today on Bill 49, a bill to establish the Ontario Immigration Act. As the minister says, this bill is very important for newcomers and for employers and is vitally important for Ontario. More importantly, passing Bill 49 would make Ontario more competitive by attracting the skilled workers that we need to fill our labour force and grow our economy.

Attracting, supporting and retaining skilled workers to fill our workforce is critical to stabilizing our economy, so we need to lay out the welcome mat, and a large part of that involves helping newcomers settle and succeed.

In our riding of Kingston and the Islands, the work that we have done through the immigration services Kingston network has been very positive. I’ve seen the work that they have done through the federal office that I was working at formerly, and I’ve seen them benefit on a daily basis.

We do need to work with the federal government, as the Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound member has stated. I fully support that. It’s absolutely critical that we get the recruitment, the selection and admission of skilled workers.

For example, internationally trained professionals come to Ontario hoping to find work in the field that they’ve studied in their homelands. I’ve had many conversations with newcomers to Canada who have expressed great frustration over the past years at not being able to find employment, and I think that this bill is going to go very far in terms of helping them in their plight.

All too often, skilled newcomers have experienced barriers and hurdles that prevented them from becoming established. Our government is committed to removing these barriers to internationally trained professionals practising in their fields.

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

Mr. Robert Bailey: It was interesting to hear the remarks from the members for Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Scarborough Southwest, Beaches–East York, and from the member for Sudbury, our newest member. I should add that I enjoyed hearing all the personal stories about all the different members, their families, how they came to be here. Their families came here as immigrants and obviously succeeded and have been very successful in their own careers—their parents or themselves—as first- or second-generation immigrants. That’s the best part of being here in the House, I think: hearing those personal stories. I think we should do more of that and maybe less of some other stuff.

Anyway, over the winter recess, I had the opportunity to attend a talk by the chief economist at the Central 1 Credit Union in Sarnia that was put on by the local chamber of commerce, who, by the way—I didn't intend to bring this up—are visiting Tuesday and Wednesday in this House. We're going to have a Sarnia-Lambton day, so I'll throw that in there.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: You're all invited. We're going to have a reception on Wednesday.

Mr. Bill Walker: Any food at that one?

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, there will be some food from Sarnia-Lambton.

Looking at the demographics, Mr. Pastrick, who was the speaker, noted that despite the relatively low immigration rate compared to the province, the migration of people outside of Ontario to Lambton county was the second-biggest contributor to our population and the population stability of our county and my riding, the basic part of my riding. Mr. Pastrick also indicated that while Toronto and larger urban centres in Ontario continue to draw away those Ontario-born residents, there is still an opportunity for those communities in other areas to thrive if there's a helpful system to help transition new residents into their communities.

Also, right now before I lose my time, I'd like to highlight the great work that Lambton College in my riding is doing in attracting nursing students and other students from around the world to their campus. Lambton College has world-class programs, and anybody interested in working in the energy sector or health care can speak to that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): One of the government members has two minutes to reply. I recognize the member for Beaches-East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Well, thank you, Mr. Speaker. It's a great pleasure to be able to respond on behalf of my colleagues from Etobicoke-Lakeshore, from Scarborough Southwest and from Sudbury and to thank the members opposite from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, London West, Kingston and the Islands and Sarnia-Lambton for their comments. But I would like to focus specifically on the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound for his most bellicose, but spirited, comments.

It continually surprises me how the member opposite can be so supportive of what we're doing and critical at the same time. Had you thought about what this Legislature looked like in the last term, you would have realized that, had there been more co-operation on the other side, so much of this work would have been accomplished earlier, faster, back then. A lot of the bills that we've been debating in this House have been bills that have come up two or three times that, because of the dissolution of this House, they didn't cover. Some talk about forcing that unnecessary election, which of course I don't quite see that way.

But I would also like to talk about the comments from the member from London West, who talked about the bridge training programs, obviously a very, very import-

ant part of the Ontario immigration strategy and something that flew out of the previous work that this government was doing to try to enhance opportunities for new Canadians as they come here.

I know in my own community of Beaches-East York, there are so many people in the Bengali community who are agricultural specialists. So when we talk about the issues of education and opportunity, we are bringing people from around the world who want to work more in this sector, and it's very, very important that we do get them into continuing education in Alfred College and Kemptville, with the co-operation of all members, and those opportunities. We should be able to find a way to do this.

This is where this government is heading with this bill. It does set a framework, and I appreciate the support that we're getting from members opposite, the details to follow.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Pursuant to standing order 47(c), I am now required to interrupt the proceedings and announce that there have been more than six and one half hours of debate on the motion for second reading of this bill. This debate will therefore be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader or his designate indicates otherwise.

I recognize the Minister of Northern Development and Mines.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. We wish the debate to continue.

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I get the 20 minutes too? Okay, good. I've got a really detailed speech here, so I want to make sure we get everything in.

Mr. Speaker, it's a real pleasure to rise today to speak on Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act. Clearly, I think we know everyone is supporting this bill today. Anything to do with our immigrants and the success we've had in Ontario and in our beautiful country is mainly the result of the immigrants who came here.

Of course, we're all immigrants. We were all immigrants at some point, other than our First Nation brothers and sisters. And I want to get to that as well, because I think there's an area where we have dramatically let down our First Nation brothers and sisters. As we brag about an immigration act, I think we'd actually better really remember some of the problems we've got with our very first First Nation brothers and sisters, who were here for thousands of years.

I want to talk a little bit about Simcoe county. Simcoe county was established, I think, 18 years before the province of Ontario was formed.

