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Thursday 1 October 2015

Jeudi 1^{er} octobre 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Thursday 1 October 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 1^{er} octobre 2015

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

POLICE RECORD CHECKS
REFORM ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LA RÉFORME
DES VÉRIFICATIONS
DE DOSSIERS DE POLICE

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 29, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 113, An Act respecting police record checks /
Projet de loi 113, Loi concernant les vérifications de
dossiers de police.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to join this debate. I think it's a tremendously important issue to discuss, and I am honoured to be able to share my thoughts.

First and foremost, I must commend the government on bringing forward this bill. It's rare that opposition does that, but this is an important bill. It addresses a very important issue, and I do acknowledge the government's work in introducing a bill that addresses such a serious issue.

I'll just lay out some of the groundwork on why this bill is so important and why this issue is such an important issue. Then I'll move into some of the areas where we can improve it—there is always room for improvement. Let me just lay out some of the groundwork.

According to a report by the John Howard Society entitled Reducing Barriers for Ontario's Youth With Police Records, over 4.1 million Canadians—that's roughly 20% of the adult male population—have a record of criminal conviction. In addition, in Ontario, our criminal court system processes more than half a million charges annually. And this is important: About 43% of criminal court cases resulted in stayed or withdrawn charges.

So, it's important to note that the issue of having contact with the criminal justice system sometimes results in convictions, but a large number of people are charged and eventually see those charges withdrawn or stayed. "Non-conviction records can be and often are disclosed on police record checks. These types of records can have

as devastating an impact on young people's employment, volunteering and academic prospects as records of convictions." I end the quote from the John Howard Society.

What we're talking about are non-conviction records. If you are convicted of an offence, you've committed the offence, there is enough evidence that's brought before the court, and after due process takes its course and you have the opportunity to defend yourself, you are then deemed to be guilty. There is proof beyond a reasonable doubt, upon which either a jury or a judge says, "Yes, there is enough evidence here that I am satisfied beyond a reasonable doubt that this person is guilty," and then there is a criminal conviction. In those cases—when there is a criminal conviction—the disclosure that someone has a conviction is appropriate. Disclosing that conviction under our criminal records is appropriate.

The area that we're very concerned about—that many civil liberties activists, many community organizers and many individuals have shared their personal stories about—is non-conviction records. What are those? These involve, according to, again, the John Howard Society—just a brief summary of what police records we're talking about when we're talking about non-conviction records: These can involve calls to 911 for assistance, victimization, mental health crises involving the police, being questioned by the police, arrests and charges that did not result in convictions. Now, it's the last three issues that are of most concern currently, given the concerns that people have raised around carding and street checks.

Let's just quickly talk about carding and street checks. When we're talking about carding and street checks, people are concerned about arbitrary or discriminatory stops that are conducted by the police that result in data being collected, people being stopped and people being discriminated against. When someone is stopped for a discriminatory reason, there is no evidence, there is no connection to what they are doing and a particular incident or some evidence or some complaint. There's no reason, there's no justification to stop an individual; it's completely arbitrary. Those types of street checks, or that circumstance which is also known as carding in Toronto, result in some data being stored.

When that data is stored—first of all, being subject to street checks that are arbitrary and being subject to carding that is arbitrary, in and of itself, is a harm; it makes you feel like you don't belong. On top of that, that harm is compounded by the fact that there is data then stored. If that data is then released in a criminal records search, you've been doubly impacted. Not only were you improperly treated with the first arbitrary detention, but

then the second negative blow to you is the fact that there is data that is being disclosed that has not been proven in court, that has not been tried; the evidence has not been tested.

Whatever that data is, if it is in any way negative, it could impact your future career, whether it's volunteering, whether it's applying to a professional school or whether it's trying to get a job—so, those types of interactions with the police, arrests when you're eventually proven to be not guilty or when those charges are withdrawn.

Mr. Speaker, if you have been arrested, if an individual has been arrested, and then they're charged with an offence, and it turns out there was a mistake: They got the wrong person; the police admit, "Hey, listen, we just charged and arrested the wrong person. We withdraw the charges against you." The fact of that charge and that arrest, that laying of a charge—that any disclosure of that could impact someone's career is so completely ridiculous and offensive, in fact.

We have a principle in Canada and in most nations where there is the rule of law, that you are entitled to the presumption of innocence. In fact, in Canada, this presumption of innocence is protected by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms says very clearly that you are entitled to it—this is one of your rights—that you should be presumed innocent until proven guilty. Now, that presumption, which is one of the hallmarks of any society that is based on the rule of law, is so fundamentally eroded when people who are not even convicted of an offence, who are absolutely innocent—they don't even need the presumption of innocence because they are innocent. When those individuals who have been found not in any way to be guilty, in fact, have not even been charged—that charge is withdrawn—if those individuals are facing barriers and obstacles to employment and to volunteer opportunities, to accessing school, that is so fundamentally flawed; that is such an abrogation of that fundamental principle. So I think it's something that we really need to address.

There are a number of stories I want to share of individuals who have faced some serious issues based on this disclosure. I think that it's important to put a human side to this story. I'll turn now to the great work of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. They released a report in 2012 which, in a lot of ways, was one of the main reasons why and was one of the motivating factors why this bill is now before this House. The Canadian Civil Liberties Association, in conjunction with other organizations like the John Howard association, raised the issue that they were seeing a number of people being unfairly treated, receiving or facing unfair burdens and obstacles to employment, volunteer and educational opportunities because of non-conviction records. They raised this issue.

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In 2012, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association released a report. To follow up with that report, the association released something called *Presumption of Guilt:*

The Human Story. This *Presumption of Guilt* piece was essentially a compilation of stories across Canada regarding what people had faced, the stories of people who had faced burdens and obstacles because of their non-conviction record. I'm just going to quote from the preamble of this follow-up to the report.

"In the time since the release of our first report over 100 Canadians who are struggling with the impact of a non-conviction record have contacted CCLA. We decided to record just a few of their stories." So the following are going to be some excerpts of stories from people who were impacted by non-conviction record disclosure and who responded to the 2012 report by the Canadian Civil Liberties Association. Again, I really want to recognize the tremendous work of CCLA in standing up for civil liberties, not just in this case but in a variety of other areas of great concern. The first story is Gord.

"Gord was a nursing student when he was asked to get a vulnerable sector check in order to complete college placements. His non-conviction record, which was nearly two decades old when it was disclosed on his police check, completely altered the course of his life." His quote is: "You sort of wonder how one group could have so much power to influence your life. Even if you haven't been charged with anything, even if you are innocent, they can still affect you decades later, if they haven't cleared your records. And that's a problem...."

So Gord was a nursing student and faced difficulties in his college placement for charges that, again, he wasn't convicted of. He wasn't even found guilty. These were charges that were withdrawn. The fact that withdrawn charges could impede someone's career in something as important and noble as the nursing profession is absolutely unacceptable.

There's another story; this one is about Robin: "Robin was 18 and pregnant when her male roommates started dealing drugs out of the apartment. She tried to find a new place to live, but before she could move the police came and charged everyone who lived there with trafficking. The charges against her were withdrawn, but her record has followed her, preventing her from pursuing her career and furthering her education."

Again, this is another circumstance. How unfair is that? In the first place, for her to be charged—in some fairness to the police, perhaps, everyone who was in the facilities or the premises were charged, but eventually they realized that this didn't even take going to court. Robin didn't need to defend herself in court because the police looked at the evidence and, in fairness, they realized there wasn't enough evidence to proceed and they withdrew the charges against Robin. Despite that, the fact that those charges were still on her record, that they were disclosed, that she was charged with some drug-related offence—that drug-related offence charge was withdrawn. She still received a barrier. She still was impeded and prevented from furthering her education and pursuing her career. Keep in mind that this is an 18-year-old woman; she's pregnant at the time. The fact that we have someone in this circumstance who is already

vulnerable and on top of that is faced with this severe obstacle is completely unacceptable. It just really shows you the human story of how non-conviction record disclosure can impact someone.

I want to move on to another story just to add the human element to this issue. This story is about Lana. “Lana’s abusive ex-partner phoned the police and accused her of assault, twice. After leaving her partner she was unemployed and needed financial assistance to try to pay school application fees. When she first went to Ontario Works, they initially told her they wouldn’t even pay for the application for nursing school because there was a chance she wouldn’t get a nursing placement while in school.”

Her quote: “I’m not guilty, I didn’t do anything, it’s just someone manipulating the system against me.... That life-long discrimination is just infuriating, for something I didn’t do.... It’s humiliating. Because I’ve never, ever, ever, ever, not even close to it, being in trouble—never been in trouble in my life. And now all of a sudden, it’s like, why aren’t you working? What did you do? There’s this whole presumption that I must have done something terribly wrong.”

That’s the issue here: Though we have this principle of the presumption of innocence, when you are faced with—if you are an employer, if you’re someone who’s in school administration and you receive an application and on that police record check it says, “charged with possession of a narcotic,” “charged with trafficking in a controlled substance,” “charged with” some heinous assault—looking at that assault, whether it was withdrawn or stayed or acquitted, there is so much stigma that is associated with that. There’s such a negative presumption that flows from that, simply the fact that you were charged. That’s why it’s so important that that charge not be disclosed in the first place. It’s so important, Mr. Speaker, that we don’t disclose information that has not been proven in a court of justice, that has not been proven to be true. We can’t be disclosing this type of information. It’s already difficult enough for people to find a job or to find volunteer opportunities. We don’t want to discourage them and, in fact, impede them further, and that is why it’s so important that we have this piece of legislation.

Let’s take a break from the stories—we’ll come back to some more life stories—and talk about the legislation and some of the good things it does and some of the things that we need to improve upon. What’s important to note is that the bill offers some guidance in an area that, up until now, has been quite unclear in terms of what the acting principles, the guiding principles, are around when you should disclose and what you should disclose when it comes to criminal records. So it’s important that we have this clarity. There has been a lack of clarity up until this point.

Underneath this piece of legislation, there are a couple of really important components. One component is that, upon application for a police records check, the individual who is applying for the police records check has to

provide their consent for the police check to be initiated in the first place. I think that’s absolutely important. We don’t want to allow circumstances where third parties can make a check, or can order a police records check, without the consent of the individual it involves. That’s very important, and that’s included in this bill. I think that’s an important issue.

In addition, it’s also part of this bill, which is an important component, that if there is a police records check that’s initiated, the results of it first go to the individual who made the request. So it goes to the individual first and then they have to consent in order for it to be released any further. So that’s an important extra protection. I think that’s worth acknowledging. It’s very important to acknowledge that the bill basically breaks down three types of checks. This is under section 8. They break into three categories: there’s a criminal records check, there is a criminal records and judicial matters check and then a vulnerable sector check.