1700

We look at the families that moved to Simcoe county, starting with John Graves Simcoe signing documents and working with First Nation organizations and First Nation peoples to actually allow people to come primarily from the British Isles—Irish, Scottish, English, some Welsh. Those are the original people who came in the late 1700s

and 1800s. If you look in any of the history books written on the county of Simcoe, you'll find names that are there today—Dunlop, for example. Our family is from Scotland. There's actually a town in Scotland called the kirk of Dunlop; it's just outside of Paisley. That's where my dad's family came from in the late 1700s. In fact, the one—I think his name was Daniel Dunlop—who came in that time frame is buried in the St. Lawrence Seaway area. When they created the seaway, they actually had to move graveyards to accommodate, so they would still be in existence.

We look at all of the work these people did. If you go into some of these communities, you can see. We talk about agriculture today, and we look at the kind of equipment we have to work with: tractors and combines and plows. The guys who came here, the people who came to this country and took huge woodlots and had to take the timber down just to use the soil—it's the same sort of work ethic that built our railroad.

I was saying to my wife just the other day, "If there ever was one thing we really got right in our country, it was the railroads." Really, when you think of the work that was put in with horses and some immigrants from other countries as well—but how the beds of those railways, right to this day, are staying solid and firm. The kind of backhoes they would have worked with in the 1860s, 1870s and 1880s would have been like miniature little toys compared to the kind of equipment you'd see working on any of these high-rise sites today. There was nothing to them. Yet they built it; they built it right. They didn't have tons of consultants and engineers and architects. They went ahead and built that railroad right across this huge country, and they're still running those trains today, only the trains are a lot larger and a lot bigger, and they are moving billions and billions of dollars a year in commerce.

I'm getting a little off track here, but I'm talking about the people who came here looking for jobs.

The same thing applied to our farms. If anybody knows the Mount St. Louis Moonstone ski resort—I think many of you have probably been there. It's three minutes from my house. My dad's farm, where my dad was raised, was at the top of that ski hill. What they did is, 30 years or so ago, Josl and Elfriede Huter bought that farm off my grandfather—

Interjection.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Pardon me?

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's been downhill ever since.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: No.

What they did with that farm was, they dug out most of the 100 acres into a huge pond. If you look at those hills from Highway 400, if you're going by, you'll see the hills have been raised much higher, probably another 200 feet higher because of that. They took it out of that farm at the back. The original farmhouse and barn are still standing at the back of the property. You can see them if you're up there skiing. I show my kids and my grandchildren all the time. When I go skiing up there, I show them.

That's where that family was raised. They picked rocks. They raised enough to get the crops ready. They barely survived, but you know what? They didn't draw any kind of social assistance or anything. They worked hard and raised their families there. That's the way all of that area was done around there.

I just want to say a little bit more about that farm, Mr. Speaker. Because of all the environmental rules, what they've done with that hill is, they banked the sides of the hills with clay, and then they pump water up there from the springs. That's the same water that makes snow. They've got literally hundreds of millions of gallons of water stored there for snow-making equipment. That's the type of thing, the sort of innovative thoughts on one piece of property that has happened throughout the years. We've got those kind of examples all across our ridings.

The same thing applies to other areas of Simcoe county. I look at Oro-Medonte, at Tosorontio, at Clearview, all those areas where there have been mega-farms put in over the years and all kinds of people have worked really, really hard. Most of them are from those British Isles descendants. Those are the people we see in Simcoe county.

But more recently, of course, we've seen a lot of the Dutch community, particularly in the last 50, 60 years, people who came from Holland—I know that Ernie is not here right now, but I can tell you that the Dutch are incredible farmers. You just have to look at the Holland Marsh. If you look at the Dutch families around Simcoe county, you can almost tell they're Dutch when you look at the farm from the road. They have the driveways lined with flower beds and gardens along the driveway into the barns. Everything is neat around the barns.

I look at families like the den Haan family down in Tosorontio, who have now got a cheese factory on their site as well. I look at different families that I've met over the years. These are families who came here with nothing. They didn't ask for anything. They slowly got little jobs and they bought a piece of property. They raised their families and now the families are successful and the families are buying more and more properties. We see that all the time.

That's what makes Canada great. When you see these types of people who came here looking for one chance, one opportunity, to do something that would make life better than what we they had in Europe, these are the real success stories.

Come to the city here. What would we have done without the Portuguese and the Italians working with concrete? They have built the city. I mean, the underground work that's been done here—miles and miles of pipe have been put in. All of those guys who came here looking for their first job working on construction sites were all people who said, "Look, it's an opportunity here and I want my kids to do better." In many, many cases, the kids have done much, much better. They've gone on and they've gotten good education and they've been able to buy properties. Some of them have gone into development industries. But the one thing is, they haven't asked

for anything. In most cases, they've worked really hard to get where they are.

I look at some of my friends up in the Orillia area. I think of the Greek families. We have a lot of people in our area who are of Greek descent and who operate restaurants—fantastic restaurants. You see them build these restaurants or dining rooms or steakhouses, whatever they may be, and you just know it's going to be a huge success. It's not one of these ones where they're in and out and gone out of business overnight. They are there and they work hard and they tend to create a lot of jobs in their communities as well.

I can think of people like—I wrote some of their names down here—the Town and Country Steakhouse in Barrie. I know that Ann over there has probably been at the Town and Country a number of times. I'm a Town and Country fan—a Greek family.

There's Theo's Eatery in Orillia and the Bayside restaurant at the curling club in Orillia. Tops in Pizza: This guy, Jimmy Marinakos, every year at Christmas for 25 years, has opened up his business. All day long on Christmas Day, whoever wants a pizza in Orillia can go down and get a pizza made by Jimmy and that's his Christmas gift to his community. The guy works his heart out all the time. That's the kind of people we've brought. I like to brag about these kinds of people because I think it's important that they are acknowledged because they are immigrants. Again, they came here with nothing and they've made success stories of themselves. They bought nice houses and their kids are doing well. It's always nice to hear that.

I've been doing a lot of work in skilled trades and apprenticeship reform, and I'm now the critic for education and training, colleges and universities. I've had quite a few chances to tour a lot of the facilities. I'd like to actually mention some people I've met as well. I'm thinking of a gentleman in Sudbury. I don't know if anybody knows this gentleman, Milad Mansour of Milman developments. He came here from Lebanon. He came to Toronto and couldn't find work in Toronto, so he went further north. He went to Sudbury. Milad, I believe now, has around 1,200 employees and a number of companies in the Sudbury area. It's just a huge success story. If you go up to Sudbury and you ever get a chance to tour any of his companies—he does a lot of work in the mining industry and in the rail industry. He's just a great person. I think he's probably in his mid-seventies right now but still is a dynamic guy.

1710

Here's a guy who came from Lebanon. When I first talked to him, I said, "I can't believe you came from Lebanon to Sudbury." He said, "Yes, but I made a great career out of it, and it's been a wonderful time."

A couple of things: I wanted to go back to the member from High Park—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Parkdale–High Park.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: —Parkdale–High Park. You made a couple of really good points that I picked up on today as well with the students when I met with them.

These are the international students that we have here. Today, most of the colleges and universities are counting on international students because they pay more money. They pay the full shot. They're paying more money to come to colleges and universities all across the province. We're starting to get a bit of declining enrolment in the college and university system, so they're in demand. But you know what? I could not believe it. They don't get the same kind of health care.

If a college student gets appendicitis or something like that, or they get sick, they have no insurance. I'll tell you, that's something that's got to be changed. Very few of the kids do get sick when they're at that age, but let's face it: There should be something in our system that would allow them to actually—because they're paying top buck here. They're paying top dollar to the colleges and universities. There should be a better system for those students so they can be treated without going into debt even further, because they're paying thousands and thousands of dollars more to come here than the students who are here.

I think it's important that we zero in on some of these things and listen to what these kids are saying. I've had this a number of times as I've toured some colleges and universities. Different international students have actually asked me about that. When the student union came today and said, "This is a problem we've got," I think it's something that the government should accommodate in the budget, when the budget comes up, because if we're talking about a bill like Bill 49, there have got to be things that support it, and some of the things that should support it are things in the budget that we bring up in the House. We're still going to vote for this bill no matter what happens, but the reality is that we want to make sure that these little things we bring up in the House are somewhat addressed.

That brings me to another thing that's happening in my riding this summer, and that's our Franco-Ontarian friends. This is the 400th anniversary of European presence in Ontario this year. In the town of Penetanguishene, we're having a huge event. It will probably be the signature event in Ontario for the celebration of 400 years since Champlain came here. I think the first mass west of Lower Canada was in Toaniché on August 12, 1615, and there were natives and Franco-Ontarians, Francos, at that particular event. We're celebrating that in a big way this year. They are, of course, our first European settlers to come to Canada, other than our First Nation brothers and sisters.

I don't want to spend a lot of time on that, but I know there has been a lot of effort put on the Franco-Ontarian—I do thank Minister Meilleur. I've been working with her for four or five years on this, and she has been very supportive of the 400th anniversary of Champlain. We hope other communities will celebrate it as well. Even here on September 25, you have Franco-Ontarian Day, and there will be celebrations around that time. I think there are some real opportunities for the

government and all of us to capitalize on this anniversary.

That takes me a little bit more into my final couple of comments, one being that the students who come from around the world to our universities and colleges—and I've said it a number of times, but I was just amazed when I toured Collège Boréal at 1 Yonge Street. It's right down on the water by Captain John's fish and chips place, that big boat that's down there. Collège Boréal has about 250 students there.

Most of the students are international. Most of the students who are there in Collège Boréal are francophone students, francophiles from somewhere in the world. Many of them are coloured people, many from different African countries. They all have French as their prime language, and they do take English courses there as well.

But there are some real opportunities for the government, and for all of us, capitalizing on some of these different individuals that come here. A lot of them will be going back home with the diplomas that are required but what I'm hearing from the administration there is that they could use more programming. I think that if we could pass anything on to the ministry or to the government—and particularly in Franco-Ontarian colleges, I think there are some real opportunities for more training.

That training can be used to help other countries in mining, for example. Boréal does a lot in mining in northern Ontario. There are some opportunities, because they're teaching people the mining industry, and they go back and create jobs in their country—in Sierra Leone or some of the French-speaking countries in Africa. It's just amazing how small the world really is.

That mining then turns into job creation for people who are creating mining products here in Canada, or wherever it may be in the world. It's really working out positively.

I think we should capitalize on some of our ethnic groups that are coming here just for an education, as international students, and yet they're taking back valuable information to help develop other countries, and we can capitalize on the sale of products to those other countries as well. That's one of the things I wanted to say as well.

Finally, my last comment is on our First Nation brothers and sisters. The system we've got today is not working. We know that. I mean, it's about jobs. Putting people on reserves 200 years ago, or whenever we did, whenever all that was created, I don't think has worked well enough.

We heard somebody speak earlier about the Ring of Fire. That's the kind of thing that works: getting those young men and women jobs, and not saying, "There's a cheque here waiting for you." I don't like what we've done there. I think we could have done a lot better job. I think there's a whole pile of people to blame.

As we build support for our immigration and for all the wonderful people who have come from all over the world, I think we still have left our First Nation brothers and sisters in a bad way. If the bill is really complete, and

if it's really supportive of all Ontarians and all Canadians, we've got to do a better job in working with our brothers and sisters from the First Nation reserves and places where they live. I know many of them are in deep poverty.

I can tell you, from my own example in Simcoe North, we've got Casino Rama, which is the Chippewas of Rama. Most of the people who live in Rama, the First Nation people, have jobs, and they've got cars and nice houses.