The first check is probably the most common. It’s the straightforward criminal records check. The bill makes it very clear that the starting point will be that non-conviction records are not to be disclosed. That’s important, and that’s a good starting point. I acknowledge that, and I want to recognize that that’s something important. Actually, it’s also important to recognize that a host of stakeholders were consulted on this bill and did support it, and those ranged from individuals in the police services to individuals on the advocacy side, as well as people who are victims or people who are charged and who are in circumstances where they are impacted by disclosure of non-conviction issues, as well as the CCLA. So those stakeholders were consulted and supported it.

There are, though, a couple of areas of concern. One of those areas is when it comes to the exceptions. Under section 10 of the Police Record Checks Reform Act, there is a headline which indicates “Exceptional disclosure of non-conviction information, vulnerable sector check.” Underneath that, under section 10, subsection 2, there are criteria for exceptional disclosure. This is where we have a couple of areas of concern. First off, I acknowledge that there are circumstances where, in exceptional circumstances, there are exceptional cases where there may be an importance, there may be a requirement to release some information that doesn’t actually make up a conviction. So in those cases, then, maybe you do have to release occurrences or charges that were withdrawn. There may be some grounds to do so. There may be some reason to do so.

0920

A couple of areas of concern: In the criteria that are listed, it’s not clear that the position that’s being applied for has to have a connection—that there needs to be a nexus between the position applied for and the entries in the record. What I mean by that is this: We have to keep in mind that this exceptional disclosure circumstance is the disclosure of things that are non-conviction. We’re talking about things that people are actually determined by a court of law to be innocent of. They’re actually

offences where they may have been the wrong person and the charges were withdrawn. They might have challenged the issues in court and were found to be not guilty. These are incidents that could simply be occurrences where the evidence wasn't tested by a court; there wasn't the opportunity to test the evidence. These are already issues that aren't convictions. And in that exceptional case where there is some reason to be releasing that information, there has got to be a connection between the position you're applying for and the type of records that you have.

What I mean by that is if there are some entries in your criminal record that are not convictions—you've not been found guilty—but they're related to something that's quite troublesome, perhaps something around offences related to children, which we're all very concerned about and are very serious, but again, they're not convictions; you have not been found guilty—if you're applying for a position at an old age home or your work will be involved with elders, but the entries that are non-conviction are related to children, then there isn't really a direct connection between those entries and what you're applying for. It's got to be something that is very connected.

If your entries are for something that involved fraud or fraudulent behaviour with seniors, but you're applying to work with youth, there isn't a connection between fraudulent offences against seniors, which are, again, very serious—but you haven't been convicted. If you want to disclose that information that is non-conviction, that you've not been proven guilty on, you should be entitled to the presumption of innocence. If you are being subject to having that information released, and it doesn't connect to the actual employment or education that you're pursuing, then, again—that criteria needs to be added; it's not included here. That's one issue that I raise.

The second issue, which is even more important, is the criteria for exceptional disclosure. I just want to read from subsection 10(2): "Non-conviction information about the individual is not authorized for exceptional disclosure unless the information satisfies all of the following criteria...."

Subsection 10(1) reads: "This section applies with respect to the disclosure of non-conviction information in response to a request for a vulnerable sector check in respect of an individual."

The criteria that are listed are good criteria, with the exception of the additional point that I raised; however, the mechanism to apply this criteria is not clear. As it stands, the decision-making and the discretion would lie in the hands of the police. While our police officers do phenomenal work in our communities to keep us safe, while front-line officers are essential in our public safety, if police are the body that control or house the data—they have the data; they have the records—and they're also the body that you apply to for whether this should be released or not, and they also have the discretion about whether to release certain information or not, and they also apply the criteria, inherently, it's a system that is not as transparent or as accountable. If the police themselves

are the ones who are making the decision—they have to apply their criteria—then it's not an open system. What I mean by that is if I'm applying and I submit for a records check, the police look at my circumstance and then look at the criteria. They then make the assessment, "Okay, the criteria apply." There is no opportunity for me to say, "Hey, listen, I don't think their criteria apply." There is no way for me to actually dispute that, in terms of having my opinion, to come forward and say, "Listen, there isn't a connection between what you're hoping to release and what I'm doing. The criteria that you're applying don't apply to me." There is no form for that.

What there is is after the case, there is an opportunity for reconsideration; that's what it states. You can request a reconsideration. Again, you're not provided with the reasons for the decision, you're not provided with the manner in which the criteria were applied, so there isn't really that due process.

What BC has proposed, because they recognize that this is a very valid concern—the government in British Columbia created a separate, independent body. That independent body is assigned the task of assessing the risks and applying the criteria, and it is independent from the police services. So there is a level of independence, there is an increased level of transparency and, because it's an independent body making that decision, you have a greater opportunity for accountability and to challenge those decisions if they are inappropriate.

Again, the entire purpose for bringing this forward is because there has been improper use of the existing discretion. The whole reason we're bringing this bill forward is because there's an acknowledgement that in the existing system, records were disclosed in a manner that was not proper and people were severely prejudiced because of it. If we know that that's an issue, the solution has to also acknowledge that if we continue down the same path of allowing all the discretion to be in one group, and not an independent group, then the problem continues. That's an area of concern, and much like the British Columbia decision, I'm suggesting that there needs to be some independence in that decision-making.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association, as I indicated, released a report in 2012. They also made a series of recommendations. In them, they made recommendations to the provincial, territorial and federal governments, as well as to police services and police service boards, businesses, not-for-profit organizations and third-party record check companies.

Referring to their recommendations around provincial, territorial and federal governments, the CCLA stated, under their recommendation 1.2: "Governments should introduce legislation based on British Columbia's Criminal Records Review Act, establishing centralized bodies to conduct vulnerable sector screening and evidence-based risk assessments. These bodies should provide screening services for all positions that would qualify for a vulnerable sector check."

Now, it's important to note that they included the language "evidence-based risk assessments." Broadly speak-

ing, one of the other problems that was raised by both the John Howard Society and the CCLA was that there seems to be a knee-jerk reaction to criminal record checks. It can't be the case that in every circumstance you need a criminal record check. There has to be some thorough analysis. It shouldn't be the case that anyone can just request that you have to have a criminal record check for any job. That doesn't seem to be a very logical proposition.

What the CCLA and the John Howard Society are recommending is that there needs to be an evidence-based risk assessment. There needs to be a look at: "Is there evidence that suggests that in this particular type of work or this particular type of education, there is a risk that is posed where there is evidence of a certain type of criminal activity?" If there is some clear evidence and that evidence is related to the actual risk assessment, then in that case it makes sense and there should be an assessment. Then, that means we need to actually look at whether there needs to be a criminal records check or not. I think the issue here is that it shouldn't be the case that—what it looks like now is that any job you apply for, there's always an automatic criminal record check. That's a problem.

The other concern around criminal record checks, broadly speaking, was raised by a number of community groups, and one member of our caucus raised this issue as well. It's that there is a cost associated with a criminal record check. That cost is something that often acts as a barrier, in and of itself, for individuals who want to volunteer. First of all, there's a cost, and there's a time issue. The cost is both financial and time-related.

So you want to apply to volunteer in a position in your community—you want to help out, contribute and give back—but the requirement is for a criminal record check. Two issues come up. One is that it takes a long time. You have to follow through a lot of hurdles and a lot of bureaucracy to get your criminal record check completed. It takes a lot of waiting time, sometimes in lines, to get this done. The process is very difficult, and there is also a high cost.

0930

In terms of the actual act, it's information that's stored, presumably by the police, in a database, and the fact that the charges are sometimes so exorbitant, so high, doesn't seem to make sense. It creates a barrier. So if I want to apply to help out in my local community but there is a criminal records check that is going to cost me a lot of money and take a lot of time to process, maybe I don't bother to do it. The fact that some people are precluded from applying for positions like this because of this cost barrier is not acceptable.

So we need to address why there is a cost in the first place. Can that cost be waived if you're applying for a volunteer position? You're giving your time freely. In those circumstances, perhaps the cost should be waived. If you are applying for a job and you are a youth or somebody who can't afford to make ends meet, and you're struggling and you want to find a job to pay some

of your bills, you have to pay money to start earning money. It's difficult in those circumstances. So there needs to be a look at whether—if it's a young person applying for a criminal records check or someone who's applying for a volunteer position, in those circumstances perhaps the charge could be waived.

Also, we have to look at ways of streamlining this process so it can be quicker and people aren't waiting a long time. The member from Welland raised an issue, that sometimes in the health sector there are opportunities that are missed because the wait time is so long. The opportunities are available, but the wait time to get your criminal records check takes so long that you miss an opportunity. That's another issue that has been raised.

So to sum up these last two points, we need to really evaluate whether or not, in terms of provincial leadership, there's a reason to be requesting a criminal records check. In all circumstances, I don't think it makes sense to just immediately need a criminal records check. There needs to be an evidence-based risk assessment: Do we need to look at the risk of this individual in this particular employment? Does it make sense for us to do so? If it does, okay, let's move to the next step and then make that assessment.

Secondly, the other area of concern, broadly speaking, is that we need to look at ways to make it easier to access your criminal record. Employment opportunities for young people, who are already facing some of the highest unemployment in the history of Canada, and Ontario is facing a high youth unemployment rate, well above our regular unemployment rate—we need to make sure that there aren't additional barriers to youth, perhaps waiving the records for youth. And again, the volunteer component: If someone is applying to give their time freely, there needs to be a consideration for perhaps waiving that fee as well.

I want to return again to some other stories around this issue of criminal records checks and why it's so important to address this matter and the real-life stories of people who are impacted by it. I want to share the story of Chris. Again, this is from the CCLA's follow-up to their 2012 report that compiled some stories they'd received of individuals who had faced barriers because of non-conviction records.

"Chris had been accepted as a volunteer firefighter in his small town and was several months into training when he realized that his vulnerable sector check listed him as the subject of a drug investigation. Chris had never even been questioned by the police, much less charged with any offence. He assumes that his name was entered into police databases because he had a friend who was arrested and charged with drug offences—Chris had met the undercover officer who was investigating his friend, but Chris was never questioned by police or charged with anything."

I quote his story: "It's a small town, I mean, all the people I was in class training with, it was a class of 25 or 30, they all know I got kicked off. All the people at the station know I got kicked off. I run into these people on a

daily basis. I feel now like a criminal and I haven't done anything wrong. Or even if I had done something wrong, I've never been to court to prove it. It's like guilty until proven innocent....

"It kind of ruined my chances. My whole plan was getting on, and getting full time—it threw that out the window. Now I'll never be able to be a firefighter."

We have to understand that these are real lives that are impacted. These are people who are faced with losing a career over not having done anything. These are people who are actually innocent, who have not committed an offence. They were the subject of an investigation; in this case, an individual who may have been approached by a police officer but not even questioned. Their name just came up because they were in contact. I don't blame the police in this case. They contacted this individual; that's not their fault, but the fact is that that record was disclosed that he was the subject of a drug investigation when he wasn't charged with an offence, let alone convicted. The fact that, just because he was—in some broad-speaking, vague way—involved in the investigation as someone that the police contacted, for that information to be disclosed, is absolutely unacceptable. The fact that that information precluded him from becoming a firefighter is even more unacceptable.

I want to share the story of Lois: "Lois was trying to board a flight to Los Angeles to spend Thanksgiving with family when she was pulled over by American border officials for secondary screening. She was told she was not able to cross over to the United States because Toronto police had attended her home in 2006 after a 911 call for medical assistance.

"This interview was conducted in February 2013," some seven years later. "Since then the matter has been resolved. Lois is not at liberty to comment further due to a confidentiality agreement.

"To me, this is the kind of thing that needs to have a public airing.... But many people are not willing to be public about it because they fear the embarrassment, they worry about job security.... I think this is something that we really need to look at, because too many people are being hurt—and too many people will continue to be hurt—if we allow this to go unchallenged."

It's important to know that this impacts not only employment, not only educational opportunities; it also impacts something like travel, people going to the States or going to other countries—international travel. When there is the sharing of information, and certain information is allowed to be shared that is not relevant to someone's risk in any way—someone is not in any way convicted of an offence—it should not provide this barrier.

I want to talk about, again, the impact of these from my own experience as a criminal defence lawyer. I represented a number of clients, many of them who were innocent, who were either wrongly accused, or misidentified at the scene. There was very clear evidence that could exonerate them. I personally represented these clients. Great kids: They had a great future and great potential. The fact that they were simply charged with an offence—

they received good representation and were able to be found not guilty. But the fact that they were charged, that those charges were either withdrawn in some cases, or that those charges were eventually acquitted of them, and that they were now going to face barriers to their employment in the future, to me, is something that I can't live with. The idea that people that have such great potential, that could be such great contributing members of our society, people that have so much hope and so many aspirations, people that I've dealt with—I represented them. I got to hear their stories. I got to meet their families. I know that they're good people, and I know that they'll go on to do great things. But I know also that, simply because they were charged, they are going to have greater barriers unless we pass laws that protect them. They're going to have difficulties accessing certain educational opportunities. The fact that they're going to perhaps be looked over or passed over for job opportunities is just not acceptable to me. It's something that's troubling and it's something that needs to be resolved.

There's a larger discussion around barriers that exist and particularly when they exist for people who are already vulnerable. We have a vulnerable sector check, but we also have people that are more likely to be in contact with the police and more likely to get charged. Those individuals are often younger individuals, often racialized, often from lower socio-economic backgrounds, and living in neighbourhoods where there's a higher police presence. It's not because of their own fault, not because of anything they've done wrong, but it happens to be a community that, because of issues of poverty, there's a heightened degree of policing, and they are now more likely to be subject to police contact. People who are already facing systemic barriers, whether it's racism or whether it's poverty issues—they're facing systemic barriers. Those systemic barriers are then augmented or made worse by the fact that they have police contact which results in charges. These charges are maybe acquitted or withdrawn. But they're still going to face barriers. That's what's so troubling to me: It creates a system that's already unfair and makes it even more unfair for them.

That's why we've raised concerns around carding; it's the exact same issue. When there's police contact that can be disclosed and that can negatively impact, like these stories I've shared—people have lost the opportunity to travel, to get employment, to get education, due to information that is stored that doesn't have anything to do with their guilt or innocence. That information being disclosed results in these issues.

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In the same way, carding not only allows for one additional avenue for information to be disclosed that might result in some other barriers to employment, volunteering and education, but carding itself—when the act of stopping someone is arbitrary, when the act of stopping someone is discriminatory and when the act of stopping someone in a street check or carding circumstance is not based on any evidence, is not based on any specific complaint and there is no connection between some

evidence and that individual—when that's not present, it's unacceptable to stop these individuals. What it does, Mr. Speaker, is that it further sends a message that you don't belong. It tells people living in their own community, people who live in their own neighbourhoods, that simply for existing, simply for being, simply because you were there, you are not welcome.

People are stopped multiple times in their own neighbourhood for not having committed any offence, for not even being a subject of an investigation. The fact that that practice is going on, arbitrarily and in a discriminatory fashion—often that discrimination is based on youth and based on race—is so unacceptable. It's something that is fundamentally offensive, and it violates our charter. It's something that can't be regulated. You can't regulate a practice that is inherently violating our charter. It can't be regulated, and the government is taking a course of action where they want to regulate this practice. It can't be regulated, Mr. Speaker. If a practice openly violates our charter rights, it cannot be regulated. It is illegal.

The concerns that are raised—there are public safety concerns; there are issues around police investigations. I wholeheartedly support the work of our front-line officers. They have tremendous tools, and they are very capable of using those tools to keep our communities safe. Those tools that exist allow the police to stop individuals, the tools that exist allow them to investigate individuals and, in fact, the tools that exist allow the police to search individuals without a warrant. But there is a requirement that there are reasonable grounds to do so, that there is evidence to do so, that they can articulate a cause, that they can give a reason. When there is a reason present, the police have the ability to do a whole host of things.

The issue that community activists have, the issue that members of the civil liberties associations have, the issue that legal experts have, is that when you have an arbitrary system, an arbitrary detention, arbitrary stops—stops for no reason, no evidence—those are unacceptable. They cannot be regulated. When you have discriminatory stops—stops that are based on simply the colour of your skin, stops that are based on your age, stops that are based on young people hanging out at night—that's not reasonable grounds.

Reasonable grounds are very well articulated, very well laid out through years and years of jurisprudence. There is clear jurisprudence around what reasonable grounds are. We know this. If there are reasonable grounds, if an officer can articulate those grounds, then it's absolutely fine to engage in whatever the tool may be, whether it's an investigation, an investigative stop or whether it's actually searching the individual. If there are grounds, then it's appropriate.

All we're saying, very clearly, is that if there are no grounds, if there's no reason to do so, they should not be stopped. That issue of carding, compiled with the issue of disclosing non-conviction records, is creating a heightened sense that the police are not serving the community. Again, this is not the fault of the police. This is the fault of the government. The government has a responsibility.

The provincial government, in this case, has a responsibility to provide the leadership. They have an opportunity to do so. They have the means to do so. They have the authority to do so. They simply must take that next step and actually act.

So, on this non-disclosure piece, the government has finally taken the right decision and acted—years of various activists raising this concern, years of various legal experts raising it, and various advocacy groups raising this concern, saying that people are being impacted by this.

I think it is really important, as I forgot to note, and I want to get into this as well, the tremendous work of the Toronto Star with respect to this issue. In specific, I want to give a shout-out to the great investigative journalism of Mr. Robert Cribb. Mr. Cribb has released a series of reports around the impact of disclosure of non-conviction records, and I think it's really important to note his tremendous work. He shared a number of stories. I'm just going to share one of those stories.

In an article published June 22, 2014, again by Mr. Robert Cribb, the article reads: “‘No Judgment, No Discretion’: Police Records that Ruin ... Lives.”

He outlines the story of Andrew and indicates that “Andrew's career-limiting moment of humiliation unfolded in front of a distinguished colleague in the security line at Pearson International Airport.

“The 42-year-old Toronto area businessman was on his way to a prestigious trade conference in the United States last year that promised valuable networking opportunities for his construction firm.

“He'd prepared for months.

“But it was all ... undermined thanks to a minor contact with a police officer 24 years earlier that torpedoed the biggest business trip of his career and continues to compromise his professional credibility and prospects.”

Mr. Speaker, 24 years ago—I mean, what were you doing 24 years ago? A “minor contact with a police officer” 24 years ago. I mean, it's funny, because we think of what we were doing 24 years ago, but it's not funny for Andrew. The fact that a minor contact 24 years ago is impacting his career in such a significant way is just unacceptable. Like my colleague is saying, it's abusive. It's abuse. This is something that is absolutely unacceptable.

Again, like the other stories we've shared, the individual—in this case, Andrew was “directed into secondary screening for the first time in his many trips south ... waiting 90 minutes in puzzlement until a US border guard asked him if he'd ever been convicted of possessing narcotics.”

He said, “No, sir,” of course; he had not. He would have known that. That's a pretty big offence, possessing narcotics.

“The officer told Andrew that records showed he was investigated for possession of narcotics in 1990 and that, as a result, he was being denied entry to the US.”

Keep in mind, he had never been convicted of a crime. This is simply an investigation from 24 years earlier, and

that investigation precluded him from going to the States. He was never even charged. This wasn't a case where he was charged and then the charges were withdrawn, which also is completely offensive, because he's been found not to even need to go to court to defend himself, but he wasn't even charged in this case. This is a serious issue.

There are a number of other stories. Mr. Cribb went on to talk about something that I initially raised, that Toronto police have experienced a 92% increase in police background check requests in the past five years—a 92% increase over the past five years. So, as I was saying, we need to really evaluate why there is this sudden increase in police record check requests. It shouldn't be the case that you immediately request a police record check for any employment. There has to be some reason for it; there's got to be some basis for it. There has got to be some risk assessment. It shouldn't be just a knee-jerk reaction where if you're applying for a job, you need a record check. Given the fact that it has increased 92% in five years without any justification, there are some concerns here.

Again, if there is a risk that is identified and there is a risk assessment that's required based on some evidence, that's absolutely appropriate, and that's what we need to see. That's why it's so concerning that this trend is increasing towards increased criminal record checks without any reason for them, and people are being precluded from opportunities when they haven't even been convicted of an offence.

Mr. Cribb goes on to talk about the fact that people have had to seek legal representation at a great cost to have records deleted. Again, these records are not even convictions. These records aren't in any way showing criminal guilt. These are records that are non-conviction in nature, but they have to obtain legal representation to get those removed so they can actually move on with their lives. Again, this is something of great concern, and I want to again acknowledge the great work that Robert Cribb did in raising some of these concerns.

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He also wrote another article on May 17, 2014. The article is entitled "Canadians Stunned to Learn They Have Police Records, Despite Never Being Found Guilty." In this case, the story is about Chris. He's a 27-year-old construction worker. He "hoped that firefighting was a calling he would one day turn into a profession." He was asked to provide a vulnerable sector check.

The results left him stunned. The check "indicated no charges or convictions." There was a letter attached. It said he was named in a drug investigation. Again, just for being named in the drug investigation, it precluded him from an opportunity to go on to do his life's goal, which was to become a firefighter.