I go to the other end of my riding, out onto Christian Island, with the Beausoleil First Nation, where they have to go by a ferry to get there, year-round, or an ice trail or an ice road in the winter. They don't have the same kinds of job opportunities. Young people—there are suicides; there's that sort of thing.

We're not really complete until we look after our very first immigrants, which are our First Nation brothers and sisters.

Anyhow, those are my comments on this. Of course we're supporting it, and we're looking forward to the amendments.

I'm looking forward to the comments. I appreciate the opportunity to say a few words today, Speaker.

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

Mr. Percy Hatfield: It's always a pleasure to follow the passion of the member from Simcoe North that he brings to each and every debate in this House.

I'll touch on one aspect of what he was talking about, and that's the international students. A few years ago, I was on the board of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities. I was at a conference, and my good Conservative friend Michael Thompson, a city councillor from Toronto, was talking about the benefits of foreign students to the city of Toronto. He said—and it blew me away—that when you add up the economic benefit of what the foreign students bring to the city of Toronto, it's in the billions of dollars a year. It's not in the millions, Speaker; it's in the billions. When you think of how many there are, and the tuition they pay, the rent they pay, the food they eat, the clothes they buy, the entertainment and the transportation, it adds up to billions of dollars a year. We don't credit, I believe, foreign students for doing that to our economy.

So when it comes to things such as simple solutions, as mentioned by the member from Parkdale–High Park earlier—OHIP coverage for foreign students—and as reiterated again by the member from Simcoe North, I think we have to do better all the way around.

1720

We have a medical school in Windsor. They keep telling us that the more residents you get, the higher the percentage is who will stay within the community that they do their studies in. If you have out-of-town students studying in your community, a good percentage of them will decide to stay, and these become creative, educated professionals who add so much to all of this, to our cultural fabric. We all share with each other.

The more we can do on the little things that matter—the more we can do to extend OHIP coverage or whatever it is—the more we should be doing.

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

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: My colleague from Simcoe North is correct: We have wonderful immigrant families living and working in our areas. More and more immigrant families have moved into my riding of Barrie, and I see them in the classrooms in the schools where I teach.

Their children are progressing well in our schools. These students are well received by other children. They're loved by other children. When you're exposed to other cultures that early in your life, you come to value them as friends and almost as family.

Their parents are so thankful that their children can go to good schools and make a life for themselves in Canada. These families worked very hard. Many of them were professionals in their former countries and now they have had to work on developing other skills and developing new lives with new jobs. Quite often, some of them open their own businesses, and these businesses become very successful.

These immigrants are a wonderful addition to our province and to our country. We need to encourage more of these immigrants to come to Canada and contribute to the economic future of Ontario and to Canada, and we need to accept the wonderful, diverse cultures that have been introduced in Canada.

My mother was raised in Edgar, which is in the Simcoe North riding. When she was a young woman, that was a place where people from the Underground Railroad came and settled. She went to school with the black children who lived there. When she got older and moved into town, she could not understand why other people were not accepting of the people that she'd been brought up with. She did not understand.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: That was a very good talk from our member from Simcoe North. I know he really appreciated the opportunity to speak, and we appreciate that note that was read in by Michael Gravelle. There's nothing worse than working on a speech all weekend and you stand up to give it and you're shut down.

The member for Simcoe North, if I can quote him, indicated that we are all immigrants, regardless of year of arrival. The Barretts came over on the Bolivar, from southern Ireland. My middle name is Butler—Butler's Rangers. We got kicked out of the Mohawk Valley at exactly the same time the Six Nations did. We fought side by side and ended up in the Niagara area. As with many of the Six Nations, we weren't at the time that interested in cutting down all those trees and farming, so you move on and do something else. I know that on my mum's side we still have the farm—my mum's farm. It was established in 1796. The Culvers and Bowlbys came up by sleighs—came up in 13 sleighs, actually—from

New Jersey. They came up through the woods and brought the slaves with them. Slavery was legal at that time on both sides of that border. We still have one of the sleighs from 1796 and, of course, the family Bible. Much of this, whether it's on my mum's side or on my father's side with the diaries and journals, the immigrant experience, even going back well over 200 years, is still very, very alive in our minds. It's either an Irish thing or a United Empire Loyalist thing.

I appreciate the opportunity to get the two minutes in, Speaker.

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

Ms. Peggy Sattler: It's a privilege to stand on behalf of the people I represent in London West to respond to the comments from the member for Simcoe North. The member for Simcoe North focused much of his speech on international students. Given his critic portfolio, his interest in post-secondary education makes a lot of sense.

I think all of our communities have post-secondary institutions. I know in London we have Western and Fanshawe College, which are putting a lot of resources, effort and attention into international student recruitment efforts, because we recognize that bringing more students from other countries into our own communities benefits us hugely, whether they stay or not; but it also enables us to provide international experiences for our own students when we create these relationships with countries around the world. We are all made richer when we have a better understanding of people around the globe.

One of the things we've seen in London is that we are gaining as many immigrants as we are losing. There has been no net change in terms of new immigration into our community. A lot of the international students are staying, but many are not. One of the implications of drawing increasing numbers of immigrants from post-secondary student pools is that the role of the college and university becomes very much settlement service provider. I think that in light of these trends, in light of the fact that increasing numbers of provincial nominees are likely to be post-secondary students, we need to ensure that our post-secondary institutions are able to deliver the kind of settlement supports that students need.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes our questions and comments. I return to the member for Simcoe North.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to thank the members from London West, Windsor–Tecumseh, Barrie and Haldimand–Norfolk for their comments.