There's significant stigma associated with it. It has gone on to plague him in his own community. Again, not being charged, not being found guilty has resulted in him not being able to pursue his career of choice, and perhaps us missing out on a great firefighter. There are so many stories. The impact that this has is tremendous.

We looked at, to a large degree, career opportunities and educational opportunities. I want to focus on the impact of stigma. The impact of stigma can't be understated. We already know that your sense of self-worth has a significant impact on your ability to be successful in society. One of the reasons why we have raised such a concern around carding and street checks is because that feeling of being stopped in your own community for no reason, just because you're there, sends that feeling that you don't belong.

Similarly, when you are faced with the stigma of having committed an offence, of being treated as if you're guilty of an offence which you're not guilty of, it sends this very powerful message that you are unacceptable, that there's something wrong about you. You live with this feeling. The stories talk about feeling like a criminal, feeling like they've done something wrong when they haven't, and that feeling is so crushing. It limits your ability to succeed. It limits your motivation to be able to be a contributing member of your society. It has such a negative impact, and we can't state enough how horrible and how detrimental it is.

It's that feeling of not being valuable, of not having any worth, of being a criminal when you're not, that we need to get rid of. That's the human story here. That feeling, that limitation that exists, is so powerful and so debilitating that it really needs to be addressed, and that's why this type of law is so important.

In my last eight minutes, I want to move towards some of my recommendations. While I acknowledge that this bill is an excellent step forward—it's not even an incremental step; it's a significant step forward. It's addressing a lot of the concerns that have been raised, and it sets out a very clear guideline that non-conviction records should not be disclosed. That's absolutely appropriate.

It breaks down a number of areas of checks, and the one area I want to address in more detail is when there are exceptional cases, when we determine that in a very specific case, when there are vulnerable people at stake—youth, seniors, or whatever the group may be; that based on their health or age, there might be a greater level of vulnerability—there might be some reason for us to disclose additional information. But this is where we have to be even more vigilant. Basically we're releasing information that otherwise this law says we cannot release.

In those circumstances, I have to highlight how important it is to have an independent body. BC's solution was to strike an independent body. There is a certain cost associated with that, but the benefit is having an independent body allows for a tribunal or independent decision-making to assess whether or not certain information should be released, and to engage in that risk assessment. That risk assessment is vital, because as it stands right now, the discretion is in the hands of the police, the same people—again, it's not their fault, but if they're not provided with the guidelines and the tools to do their job, then they're going to be left with this position.

The police hold the data, and now they're going to have to apply criteria and assess whether or not, with their discretion, these criteria are met and whether or not they should release or not release information. That system inherently is not the most transparent and accountable. We need to look at a more accountable and transparent mechanism, whether it's a tribunal or whether it's another mechanism.

I've consulted with a number of legal experts and community advocacy groups, and individuals that have represented communities and community groups that are impacted by these types of non-conviction disclosures. I am hoping to propose an alternative solution that would look at creating more independence, that would allow for a solution that would take away that discretionary element from the police so that there is a more accountable and transparent way to do it.

One of my suggestions will be that an application can be made to the court, to a judge who is independent, a judge who has that decision-making capacity to weigh the evidence and look at the circumstances and say, "Listen, in this particular circumstance, there is a certain risk; there is a certain number of entries that are non-conviction-related; and there is a nexus, a connection, between the two." In this case, the criteria have been met or have not been met, and they can make that decision.

That process would be open. That process would allow for two sides to be heard. The individual that is requesting the check, that wants to have a criminal record check, could actually raise an argument and say, "Listen, there is no connection between this offence, or this non-conviction record, and the opportunity that I'm seeking, and I don't think it's necessary to release it."

There is an avenue to provide more accountability. That decision also would be subject to appeal, to be reviewed, and that again allows for greater accountability. That's the real issue here with respect to many of the concerns that we have. When the public feels concerned about police services, it's not the police services themselves; it's the lack of accountability and transparency around some of the decision-making. This would be a great step forward in terms of ensuring there is that transparency and accountability.

Taking the decision-making and that discretionary power away from the body that controls the data and putting that in the hands of an independent decision-maker, like a judge, would allow for greater transparency. I think that's a solution that I encourage the government to look at, in terms of addressing this concern—or look at the BC example and look at their criminal records act and how they've set up that tribunal. Both of those circumstances would provide a solution that would provide greater accountability and transparency and would ensure that our solution to a very serious problem doesn't create another problem with respect to this discretion now being at question. So I ask you to consider that.

I also want to highlight that this concern around the independence is something that has also been brought up by the CCLA. In their recommendation, they also request

that the government look at the BC act, so I think it's something that is strengthened by their recommendation.

The John Howard Society took a very interesting angle on police records, and they focused in on the youth. I want to take a little bit of time here to focus in on the youth. We know that youth already are facing some of the highest unemployment rates in the history of Canada at this time. Given that there are already so many barriers for youth to finding employment, the existence of a record or record checks could create an additional barrier. They focused their report Reducing Barriers for Ontario's Youth with Police Records on those barriers that are faced by the youth and really looked at some solutions to that.

Their recommendations included—one of their recommendations, under section 2, was regulating the demand for police record checks.

I'll just read from 2.1: "The provincial government should commit to making Ontario a province that fosters barrier-free reintegration and inclusivity. It should model the efforts" under way in other jurisdictions on "eliminating the government's use of stigmatizing and labelling language, and enacting policies akin to the 'Ban the Box' reforms in the US." They go on to talk about the importance of limiting the ability or limiting the requests for criminal record checks in circumstances where it's just not necessary and of ensuring that youth don't have an additional barrier to actually accessing employment. They also talk about the regulation of the disclosure of the police records. That's something that this bill, I think, will do. So that's important.

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Finally, they talk about regulating the use of police records in general. This is something that has been called for by the CCLA as well, and the John Howard Society. It's something around the Human Rights Code. I just want to read it out. I think it's important. It's recommendation 4.1, and it says, "The provincial government should amend the Ontario Human Rights Code's 'record of offences' provision to broaden its definition to explicitly protect Ontarians against discrimination on the basis of any record of offences—which should include all non-conviction police records, mental health police contacts, criminal convictions and records that have been sealed subsequent to a record suspension—with a narrow exception allowed for employers who can demonstrate that a particular criminal record is reasonably and objectively connected to a bona fide requirement of the specific employment or volunteer position being sought."

So this is a step broader. If an individual has a conviction, and it's for an offence that has no—even if they had a conviction. This is another area for us to look at. If that offence has no bona fide, evidentiary connection to a particular risk, a specific risk, whatever the employment or volunteer opportunity—if there is no nexus, and I do have a conviction—then that shouldn't create a barrier for me either. There has to be reason for it to create a barrier. It shouldn't just be that the existence of a criminal record means that forever you are precluded from oppor-

tunities. There needs to be some evidentiary basis for that; there needs to be some reason behind it. That would create a more inclusive society. Just because someone has committed an offence years and years ago and they haven't received a pardon shouldn't mean that their entire future or their ability to contribute to society is forever impeded.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments? The member for Sudbury.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault: Thank you for seeing me up in the corner here, Mr. Speaker.

I'd like to thank the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton for his thorough presentation. He outlined many stories in that presentation. He talked a lot—I think it was halfway through when he talked about cost and time. I think those are two important factors that he was raising.

I do have a question for him that I hope he could address in his rebuttal. This isn't a "gotcha" question; it's more of trying to get an understanding of when you were talking about the independent body that's occurring in BC and some suggestions of what we could do here in Ontario.

We also heard earlier, when you talked about cost and time—when we're talking about time or employment or if it's time for a volunteer organization to get this volunteer, would that process—have you heard in your research—then slow down if we are using that independent body? I think that's important for us to get an understanding of. Especially when we're looking at how this bill is going to change—making things more accountable. It's going to really change some of the unnecessary barriers that citizens have been facing when it comes to non-conviction and non-criminal information, especially mental health records and those types of things being undisclosed in record checks. I'd appreciate to hear some information from the honourable member on that piece.

Also, I think it's important to reassure the honourable member, when he talked about this legislation and he was talking about street checks, that street checks will not be released under this legislation. It's something that I think is important to bring forward as well.

I do appreciate his comments. It was very well thought out. Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to add a couple of comments following the remarks of the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton.

I particularly appreciated the balance that he was bringing to the presentation in terms of the impact of these circumstances that people find themselves in. It reminds me why Justice was always presented as standing with the balance, because there are always arguments on both sides. I think in this case it becomes clear we must appreciate the long history and the long reach of—it's not the law, in the sense of someone having been through the process; it is, in fact, being touched by the process. I think all of us would agree with the fact that the balance is tipped when you are standing in a line to

get on an airline and something 24 years before prevents you from doing that.

It's all the more important to understand this and respond to it in an appropriate manner when you consider the kind of communications tools that people have. When you drive your car up to the kiosk at Fort Erie, the Peace Bridge or wherever, you know that your licence plate has been checked in the computer as you are driving there, and the identification you provide is verified. How much other information is there that is really extraneous? I know of a municipality that requires a police check, and it has nothing to do with vulnerable adults or vulnerable people. We are using these indiscriminately.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to comment on the one-hour lead that the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton just shared with us. I think some of his points will resonate very well across the province. He did quote, at length, the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the John Howard Society. The John Howard Society, particularly on the issue of youth, has said that the release of non-conviction records is a "total repudiation of the presumption of innocence, a gross distortion of the right to privacy."

I think it's important, and I think he touched on this, to remember that until you lose those rights of privacy, until your rights are violated, you actually don't know how sacrosanct they are. And yet, the stories that he shared—I think it is very important to reflect on those human stories that are the truth, right? These are the lived realities of the people in the province. Inherent in the entire one-hour lead was the reality that there is a power imbalance in society, and we have a responsibility in this House to bring those voices, those marginalized voices, to this place.

The relationship between police forces and the community—in some communities, Mr. Speaker, it needs to be acknowledged that it is very tenuous. When a police officer, in the instance of street checks, as he referenced, asks for personal information—unprompted, a random ask of that information—this happened to the member from Welland, and she challenged that police officer, but she is in the position of privilege. She felt empowered to challenge that ask. When you look at youth across the province, in some communities they feel more vulnerable, and they definitely don't feel that they are speaking from a position of strength.

So I share the congratulations that the member has given the government. This legislation is needed, but let's make it as strong as we possibly can in this House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to have a brief opportunity to comment on the police records check legislation and the comments from the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton. The piece of legislation before the House will prohibit the release of non-criminal information, such as mental health records, and strictly limit the re-

lease of non-conviction information. I think we're all in agreement that that general prohibition is a good thing.