Really, this is one of these bills where we all support it and we all make our comments on it. I just hope some of the comments we make, whether you're a government member, a member of the NDP or the PCs, are carefully listened to, because I think there are some good points being brought out.

The member from London West talks about international students and that as well. There are key issues there. You know what? Today, I think our colleges and

universities, because tuition has gone up—since this government took power, I believe tuition's up about 110%. Colleges have no more money, so they really count on international students.

But to give the international students decent health care—not every young man and woman is going to require health care when you're 18 and 20 years of age. But when someone does get sick, they need it, because they have to go back to the bank or they have to call home for more money, that type of thing—or they have no money at all and they have to drop out of school.

Those are the kinds of things that should be—if we're talking about supporting our immigrants and the things we can do, let's support some of the good ideas that we come up with in debate here. I'll be looking forward to that because I know the student associations were meeting with 20-something people here today. I hope they would listen to that.

Thank you for the opportunity again.

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

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's an honour to stand in this House to address this bill, Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act, 2014. I want to take a few moments, though, before I get into the body of my speech to recognize an immigrant who made a huge difference in this city and this country.

Mr. Neil Young, the member of Parliament for, first, Beaches–Woodbine and then Beaches–East York, was an extraordinary person. He died this past weekend. He represented an area with one of the largest South Asian populations in Ontario, centred on Crescent Town. He was a man who understood what it was like to come to a country, establish yourself, make a difference, build a family, and he represented that community in an extraordinary way. Neil and his surviving wife, Viv, made themselves a political force in the east end of Toronto, one that had broad respect right across this city. Neil will be missed, and I know this: His work will not be forgotten.

1730

Speaker, today we're talking about a bill that we hope will help future Neils and future Vivs in the work that they can do in this country. We in the New Democratic Party see this bill as small, see it as a step in the right direction nonetheless, but we need a bill that is going to do more on the “big picture” issues. My hope is that when this gets into committee, there will be the opportunity to actually strengthen the bill and make differences so that the people who come to this country, the people who establish new lives in this country, have the opportunity to fully utilize all their potential, all their skills, all their talents.

We know that Ontario is falling behind when it comes to the number of immigrants who arrive in Ontario. That is a huge problem, Speaker, because although I know that there are some who say having immigrants come into a country or a city takes away jobs from those who are

here, in fact, if you look at the history of Ontario, if you look at the history of the GTA, a large part of the wealth, a large part of the prosperity of this region and this province, has been rooted in that great wave of immigrants from around the world—from Africa, from Asia, from Europe, from Latin America—who have come and contributed their incredible energy to building an economy and a society that is second to none in the world.

If we are losing people, if we are losing attractiveness to newcomers, we are losing future prosperity. There's just no getting around it, Speaker. That is simply the reality. We need to be an attractive destination. We need to be a place that makes people from around the world say, “Yes, we want to come to Ontario.”

I think one of the members earlier was talking about a gentleman in Sudbury who had come from Lebanon. I had a good friend a number of years back who was from Bangladesh, an accountant who arrived in Ontario and went to Baffin Island to get work as an accountant.

People come here. They are incredibly ready to adapt to a new situation, to adopt a new lifestyle. What they need, though, are the supports from this province, from this society, so they can contribute to their full ability. This bill doesn't address many of the fundamental challenges facing newcomers, nor does it reflect the typical low-wage migrant experience.

Speaker, a few years ago I had the opportunity as the finance critic to work with people in the Sikh community in Brampton. This is a very dynamic community. People in Brampton from the Punjab, from an area that has been a big hub of economic growth on the Indian subcontinent, were finding that they couldn't get work, full-time or permanent work, with actual companies. They had to go through temp agencies time after time after time. They knew that the temp agencies were getting a very large hourly payment and that they, very capable workers that they were, were getting a low hourly wage.

Speaker, one of the things that we need to address, if we're going to make Ontario an attractive destination, if we're going to keep it an attractive destination, is this whole question of precarious part-time work. When I researched it, I found that in parts of northern Europe where governments had taken on this issue, what they ensured was that a part-time or temporary worker would get the same wages and benefits as the full-time permanent worker. It eliminated the incentive to use temp companies, to use those middle people who would take a big chunk of whatever was paid by the company and not pass it onto the person who actually worked on the shop floor, who worked on the construction site, who worked in the office doing administrative work.

Speaker, this government has been in power now for more than 10 years. It has had the opportunity for over a decade to address many of the concerns that my colleague from Parkdale–High Park had raised, that I have raised in previous speeches and that my colleague from

London West has raised. It has left this until very late in the day.

The member for Guelph, responding last week to the member from London West, said, “It’s important to understand that Bill 49 isn’t the be-all and end-all.... It’s really the first step; it’s the starting point.” If you’ve been in power from 2003 to 2015—12 years—why wasn’t the starting point a bit closer to the beginning of the mandate? I think that’s a reasonable question to ask and a reasonable concern to have.

Last week, my colleague from London West addressed this bill in some detail. She’s the critic for training, colleges and universities. I’d like to return to a number of the specific points that she made in her speech. She noted that we as a province have a lot to learn from others about best practices. Between 2001 and 2011, Ontario’s proportion of immigrants declined from 60% to 40%, which is now Ontario’s lowest share of new immigrants in 30 years. Particularly, Ontario’s share of economic immigrants has significantly declined, to the point where economic immigrants make up only half of all immigrants to Ontario, lower than any other province.

That does not bode well for the future of Ontario. We’re losing the talent we’re going to need to build our cities and to develop our rural areas. We’re losing the talent that could make a difference in every city, town and region of this province.

Now, it was interesting to me that the member for London West referred to London as “a preferred secondary destination for immigrants after they have arrived in Toronto....” I have to say, my parents were immigrants. They arrived in Toronto and almost immediately left town to go to London, which is how I came to be born in London, Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I know, surprising news for some of my colleagues. I’m a politician; I can claim a base in just about every town in this province.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That makes you a rural member.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: No, London is not a rural riding.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: At the time.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: No, at the time London was still a well-developed town.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Were you in the city or outside?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: In the city.

I think that she raised a very good point: We have a variety of environments where people can come and land in this province. Toronto is one environment; it’s my city. London is a great city. Windsor is a great city. There are a lot of places—

Mr. Bill Walker: Owen Sound.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Owen Sound—that offer a lot of different opportunities for newcomers to this province. In order for each of those places, each city, large, medium-sized or small, to fully take advantage of those new Canadians, we need to have legislation that gives them the support.

Last fall, London’s Vital Signs report was released. It showed that the rate of unemployment among recent immigrants to London—those who arrived within the last five years—was almost 20% in 2011 compared to 8.5% for non-immigrants. I think the member for London West pointed out, and she was right, that it’s a huge, huge waste of human potential and undermining of our economy when these people, our people, our new fellow citizens, don’t have the opportunity to actually go out there, earn a living and build their lives.

I see I’m running out of time. I’ll have an opportunity in response to question and comments.

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

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: I’m pleased to speak on Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act, but I’ll have to say it pains me to bring a number of points to light in this House. We certainly congratulate the Prime Minister of Canada for attempting to execute a photo op granting honorary Canadian citizenship to Malala Yousafzai, but as you’ll recall, that was probably more of a photo opportunity because legitimate applications are essentially being ignored.

In response to my honourable opponent opposite, I would respectfully suggest that we have currently a Prime Minister and a government more focused on being the Prime Minister of Alberta, regarding the preferential treatment of Alberta, particularly in this domain, with regard to refugee and immigration settlement and integration of newcomers.

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As an example, they have removed the list of doctors who speak Urdu, Punjabi, Hindi, Farsi, Arabic and Gujarati. Why have the doctors who are speaking those languages hang around if you’re not going to have any refugees from those countries?

Speaker, I don’t need to go too broadly over the recent elegant comments emanating from the federal side on the colour scheme of the temporary foreign worker issue, but they’re institutionalizing a second-tier, second-class group of immigrants—yes, catering to particular interests.

By the way, again, don’t get sick while you’re here because we certainly don’t want to pay for the refugee or the immigrant newcomer care. It’s a tragedy. It is the slow and steady Americanization—even, I would say, Wisconsinization—of the province of Ontario.

Frankly speaking, Speaker, whatever photo ops you want to come to, whether it’s in my riding, Prime Minister Harper, which you executed about a month ago—shame.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before we continue with questions and comments, I think it’s important to point out that the questions and comments are supposed to relate back to the member’s remarks—the person who had the floor and gave the speech. The member for Etobicoke North, I think, understands that.

Questions and comments.

Mr. Bill Walker: Interesting: A number of the other Liberals talked about how much they want to work with the federal government, how this was going to be a co-operative thing. That seemed to be a bit bellicose, Mr. Speaker. I think that was a word used earlier today.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes. Obstreperous.

Mr. Bill Walker: Obstreperous, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to go back to my colleague from Toronto–Danforth. He made a good comment: the lowest share of immigrants in 30 years. Could that be because of the state of our economy, the state or shape of our province currently, compared to where we could be?

One of the other colleagues from the Liberals talked earlier today about how much they have done and how wonderful things are. You know what? We're still relatively good compared to a lot of other places in the world, but just think of how much better we could be if we truly brought in the talent and had an economy. The key tenet of all of that is having the opportunity for jobs in our great province. More jobs than anyone else would be the way that we would attract more immigrants—being able to give them the hope and the opportunity to come to Ontario and drive this province forward like we have for so long.

I'm very proud to put on record my English and my Irish heritage. My family has long, long roots, and I'm proud. I think every immigrant population that has come to this country brings their own culture, their diversity, their wonderful traditions, their habits, their food, their skills, their experience. That's what we need to embrace because that is, as I've said earlier in my comments, the cultural mosaic that is Canada, that is Ontario.

I think we need to do all we can to get this province back to the point where everyone outside of Canada wants it to become their home. The pride that people bring to this great province and the pride that they have in bringing their families here and making it their home are what we all should be striving for.

We need a firing economy. We need to have job creation. We need to lower the debt levels to ensure that those immigrants have the opportunity to come here in the future and have the type of lifestyle we all deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments with respect to the speech that was just given by the member for Toronto–Danforth? I recognize the member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Why are you warning me before I speak? That must mean something.

I wanted to actually speak to the point that the member made, which is the bill everybody supports. But it is a small step.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you; I'm glad I got your approval for this.

Speaker, that's really what I wanted to raise: that I don't think there's anybody in this House who doesn't agree with what the government is doing.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: On this issue.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I think most of us who have been around for a while understand that Ontario needs—yes, on this issue. Thank you for qualifying that. There are a lot of issues we disagree on.

We all agree that Ontario has to play a larger role when it comes to the policies of immigration in our province because, clearly, our interests need to be protected, and who better able to protect those interests and to do what's right for Ontario than the Ontario government?

The problem, however, is that this bill doesn't do that. It's a first step, an all-important first step, one that we're all going to support. But when it comes down to the nuts and bolts of what this bill does, it doesn't deal with the kind of things that we have to deal with.

I'll just use one example. I come from northeastern Ontario—predominantly francophone. Why is it, as a federal government, and why is it that we're not going to really be able, under this bill, as a provincial government, to actually have a strategy in place that says when there are francophone immigrants from across the world who want to come to Canada and establish themselves in Ontario, that northeastern Ontario be actually indicated as a place they can go?