The other thing the act also does identify, though, is that there are circumstances in which there need to be vulnerable sector checks. As Minister of Education, with responsibility for schools and licensed child care, those are two of the circumstances in which, in fact, we require that employees in schools and people who work in licensed childcare centres do, in fact, require criminal record checks and in particular the vulnerable sector checks, because they are dealing with children and have responsibility for children and, by the nature of their work, have a special relationship with children and often will have that relationship in a one-on-one encounter circumstance. In that case, we do require an easy test for figuring out if you can ask for a vulnerable sector record check.

So I would just caution the member that in looking at tribunals and things like that—for example, one thing that we already run into problems with is that all the students who come into faculties of education all over the province each fall need to get a vulnerable sector check before they can go and do their practice teaching in the schools because, again, they're going to have that special relationship. We need to be careful that we don't back up the ability of those people to get their check done quickly in another context of looking at tribunals. We have to find the right balance here.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton. You have two minutes.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you for the comments. I thought they were very thoughtful. I want to acknowledge everyone who responded: the member from Sudbury, the member from York–Simcoe, my own colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo and the Minister of Education.

I'm just going to respond as quickly as I can to all the issues that were raised. I think that, absolutely, having a tribunal process or having a process that requires an application to the court would increase time and cost. It would increase time and cost in circumstances where the result of the criminal record disclosure would preclude you from the job and the opportunity anyway. So it's only in those rare circumstances where the release of information would actually generate a record that could actually preclude you from an educational opportunity or a job opportunity. That impact to your life would be a much bigger cost and a much bigger time loss. In those circumstances, it's worth it.

In cases where there isn't a need for an application, it would be where you don't have a response generated. You receive that response, there is no issue and you go on with your life. It's only when there is a response generated that you perhaps make that application to a court or tribunal. That's a suggestion.

I want to thank the member from York–Simcoe for recognizing that there are circumstances where it doesn't make sense or doesn't seem necessary to have a criminal records check.

I want to thank the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for bringing up the John Howard remark that it really is a repudiation of the presumption of innocence when we have information that's released that generates obstacles for people to pursue education or employment. It really does violate that fundamental principle.

So thank you all for your comments, and hopefully we can create a bill that protects people.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10:30 a.m.

Interjection: Recessed.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Recessed.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Gila Martow: Mr. Speaker, I want to introduce my friend Trevor Kahn. He's here from Richmond Hill, and I believe it's the first time he's been here at Queen's Park since I've been a member. Thank you for coming, Trevor.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have some big visitors with me today. This is Dr. Toth, who is the president of the OMA; Amber Anderson, who is the manager of government relations at the OMA; and Danielle Milley, who is the media relations adviser at the OMA. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I want to take a moment to congratulate the Blue Jays, as they won their sixth American League title. It's been 22 years since there has been playoff action in the city of Toronto. As an Ontarian, I just want to say congratulations and wish them well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll accept that as an introduction to the Blue Jays.

Further introductions? The member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Mr. Speaker, I just want to thank all honourable members who participated in the “Do Not Pick On Cody Welton Week” here at Queen's Park this week. Cody is quite a capable member of the PC staff here, and I appreciate the co-operation of all members. Keep up the good work; there are a few hours left to go.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm glad you introduced Cody.

Mr. Arthur Potts: I want to thank all members of the House who showed up this morning for omelettes with the Egg Farmers of Ontario. I got a nice tie out of the process; I'm wearing it proudly.

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce today, with the page from Simcoe North, Calvin Kudar, his mother, Beth Kudar; his grandmother Wendy Johnston; his aunt Mary Johnston; and another aunt, Mary Caulder.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome—an actual introduction.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's my pleasure today to introduce Jasmine Rajbhandari. She's in the gallery here. Her husband is coming in a few minutes, Kishor Rajbhandari. They are the parents of page Krishaj Rajbhandari, who's here today.

I also want to introduce my constituency office assistant: Jessica Bozzo is here today as well, for her first time to watch question period.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, I know he's been introduced already; however, he is a constituent of mine and a local family doctor, the president of the OMA, Dr. Michael Toth. Welcome.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I would like members of the Legislature to join me in welcoming Sandy and Ken Bradley, and Howard and Ingrid Sproxtton. They bid on a day at Queen's Park and a lunch with their MPP. Unfortunately for them, that's me. Thank you.

WEARING OF PINS

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

Mrs. Cristina Martins: Point of order, Mr. Speaker. I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear commemorative pins in recognition of Hispanic Heritage Month, which begins today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Davenport is seeking unanimous consent to wear pins in honour of Hispanic Heritage Month. Do we agree? Agreed.

Last call for introductions.

Mr. Michael Harris: I know that B.J. Birdy isn't allowed in our Legislature, but I do want to stand up and congratulate the Toronto Blue Jays for making the playoffs—22 years since winning the AL East division. Congrats, Jays.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If we can keep that mood in question period, I'm just going to be moving right along.

There are no further introductions. It's now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Acting Premier. The Premier has said she has answered questions a hundred times regarding the corruption and alleged bribery in the Sudbury by-election. The reality: The Premier has failed to give a direct answer to any of those hundred questions.

We will stop asking those questions when we get a direct answer.

Did the Premier give permission to Pat Sorbara or Gerry Lougheed to offer Andrew Olivier a job or appointment in exchange for stepping down as the candidate? Yes or no?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm sure the member opposite would like to correct his record. The Premier has actually answered 107 questions on this topic.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Premier has been open with the Legislature, open with the media—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Answer the question and we'll stop asking.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —open with the public about allegations related to the Sudbury by-election. She has addressed questions dozens of times in interactions with the media.

We have faith in the process—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew, second time.

Finish.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have co-operated fully. We will continue to do that.

As this is a matter before the courts, we will have no further comment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Mr. Speaker, that was just one more spin and one more no-real answer.

Gerry Lougheed Jr. said he took part in conversations with Pat Sorbara and the Premier when they discussed who the Liberal candidate in Sudbury would be. Gerry Lougheed told Andrew Olivier that Pat Sorbara was going to talk to him about appointments in exchange for stepping down. Gerry Lougheed Jr. told Andrew Olivier that the Premier wanted to talk to him.

Did the Premier give her deputy chief of staff permission to offer Mr. Olivier options if he stepped down? Yes or no? No more spin.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I must say I'm shocked that the members opposite continue to—

Interjections.

Mr. Paul Miller: Time for a citizen's arrest.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Carry on.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I'm shocked that the members opposite continue to disregard the law and the conventions of this House.

The Supreme Court, academics and even our own standing order rules make it clear that ongoing court proceedings cannot be discussed in this House. That's no spin.

What the members opposite are doing is they're playing politics with an important issue that is before the

courts, and they are disregarding the constitutional convention of this House.

I tell the Leader of the Opposition to perhaps listen to his own deputy leader when he said—

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier: The Premier has said that she will co-operate fully. You would have to assume that “co-operate fully” would mean that if subpoenaed to testify, the Premier will testify. Yet again and again, when I’ve asked that question, there has not been an answer.

You may not want to talk about the upcoming trial, but will the Premier testify? It’s hypocritical to say you’re going to co-operate but not testify.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Withdraw.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Will the Premier testify if subpoenaed?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Let me just stop, because I think the Leader of the Opposition should listen to one of his deputy leaders, the member from Leeds–Grenville. I actually agree with him—I agree with him on a lot of things—when in February he said to the government, I am assuming, “Stop interfering in an ongoing investigation and let it run its course.”

The member from Leeds–Grenville is right, and I would suggest—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds–Grenville, second time. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, you’re warned.

Carry on.

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Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I would suggest that the Leader of the Opposition listen to his caucus members as well and stop interfering in a court proceeding.

Speaker, the Premier has been open and clear and transparent to this House, to the media and to the people of this province. She has co-operated in this matter fully, and she will continue to co-operate.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Premier. Sadly, it is becoming all too common: Today, the Wynne Liberals slashed funding to physicians yet again. The government cut funding in February and again in April. Today, the Liberals have slashed another \$235 million from patient care. That’s over \$800 million cut this year alone. That means longer wait times and less access to care in Ontario.

How does the Premier explain to the single working mother forced to sit in the ER longer—all night—because she can’t get a doctor for her child? How can they justify that?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite clearly doesn’t understand what this is all about. In fact, by constraining compensation to physicians, that is allowing us to provide more care to patients across the province.

The member opposite is saying physicians should be paid more. We are saying our physicians are already the best paid in the country, and if we have more money to spend in health care, it should be spent on things like home care that people rely on.

We heard from your own caucus a request for more and better home care. That’s exactly what we’re doing. We cannot pay physicians more and make the investments that are necessary in other parts of the health care system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Acting Premier: The culture of cuts to doctors is not sustainable. With a growing and aging population, Ontario’s health care system is put under immense pressure. The decisions the Liberals make today will impact patients. That’s what this is about. It’s about patients’ access to quality, patient-focused care in Ontario. Patients deserve the type of care they have spent their life putting into the system—hard-earned tax dollars.

Can the Acting Premier explain why her government is making these cuts at a time that we absolutely can’t afford it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, this is an outrageous accusation that the member opposite is making. He simply does not understand that we are investing more in other parts of the health care system. We are improving care, and we must constrain physician compensation in order to make those investments.

There are no cuts to patient care. We have excellent doctors.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Paying doctors more does not solve the problems in our health care system. We have the highest-paid physicians in the country, many would argue in the world. If you are arguing that physicians should be paid more, then I think you have your priorities wrong.

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question again is to the Acting Premier. In this round of cuts the Liberal government is slashing funding to addiction services. We are seeing a 50% cut to addiction monitoring and testing funding. Because of these cuts, there are six addiction clinics on the chopping block in the city of Toronto alone. The next closest clinic is an hour away. The people battling addiction need these services. The risk of falling back into addiction is serious if you don’t have access to these doctors.

Mr. Speaker, where is this government’s compassion? Do the Premier and this government not recognize the need for these clinics? These are real cuts.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, again, if the member opposite thinks the solution is to pay doctors more, I think he is absolutely wrong.

We have a very strong record on health care since 2003. The number of positions has increased by over 5,600 people. We have reversed the brain drain. More doctors are now moving to Ontario than leaving Ontario. Ninety-four per cent of us have a family doctor. We've got 24,000 more nurses working.

The Leader of the Opposition stood with Stephen Harper when he slashed health care transfers. That's costing Ontario patients \$8 billion—

Interjections.

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

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Yesterday in her response to my question, the Premier said that it was always obvious that her government was going to sell off Hydro One. In fact, she pointed to the fact that New Democrats were asking questions about a possible sale as far back as 2014. Well, she's right. New Democrats were asking questions about the sell-off of Hydro One in 2014 and again in the spring of 2015, just as we are now.

On October 21, 2014, I asked the Premier a direct question about the possibility of the sell-off of Hydro One. Does the Acting Premier remember what the Premier's response was to that question?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Throughout this process, we have been very transparent. We are committed to building the infrastructure that this province sorely needs. That is a commitment. In order to meet that commitment, we do have to look at the assets that this province already holds so that we can reinvest in the kind of assets Ontario needs today.

On April 11, 2014, we publicly announced the creation of an advisory council and their work to maximize the value of Hydro One. On April 11, 2014—our own news release—we put Hydro One in the headline. The headline read: "The Ontario government has appointed a council to recommend ways to improve the efficiency and optimize the full value of Hydro One." It was in our 2014 budget—which, by the way, was introduced twice—and in our platform. The NDP used the same financial estimates that we used; they ran on it too.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, allow me to jog the Acting Premier's memory. In response to a direct question on October 24, 2014—21, rather; the 24th is my birthday—on whether the Premier should sell off Hydro One assets, the Premier said that the leader of the third party "knows that we're not selling off the assets.... She knows that we are keeping these assets in public hands." That's in the Hansard. The Premier said exactly those words. So even after the last election, the Premier was refusing to be straight up with the people of this province

about her true intentions when it comes to Hydro One. Will the Acting Premier admit that this government has never been upfront with Ontarians and commit to a full public review before the sell-off of Hydro One proceeds?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have been very upfront. I understand that it furthers their argument; the fact that it's not true is a bit of a problem. The plan was in our 2014 budget. We introduced that budget twice. It was in our platform. Let me read from our 2014 OLP platform on page 4: "Our Moving Ontario Forward plan includes a balanced and responsible approach to paying for these investments. The funds will be from dedicated sources of revenue." Asset optimization we pegged at \$3.15 billion or 10.9% of the Moving Ontario Forward plan. Hydro One was mentioned three times in our budget. In the budget, we said that our government will look at maximizing and unlocking value from assets it currently holds, including Hydro One.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: More than 170 municipalities across this province have expressed their opposition to the sell-off of Hydro One. Now Toronto city councillors are joining the chorus of voices against this sale. Municipalities are concerned because they were never consulted on the largest privatization in Ontario's history and because there was no advance warning whatsoever that the sell-off was coming. No matter how much she may say it, the Premier did not campaign on this. Will the Acting Premier admit that the Liberals have no mandate to sell off Hydro One?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's clear and I think the member opposite knows, as I've said before, that it was in our 2014 budget twice. It was in our platform. We've been up front with keeping the public informed about the work of the assets council.

Let's remember why we're doing this. We have heard from municipal leaders right across this province that they need more investments in infrastructure, and that is—

Interjections.

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

1050

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The number one request from municipalities is funding for infrastructure, whether it's natural gas expansion, whether it's light rail, whether it's rapid transit, rural or northern natural gas expansion, connecting links. The Ontario community investment fund has been a great advantage for municipalities. They want the investments. We have to pay for them somehow.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier. Gerry Loughheed Jr. is a loyal Liberal soldier. Mr. Olivier referred to him as a Liberal king-maker in Sudbury. He has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Premier and Mr. Trudeau.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sorry, but the banter between members while the question is being put is not helpful on either side.

Carry on, please.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: He has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Premier and for Mr. Trudeau.

When you talk to people in Sudbury, they know that Mr. Lougheed did the bidding of the Premier and the Liberal Party, and the taped conversations in the bribery scandal reinforce that fact. When will the Premier of this province accept responsibility for her role and the role of people in her office in this scandal, or is the plan now to simply throw Mr. Lougheed under the bus?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What the people in Sudbury are talking about—and I have to say the new member from Sudbury is in very close touch with the citizens of Sudbury. They are actually looking at the record investments that our government has made to improve the lives of the people of Ontario.

The Northern Ontario Heritage Fund: We've invested toward 954 projects in Sudbury. Throughout that process, almost 3,000 jobs were created or retained.

We've spent more than \$70 million expanding Highway 69 from Parry Sound to Sudbury. We're committed to four-laning the 152-kilometre stretch of Highway 69 south of Sudbury and the Maley Drive extension.

We have invested in a new hospital, the Sudbury Regional Hospital. Health Sciences North will receive \$275 million this year. That's an increase of 54%.

Sudbury is doing well—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier needed somebody to push Mr. Olivier aside so that the member for Sudbury could run unopposed. That somebody was Gerry Lougheed Jr., the well-known Liberal soldier. Now that Mr. Lougheed has been criminally charged, the Liberal Party can't seem to distance themselves from him fast enough. The Sudbury Star wrote yesterday that "Ultimately ... responsibility for this farce lies with [the Premier]." We agree. When will the Premier of this province accept the responsibility of her role in this scandal, as well as the role of people from her office?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I find the question quite ironic, because I'm sure the NDP sent thank-you letters to Mr. Lougheed when he gave \$500 in the 2014 election to the former MPP Joe Cimino. I'm sure the member from Nickel Belt also sent him a thank-you letter when he donated to her campaign another \$500 in the same campaign in 2014—not to mention that I'm sure the Ontario NDP sent him thank-you letters and continued to invite him to events when, in 2008, he gave them about \$600, and the list goes on and on. I think the members opposite and the leader of the third party should be very careful in disparaging members of communities when they have accepted donations from the same individual in question.

Speaker, this matter is before the courts. Let's respect that process.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The responsibility for the Sudbury bribery scandal falls squarely on the shoulders of the Premier of this province. The recording of the conversation of Mr. Lougheed and the Premier's deputy chief of staff shows that everything was being done at the bidding of the Premier of this province. The people of Sudbury know that Mr. Lougheed is just a good Liberal soldier who does what he's told by the Premier or Mr. Trudeau.

The Premier accepts no responsibility and her chief of staff continues to operate out of the Premier's office.

My question, again, is this: When will the Premier of this province accept responsibility for her role and the role of the people in her office in the Sudbury bribery scandal?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Again, Speaker, I'm sure they were not saying no to Mr. Lougheed when he was coming to NDP events in Sudbury and Nickel Belt and giving donations to Joe Cimino, to the member for Nickel Belt and to the riding association year after year. All of a sudden, now they're shocked and awed that somehow he was helping various political parties, exercising his democratic right in that process by making sure that his community was served well.

We are very proud of the kinds of investments we made in Sudbury under this government. From health care to education, millions and millions of dollars have been invested in that community so the people of Sudbury can enjoy the quality of life they deserve so much.

I respectfully ask the members opposite to—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Time to stop the smear campaign.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The deputy House leader, second time. There is a very old, ancient trick of using somebody else's mike, and I would ask him not to do that.

Wrap up, please.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I think he invented that trick, Speaker.

I respectfully ask the members opposite to respect the law and the convention of this House and not intervene in a court proceeding.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Jeff Yurek: My question is to the Acting Premier. Acting Premier, Ontarians with chronic diseases should be concerned about this government's actions today. Every day, Ontario's 28,000 doctors go to work and put patients first, many of them with chronic diseases. For doctors, it's simple: There's no job more important than the health of their patients.

But this government is attacking those very doctors and their patients with heart disease, kidney disease and diabetes as they are seeing their health care cut in order to pay for Liberal scandals. Whether it be the gas plants,

eHealth, Ornge or their failed diabetes registry, these scandals cost Ontarians billions.

You've cut over \$800 million from patients this year alone to fund your scandals. In fact, this past spring, you secretly shifted \$54 million from the federal health transfer to non-health programs.

Mr. Speaker, why is the government cutting health care services to the sickest in the province to pay for their scandals?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite knows better than to ask that question. He knows full well that government has to make choices about where their dollars go. For example, when we saw that Ontarians were paying far too much for prescription drugs, as a pharmacist, the member opposite thought we should not cut the prices of those drugs. My question to him would be, do you still believe that we should now increase the price of drugs and increase the compensation to pharmacists? I don't think so.

We have to make tough decisions. One of the tough decisions we're making is that physician compensation has an envelope. We must live within that envelope. That does not cut patient care. All it does is cut compensation to physicians so we can expand care in other parts of our system.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Speaker, I think the people at home should remember that everything this minister says equates to—she still claims that the gas plants scandal only cost \$40 million. It's all bunk, pure bunk.

Back to the Acting Premier: Your cuts to chronic disease management are not small. In fact, they don't even make sense. Studies show early detection and treatment of complications is key to reducing costs and having healthier outcomes. However, the cuts to doctors will negatively affect treatment for diabetes and heart patients. Rural and northern Ontario will especially be hit hard because specialists are scarce.

This government has cut 35% to doctors who treat heart failure and 33% to doctors who treat diabetes. Wait-lists will grow, the sick will get sicker, access to doctors will shrink and health care costs will skyrocket due to the government's imposed cuts to doctors.

Why are you trying to create a crisis in health care and why won't you return to the table with doctors and seek a solution that achieves—

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

Interjections.

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

Deputy Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, Ontarians are blessed. We have the finest doctors anywhere. We are enormously proud of the work that our physicians do, and they are paid in accordance with that. The report yesterday from CIHI demonstrated that, on average, a physician is billing \$368,000 a year, the best in the country.

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Your argument that we should increase compensation to physicians means we must take that money from somewhere else. I am not prepared—it would be irresponsible to take money out of home care, to take money out of drugs or to take money out of devices like hearing aids. That would be irresponsible.

We had a process in place that was mutually agreed upon between the OMA and government. We followed that process. We brought in our mutually-agreed-upon mediator and then a mutually-agreed-upon conciliator. The OMA didn't like the answer, but, Speaker, we had—

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

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la première ministre par intérim. Speaker, people go into medical school because they want to help people, but right now, this government is bound and determined to paint every single physician in this province as money-hungry and opportunistic, and this is wrong. The actions of this Liberal government are damaging our health care system. They are creating—

Interjections.

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

Finish, please.

M^{me} France Gélinas: The action of this government is damaging our health care system. It is creating—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If I could identify the person that said that, I would. When I stand, you get quiet. Even when I sit down.

Carry on.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Do I go? Thank you, Speaker.

The actions of this Liberal government are damaging our health care system. They are creating barriers to care for people who need it the most.

The government can see the damage they're doing to our system, yet they continue plowing right ahead. The government needs to recognize that physicians need to be compensated for the work they do, the care they provide, by working out a deal that doesn't cause further damage to our health care system.

My question is very simple: Why won't this government treat physicians with respect and negotiate?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Today is a very special day in this Legislature. I've heard the member opposite stand up and fight for better home care, for nurse practitioners, for midwives, for PSWs, and today she's standing up and arguing that we should increase compensation for a group of people who do fantastic work but who are already the highest-paid in the country and, arguably, the world. CIHI has recently come out with a report that shows that Ontario doctors are paid the highest in the country, earning \$368,000 a year on average.