You know what? There are jobs there. There is good social infrastructure. There's great infrastructure when it comes to health and others that we've put in place. Guess what? You can actually live in French in northeastern Ontario and never have to speak English again. People don't recognize that. There are communities in our riding, as yours, as mine, where after four generations, the first language is still French and pretty bad English. Now, I'm not saying that's a good thing, but my point is—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, I'm saying that's a good thing. I'm just thinking we need to be able to deal with trying to find ways to increase immigration of francophones in northeastern Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We have time for one last question or comment with respect to the remarks given by the member for Toronto–Danforth.

I recognize the member for Windsor—

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Davenport.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Davenport. I apologize.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Thank you, Speaker. It gives me great pleasure, as an immigrant to this great country myself, having come here to Toronto in 1970 with my family, as a young child—

Applause.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: That's right. I'm almost giving away my age there.

It gives me great honour to speak on this bill once again, especially representing a riding such as Davenport, that is so diverse and is perhaps one of the most diverse ridings that we have here in the province.

I'm very proud that, if this bill passes, Ontario will become the second province after Quebec to introduce its

immigration legislation. Our proposed legislation is only a beginning; it is not the end. There still will be work to be done, but we are on track.

This act will formally recognize the long history of immigration in Ontario and the important nation-building role it has played in forming Ontario's social, economic and cultural values. With this legislation, we are taking steps towards charting our own course when it comes to attracting more skilled immigrants to drive our economy and keep Ontario strong.

I am so impressed when I go into my riding of Davenport and meet immigrant upon immigrant who has come to this country, come to this province, to call it home and has worked very hard to establish themselves—and may I add that they are successful in the businesses that they are now running.

Equally important, the act will contribute to good governance by making sure that authority for Ontario's selection programs is clear and transparent. We all know of those unscrupulous immigration consultants and lawyers that take advantage of the vulnerable immigrants that come here to call Ontario home, and we need to put a stop to that.

If passed, the act will strengthen our ongoing efforts to deter fraud and detect misrepresentation. The Ontario Immigration Act will increase transparency and information-sharing with our immigrant partners.

Mr. Speaker, this is a very important bill. I'm glad I was able to speak on it here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Toronto–Danforth has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I want to thank the members from Etobicoke North, Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Timmins–James Bay and Davenport for their comments. Generally speaking, they were in the general region of immigration in this bill, so I appreciate that focus.

Speaker, the comments from the member from Timmins–James Bay: I think what he has to say makes a lot of sense. I think it makes good sense for Ontario to reinforce the reality of our francophone community, to show people the advantages to northeastern Ontario, those who are francophone or native French speakers who want to live in that environment.

But I also want to say that the shift in immigration in the Toronto area has meant that, increasingly, Toronto has become a centre for francophone citizens. I was talking to the head of one of the francophone teachers' federations, who had said that Toronto is on track to have a larger francophone population than Ottawa. For us, we find that really a big plus. I know that francophone parents in Toronto want more francophone services, particularly education—schools—so that they can send their children to be schooled in French from daycare, from la garderie, up to the end of secondary school. I think it makes sense for us, again, to take advantage of that population and make sure that they have the services so that they can live their lives fully and utilize their talents fully in the language they were born to.

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Speaker, my hope is that when this bill goes to committee, there will be addressing of those questions that we've raised in these debates to improve the bill.

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

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to share my time this evening with the member from Cambridge and the outstanding member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

I'm pleased to stand here to speak about Bill 49, the Ontario Immigration Act. If passed, this bill will help to recognize the important role that immigration and immigrants play in our province of Ontario, and Canada as a whole, of course. People from around the world choose to make Ontario their new home because of the bounty we have to offer: multiculturalism, community and, of course, opportunity.

Obviously, I'm proud to say that the Conference Board, CIBC, Bank of Montreal and RBC have all said that Ontario will lead the country this year in economic growth.

Closer to home, an investment by Ford Motor Co., right next to my riding, in Oakville, where members of my riding will work and already do: \$400 million. I think that speaks to the economic vibrancy of our province.

Anything that we can help to do to make the process easier to navigate and understand for our immigrants will go a long way to ensuring that they feel welcome and integrate more seamlessly into their new communities.

Stats Canada believes that by 2017, immigrants will make up 22.2% of our population. A combination of factors, including our low birth rate and our aging population—certainly the case in Burlington—means that going forward, Canada and Ontario will rely more heavily on immigration to help grow our economy.

In fact, in my region of Halton, like many urban centres in Ontario, we've seen a significant and steady increase in immigration in the past 15 years. Between the years of 2000 and 2009, the number of immigrants has risen an astounding 140%. These individuals and their families help contribute to the local economy, open businesses and create jobs, and they contribute to the sense of culture and community.

But simply having people come and live in Ontario is not enough, Mr. Speaker. This bill will help to create the necessary tools for our province to attract the kind of skilled immigrants we need to meet future labour demands.

Aligning our immigration policy with our economic policy is not the only reason for this type of legislation. Many new immigrants come to Canada to improve their lives and that of their families but can occasionally be taken advantage of right from the start, and that's something we should all be concerned about. As a result of this, individuals representing themselves as so-called immigration specialists can confuse them with lengthy documents and confusing language, often charging them

large amounts of money for their services. Once the transaction is complete, these people disappear and those who sought their help are left with nothing. This bill will help to strengthen and clarify the terms surrounding representation within the system and protect immigrants from this kind of fraud and abuse. This will ensure that only those authorized may act as representatives of those seeking to immigrate and will create penalties for those seeking to defraud would-be Canadians.

This legislation is an important first step for the province of Ontario in increasing our role in immigration policies. By working to enhance our relationship on this issue with our federal counterparts and sharing this great responsibility, we can help those who wish to be part of our great province do so and, in turn, help grow our economy and our communities.