There are many demands on our health care system. I will be the first to admit that. But the compensation to our physicians is not in the top 10.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today, more than 1.2 million Ontarians from across this province are speaking out against the damage the government is doing to patient care and to the health care system. But will the government listen? They've been having some problems with listening to Ontarians lately.

When the government makes unilateral decisions, it never works. They should know that by now. Negotiation is the key to progress. It's not always easy, but it's the way you get things done.

Most physicians' practices are like a small business. Like every small business, they need to follow the rules, but when the rules keep changing, small businesses find it hard to keep up. In this case, physicians may close their practices, putting more of us without access to care.

The question is simple: Will the government agree to go back to the table and negotiate?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We put a very high premium on having a strong relationship with the OMA, because it is through that work that we can really drive the quality improvements that we need to drive in this province. That's a very important relationship.

In the 2012 agreement, we set out a plan on how we would get to an agreement if in fact we couldn't reach it at the table. We negotiated for over a year. The OMA, unfortunately, rejected the offer that was fair to physicians and Ontarians, who need a sustainable health care system.

A jointly chosen conciliator, Justice Warren Winkler, looked very closely at the issue. His report is public. He recommended that the OMA come back and accept the deal. He recommended that the government continue to keep that offer on the table. That is what we have done. The OMA rejected it. We will continue to work with the OMA.

I do believe that we will have a stronger health care system when—

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

FETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER

Mrs. Cristina Martins: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. I have read a number of articles recently about fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, which is caused by the consumption of alcohol during pregnancy.

Statistics show that fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is one of the leading causes of developmental disability in children across the province, including in my own riding of Davenport. In fact, it's estimated that fetal alcohol spectrum disorder in Canada affects one in 100 live births, or 1% of the population. It can also lead to secondary and tertiary disabilities that require additional

care throughout one's life, care that can end up costing \$1.8 billion in Canada across the health care, mental health and justice systems annually.

Can the minister please update the House on the initiatives her ministry is taking to support those with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I want to thank the member from Davenport for asking a very important and timely question. I want to assure the member, through you, Speaker, that of course I'm very committed to providing the best possible start in life for our children and youth, and their development plays a very important part in that.

Through screening, assessment and support services, our parent and child development programs help children achieve their maximum potential, including those children suffering from FASD.

We have a number of government-wide programs in place to assist. For example, my ministry provides \$4.4 million to 20 aboriginal service providers and First Nations communities to deliver FASD programming to those communities.

I'm looking forward to providing more details in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I'd like to thank the minister for her answer. But we know that fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is not a developmental disability that affects just one community. It crosses all social, socio-economic and ethnic lines. While we know that there are many reasons why people drink alcohol, we also know that fetal alcohol spectrum disorder is preventable.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, has the government taken any steps to better understand the social and economic impact of fetal alcohol spectrum disorder on Ontarians?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Again, I want to thank the member for the question. My ministry has been working on this tirelessly. I'm very pleased to share with the House that my parliamentary assistant, the MPP from Durham, held 25 round table sessions across the province to engage our service providers, advocates, families, caregivers and especially those people affected directly by FASD. He listened to the challenges and what the priorities are.

Our ministry is also working with an expert group of FASD researchers and clinicians. We have conducted a number of interviews with key informants from across Canada to seek evidence to build our first-ever FASD strategy in Ontario. Of course, we're working with other ministries, including health and education.

We're committed, of course, to providing the best possible care to kids experiencing FASD. I want to again thank the member from Durham for a great job.

PROBATION SERVICES

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is to the Attorney General. Last week, we all heard of the heartbreaking

tragedy that struck the Ottawa Valley, where three women were senselessly and brutally murdered.

Basil Borutski now faces three counts of first-degree murder. Sadly, it was widely known that the accused has a history of assault and harassment convictions. In December 2014, Mr. Borutski refused to sign an order to stay away from one of his victims. This should have raised a red flag about his pattern of violence and his unwillingness to co-operate with authorities, who set those very parameters.

Can the minister tell the House just how many offenders she has released in spite of their refusal to sign their probation orders?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Mr. Speaker, I cannot answer that question.

First of all, let me offer my deepest sympathies to the victims' families. Domestic violence is something that we take very, very seriously.

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The Premier has asked us all to get together, all the ministries responsible, that have an input in this unfortunate situation, and to develop a program that will help to address this situation. We have a program—the PAR program is one of them that tries to address this situation, and it's ordered by the court. They have to follow this program. We are in the process of re-evaluating if the program is serving the causes it needs to serve.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: The Liberal government always assures Ontarians that their safety would never be jeopardized. Last year, the Liberal government cut the budget to the Victim Crisis Assistance and Referral Services, and now the Partner Assault Response Program has been cut, which the minister just referred to.

In Renfrew county, there's actually only one single probation officer who visits the area once a week. He is very overworked. The Liberal government seems far too comfortable with leaving survivors of assault in precarious and violent conditions. This government needs to take a real, hard look at what happened to those women. How can the Attorney General assure Ontarians that offenders, especially those with a history of violence, will be more closely monitored?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'll redirect the question to the minister of women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm glad that this question has been raised. Unfortunately, it was a terrible tragedy, and both the Premier's office and myself did reach out to the executive director of the sexual assault centre in Renfrew county and we thanked her for her presentation recently at our permanent Roundtable on Violence Against Women.

As I mentioned in yesterday's question period, the Ontario Women's Directorate has provided a number of significant investments to raise awareness of domestic violence and to support victims. I'll also mention today that the Ministry of Health is investing over \$1.1 million a year for the next three years in hospital-based sexual

assault and domestic violence treatment centres—very focused on counselling.

This year, we're making legislative changes to allow women to break residential leases when fleeing domestic violence, and there are other investments to follow.

BY-ELECTION IN SUDBURY

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Acting Premier. Despite the talking points from the government House leader, the Premier could deny involvement in the Sudbury scandal if she feels so strongly about it. Instead, the Premier is letting Mr. Lougheed take the fall not only for her but for her deputy chief of staff and the member for Sudbury. People in Sudbury know that Mr. Lougheed did the Liberal Party's bidding. The Acting Premier knows this as well because she was a Liberal campaign co-chair.

Will the Premier and the people in her office accept responsibility for their roles in this scandal, or will she just let the loyal soldier take the blame?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Government House leader.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Well, Speaker, I'm surprised to hear the member, the deputy leader of the NDP, mentioning Supreme Court reasoning as talking points. I'm sure the justices of the Supreme Court will really appreciate the characterization of their reasonings in the Tobias case from 1997 as talking points.

Let me restate what the Supreme Court said in that case, and I quote: "A well-known rule of parliamentary practice holds that no member of the House of Commons should comment upon any matter that is pending before the courts."

Speaker, with all due respect to the member opposite, that's not a talking point. That is a principle of law that has been affirmed by the Supreme Court of Canada, and I urge the members opposite to respect that convention.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Gerry Lougheed raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Premier and for Justin Trudeau. He met with the member for Sudbury to entice him to abandon his principles and run for the Liberal Party. Mr. Lougheed was asked to make those tough calls on behalf of the Premier. As a result, he's now facing criminal charges.

But it was clear that he was just doing what he was told. The Premier was the one who is prepared to do anything to win. The responsibility for this entire mess rests on her. Will the Premier finally accept responsibility for the actions of the people under her command?

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Clearly, Speaker, the member opposite is bitter because he didn't get a cheque from Mr. Lougheed. Mr. Cimino got a cheque from Mr. Lougheed. The member from Nickel Belt got a cheque from Mr. Lougheed. The Ontario NDP's Sudbury NDP has gotten multiple cheques from Mr. Lougheed. The federal NDP riding in Sudbury and the federal NDP MP have continued to receive cheques from Mr. Lougheed. I guess

that's why he's asking these questions. How come he didn't get a donation from Lougheed?

Speaker, these questions are politically motivated. They are interfering in a court proceeding. They should respect the convention of this House and not intervene in a matter that is before the courts.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): New question. The member from Davenport.

FIRST NATIONS

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister—

Interjection.

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

Carry on.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Last month, Premier Wynne and Minister Zimmer met with aboriginal leaders here at Queen's Park for the signing of a historic political accord. The accord provides a platform for First Nations and the province of Ontario to work together on common priorities.

I'm proud to be part of a government that is committed to working with aboriginal partners to achieve real progress towards developing improved outcomes for the First Nations people, and creating prosperous, healthy and strong communities.

The political accord marks a momentous moment for our government and its commitment towards mutual cooperation. Mr. Speaker, could the minister tell us about what the signing of this political accord means for all of Ontario?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before you start, I apologize to the member. I incorrectly identified the member from Barrie.

The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. David Zimmer: I'd like to thank the member for Barrie for that question.

Speaker, on August 24, I had the privilege of joining our Premier and newly elected Regional Chief Isadore Day for the signing of the political accord. The signing of this accord allows an opportunity for several things:

—further reconciliation between First Nations and Ontario;

—a strengthened political relationship with First Nations;

—a commitment to discussions on topics of common priority, such as resource benefits sharing and the treaty relationship; and lastly

—the creation of a foundation for self-government initiatives for First Nations.

Speaker, this accord presents a significant milestone for both parties and I am honoured to have been a part of the process. I'm looking forward to continuing our government's work with First Nations leadership to continue to cement our relationship.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: It's wonderful to hear that our government is doing such great work to build ties between the government and First Nations peoples in Ontario. I would like to thank the minister for his hard work to negotiate this accord with our First Nations partners. I offer my congratulations to the minister and Premier Wynne for working so hard to—

Interjections.

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

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: I'd like to thank the minister and the Premier for working so hard to ensure the accord came to fruition.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister please tell this House what the next steps for our government are in working with the First Nations people to build a stronger, more prosperous Ontario?

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, the signing of the political accord is but the first step in a new, renewed cooperation between the government of Ontario and our First Nations. There are many further steps to come.

The signing of the accord will help us work with First Nations to implement the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, including education and promotion of aboriginal history and culture. It will help us develop a new treaty strategy to facilitate constructive engagement on treaties, to revitalize existing treaty relationships, and promote improved social and economic outcomes for our aboriginal peoples.

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Negotiating this accord has been a positive experience. It has fostered a positive dialogue that I hope and I know will continue into our future dealings with the aboriginal leadership. I am proud of my ministry's role in this historic agreement and the Premier's leadership to committing our government to closer—

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

FEDERAL ELECTION

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Acting Premier. Apparently our Premier missed the Integrity Commissioner's warning to all MPPs about participation in the federal election and partisan use of government resources.