In closing, immigrants are going to be instrumental in the shaping of Ontario's future economically, culturally and otherwise, and so it is our job to make sure it's done right.

In summary, helping immigrants is all of our collective responsibilities. Showing them the red carpet, not red tape, is what Bill 49 is all about, and I urge every member of this House to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Cambridge.

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I'm really pleased to join the debate today on Bill 49, a bill to establish the Ontario Immigration Act, on behalf of many of my constituents in Cambridge, many of whom are immigrants or whose parents or grandparents immigrated in the early days when Cambridge was being formed.

As we well know, immigration is a driving force in this province. It builds our economy, enriches our society and helps us to compete on the world stage. Immigrants have made deep and enduring contributions that have shaped the quality of life we enjoy today across this province. At every stage of Ontario's history, newcomers offered skills, knowledge, optimism and hard work that advanced our economy.

This is certainly true in my community in Cambridge. The original towns of Cambridge that make up today's Cambridge were Galt, Preston, Hespeler and Blair. They were founded on the Speed and Grand rivers, which provided power for the many textile mills.

Early in the 20th century, Portuguese textile workers were some of the best in the world. Many Portuguese immigrants came to these thriving mills that contributed so much to the very early economic development of Cambridge and really provided the foundation for the economic success of Cambridge today.

These immigrants sponsored their families to come over. In the mid-1980s, when I arrived in Cambridge, almost one third of Cambridge residents actually spoke fluent Portuguese. They were certainly able to contribute to the rich fabric of our society in Cambridge today.

As Ontario faces more global competition, we're counting on newcomers today more than ever before. The

Ontario Immigration Act would position Ontario for success in this global economic environment.

As we all know, talent is the most sought-after commodity in today's economy. Entrepreneurial spirit, cultural knowledge, and creative thinking make economies more innovative and creative. Ontario's newcomers bring with them links to international markets, which in turn create more opportunities to build strategic partnerships across the world.

Newcomers bring innovative ideas and unique perspectives. They make valuable contributions to emerging industries like information technology, engineering and bioscience.

In the global economy, Ontario's cultural diversity gives us a clear edge. That's really what our government's Going Global Trade Strategy is all about. Our effort to tap into new markets is greatly enhanced by people who speak very different languages, have international networks, and understand different business cultures.

Of course, it's more than trade. We continue to rely on newcomers to maintain our labour force. With an aging population, low birth rates, and retiring baby boomers, we are counting on skilled immigrants to continue helping to meet our future labour needs.

Speaker, I'm so pleased to hear so much support for this bill across the House, and I really look forward to its passing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Glengarry–Prescott–Russell.

Mr. Grant Crack: It is good news to hear support for this bill on all sides of the House.

I recall, in the campaign of 2011, the change in attitude from the members of the official opposition, when, in fact, new Ontarians were being called "foreign workers." So I just want to tell you that I really appreciate—and I'm sure that all new Ontarians appreciate—the fact that there has been a little bit of a change over there. I'm not quite sure what the reason is.

However, we had a lot of discussion about francophones and francophone immigration in this province. It seems that all members who have spoken today are wanting the francophones to come to their communities. But I can tell you that in my community of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, which is over 65% francophone, providing the services to new francophone Ontarians is very critical. We do have all the services available for our francophone community. That's why, in our immigration strategy that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has put forward, we have a target of 5% of all newcomers to Ontario—we're hoping they're going to be French-speaking, because we know the economic benefit of that. We are a bilingual country; there are two official languages.

I have a minute and 40 seconds left.

I want to congratulate and thank the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, the Honourable Jeff Leal, for his commitment in ensuring that the collège d'Alfred, in my riding of Glengarry–Prescott–Russell,

continues to provide services and educational programming in my riding.

It was great news when he announced last Thursday, along with the minister responsible for francophone affairs, the Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, the Honourable Reza Moridi, that La Cité collégiale is going to assume the lead of this important agricultural francophone college in my riding. So I want to thank you, Minister, for that commitment that you've made in ensuring that we can continue.

I am so excited about the opportunity. The president of La Cité collégiale, Lise Bourgeois—

Hon. Jeff Leal: I had the chance to meet her. Lovely lady.

Mr. Grant Crack: She did. She came, and we had a great meeting. She's excited about the opportunity.

We're going to look at expanding programs at le collège d'Alfred. We're going to be looking at forestry.

We all know that the Premier has set targets for growing the agri-food sector. We're going to be creating new jobs. Technology is changing; farming communities are using different techniques now.

I can tell you, Speaker, that that excitement coming out of le collège d'Alfred and out of Prescott-Russell and the united counties, and all the local mayors and councillors—we're so excited. We're going to continue to grow, and we need more new Ontarians.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB)	Halton	
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham-Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Potts, Arthur (LIB)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thibeault, Glenn (LIB)	Sudbury	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Vernile, Daiene (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cindy Forster
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Han Dong
Cindy Forster, Michael Harris
Randy Hillier, Sophie Kiwala
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Soo Wong
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Victor Fedeli, Catherine Fife
Ann Hoggarth, Monte McNaughton
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Eleanor McMahon, Lisa M. Thompson
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: John Fraser
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Vic Dhillon, John Fraser
Wayne Gates, Marie-France Lalonde
Harinder Malhi, Cristina Martins
Jim McDonnell, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qadri
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Toby Barrett
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Garfield Dunlop
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Toby Barrett
Garfield Dunlop, Eleanor McMahon
Laurie Scott, Jagmeet Singh
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Robert Bailey, Lorenzo Berardinetti
Jennifer K. French, Monte Kwinter
Amrit Mangat, Kathryn McGarry
Indira Naidoo-Harris, Daiene Vernile
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie 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

**Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment /
Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère
sexuel**

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Randy Hillier
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
Laurie Scott, Daiene Vernile
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

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