Being Premier is a full-time job, yet since the election she has ignored the commissioner, posing for more pictures with Justin than working on the priorities of Ontarians. While 800,000 elementary students are impacted by strike action, she's dancing with Justin. While they're suspending Peel breakfast programs, she's breaking bread with Bill Blair. While other Premiers keep their distance, this Premier blurs lines on partisan promotion.

Speaker, it's one thing to have a horse in the race; it's another to spend our resources to push it over the finish line. Can the Acting Premier tell us why the part-time Premier continues to flout the commissioner's warning and use provincial tax dollars to get her favourite candidate elected?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, let me say that our Premier is the hardest-working person I have ever had the opportunity of working with. The energy that she demonstrates—she works so hard every moment of every day. She is a phenom; I don't know how she does it.

Yes, it's quite clear that—

Interjection: Superwoman.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Superwoman: I agree. She is a superwoman.

This election is a very important election for Ontario. The current government has made it very clear that they are not interested in working with this province. It took the Premier over a year to get a meeting with the Prime Minister. One would think that the Prime Minister of Canada would be happy to talk to the Premier of Ontario any time she wanted to do so.

The federal government—

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: —has tried to—

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

Before we begin, I'd like to bring the temperature down a little bit and try to stay focused on government business. Thank you.

Mr. Michael Harris: Back to the Acting Premier: The Premier's bad habits are rubbing off on her caucus colleagues. Her members now think they can parade around, promoting their federal Liberal buddies at Ontario taxpayer funding announcements, while staff campaign on the provincial taxpayer's dime.

While the Premier is on Justin's stage, there's the Kitchener Centre MPP and the minister—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: While the Premier is on Justin's stage, there's the Kitchener Centre MPP and the Minister of Agriculture handing out Ontario government cheques in my riding as they pose for pictures, shoulder to shoulder with a local federal Liberal candidate—provincial government announcements utilizing provincial taxpayer resources to arrange and execute, and there's the federal candidate toasting with the MPPs and grant recipients.

Speaker, I've asked the Integrity Commissioner to investigate the actions of the Kitchener Centre MPP and the minister. While we wait, will they do the right thing, rein in partisan politicking and get the government back to working for the people of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, we believe it's our job to stand up for Ontarians, and that's exactly what we're doing. We need a new government. We need a new partner. We need a new kind of leadership in Ottawa. We need—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We need a partner that will work with us to build more opportunity and more security for Ontarians.

We ran in the last election on our Ontario Retirement Pension Plan. The Prime Minister and the federal finance

minister have done everything they can to prevent us from building that kind of retirement security. We want to move forward on building a pension plan, so that Ontarians can retire knowing that they have enough income—

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

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Acting Premier. It's all the way back from 2010, and Ontarians are still looking for an answer.

In 2012 your government, the Liberals, committed to a cap of executive salaries, but earlier this week Ontarians learned that the executive salaries at the provincial community care access centres went up by 27% in four years.

The week before that, we learned that most of the executives of the Pan Am Games were to receive performance bonuses that would double their salaries, for simply doing their jobs.

Speaker, the vast majority of Ontarians find this offensive.

My question is this: When will the Liberal government stop the bonanza and cap public CEO salaries?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, this is a bit rich, coming from a man who is in a party that voted against Bill 8, the broader public sector compensation, accountability and transparency act. They voted against it, and now they're not happy with our progress on it. We would have been further ahead if they had not triggered that election. Remember that election, Speaker. We had introduced the bill. We would have had that bill passed if you hadn't triggered that election.

We are moving forward. It has been proclaimed. We are doing that work now to develop those caps and those compensation frameworks within the broader public sector. That work is happening. We are doing it in a thoughtful way. We would have been further along in this exercise had you supported it in the first place.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: A bit rich? There's a whole bunch of people getting rich under your watch. Just one, for example: Do you remember the guy who used to run Hydro One? He used to get paid \$750,000. Now we find out, because we got the FOI, that this new CEO who's being hired is going to get four million bucks—talk about getting rich.

Our party is putting forward a bill today under—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I hate to do this, but—a reminder that you're talking to the Chair. Third person, please.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you, Speaker.

Again, I say that we as a party, the New Democrats, today are putting forward a private members' bill that would cap CEO salaries at two and a half times the price of what the Premier gets. That is only fair.

I want to know: Are you guys prepared to do the right thing and move on capping CEO salaries so that we can get some justice in this world and we don't have people getting rich on Liberal lands?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, there is no question that Ontarians deserve a very clear rationale as to what people are getting paid and why they are getting paid that. We believe in that. That's why we introduced legislation that accomplishes exactly that.

I look forward to speaking to the member's bill this afternoon.

I can tell you that I'm happy to report on the progress we've made since that bill, Bill 8, received royal assent. We are collecting that full compensation information from organizations right across the broader public sector. We are covering everything from sabbatical pay to bonuses to health benefits. We are capturing all compensation. We are doing our homework. We are doing this in an evidence-based, thoughtful way so that we can create reasonable compensation caps while we manage those public dollars.

I look forward to the debate this afternoon.

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Granville Anderson: My question is to the Minister of Government and Consumer Services. Last week, they updated the House on actions our government has taken to strengthen the real estate sector. This is an important priority, but buying and selling only makes up part of a homeowner's responsibility.

The houses in Durham have a lot of character and vary greatly from place to place, from suburban in northern Bowmanville to cottages on the water in Caesarea to older farm homes on lots of land up near Zephyr.

So many Durham residents are getting creative and resourceful and looking to renovate their homes through work with our many quality independent contractors. Ensuring a level of accountability in this sector is thus extremely important to Ontarians.

Can the minister please speak to our government's record in protecting consumers on home renovation projects?

Hon. David Oraziatti: While I could probably turn around and give the answer, I want everybody to hear it, so here it is.

I want to first thank the member from Durham for asking about an important consumer protection issue.

1130

Our government is committed to protecting Ontario homeowners and has a strong track record, through the Consumer Protection Act, to ensure a number of things take place:

—that Ontarians have a 10-day cooling-off period for any contracts that they enter;

—that the contractors must provide consumers with estimates on the services and stay within 10% of that initial estimate;

—Ontarians have a right to cancel a contract if services are not commenced within 30 days of the promised date; and

—that consumer agreements disclose all of the details and all mandatory provisions clearly.

Speaker, we've enforced these protections consistently. Several home renovation companies, unfortunately, have been prosecuted for violating the act. We also created the Consumer Beware List to allow Ontarians to access the histories of these organizations with unscrupulous practices.

Speaker, we continue to work to strengthen consumer protection measures in the province. I look forward to providing more information in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Granville Anderson: Thank you, Minister, for updating the House on his ministry's work in this area. Ensuring Ontarians are able to maintain and improve their homes without subjecting themselves to unscrupulous behaviour is important, and my constituents will be glad to hear that there are protections in place.

Many of the problems that necessitate renovations, however, stem from long-term issues with homes that people buy. A home in Zephyr, for instance, may be much older and have drainage concerns, or a slightly newer home in Courtice could get a crack in the foundation, so I always advise homebuyers in Durham to protect their investments by hiring a home inspector before purchasing. However, valid concerns have been raised to me about reliability in the home inspector profession. Can the minister please inform this House on how our government is adding accountability to this sector?

Hon. David Oraziatti: Thank you, again, to the member from Durham. Presently, we are working with the home inspectors as an important profession, and certainly educational, financial and legal standards are important to put in place. That's why our ministry established a panel of experts to review that particular profession.

Last year, the panel submitted its report, *A Closer Look: Qualifying Ontario's Home Inspectors*, containing 35 recommendations. Some of those included mandatory licensing for home inspectors; professional competencies and education; technical standards; a code of ethics; mandatory insurance coverage for errors and omissions and standards regarding content; and the quality of home inspector reports, contracts and disclosures, all to be improved from that report.

Public feedback was very supportive of these recommendations, and my ministry is committed to moving forward to develop a framework to help regulate this profession. I'm pleased with our government's record on listening to consumers on this issue, and we look forward to updating the House on more progress in the future.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mrs. Gila Martow: My question is to the Acting Premier. This government is trying to squeeze millions of dollars out of the city of Toronto by appealing the prop-

erty tax assessments on several provincial properties in what the Globe and Mail called a “bizarre manoeuvre.” Mr. Speaker, it’s certainly bizarre that this government is fighting its own property tax assessment system. Whether it’s Queen’s Park, Osgoode Hall or even Ontario Place, this government seems to be saying that their own system is wrong all across the city. How does this government explain fighting its own system and, if MPAC is so completely wrong in their judgment, how does the Premier then expect every other property owner in the city to accept their own property tax assessments?

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

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let’s be clear: MPAC is not a provincial crown agency and they receive no provincial funding. They’re a not-for-profit corporation funded entirely by Ontario’s municipalities and, as an independent corporation, any decisions on operational matters are made by the management and board of directors of the corporation. Throughout Ontario, any property owner can appeal an MPAC assessment to the Assessment Review Board. The process is in place to protect businesses, to protect consumers and to protect municipalities as well. Infrastructure Ontario is following through for the benefit of the taxpayers of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Gila Martow: Again to the Acting Premier: Mr. Speaker, Ontario taxpayers deserve an organized government where the right hand knows what the left hand is doing. This government is known for its money-wasting scandals and incompetence. Now they are so desperate to pay for their scandals, they’re trying to take millions away from the city of Toronto from payments as far back as 17 years.

Is the Premier trying to balance her budget at the expense of the city of Toronto by claiming mistakes and mismanagement of a property tax assessment system which is this government’s responsibility?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I think we all recognize that Infrastructure Ontario manages thousands of Ontario-government-owned properties on behalf of the people of Ontario. We recognize that we must be prudent and responsible in managing those properties for the benefit of the people of Ontario and taxpayers.

Municipalities have requested the province to facilitate a review of MPAC—and, by the way, my then parliamentary assistant, the outstanding Mr. Del Duca, did that review to the benefit of the people of Ontario in order to ensure that the process is in place to protect those interests. In an effort to be a prudent and fiscally responsible manager of these properties, they conducted an ongoing due diligence, and that’s the way it should be, Mr. Speaker.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to correct my record. I said that the salary cap would be two and a half times; it’s actually two. I’d like to correct my record.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All members are allowed to correct their record. That’s a point of order. Thank you.

The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound on a point of order.

VISITORS

Mr. Bill Walker: I’d like to welcome Patrick Jilesen, president of the Bruce County Federation of Agriculture and now newly elected director-at-large with the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, and Thea Strassen, who is visiting Canada as a student from Germany, fulfilling her required international work experience for her degree in agricultural science. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Ms. Harinder Malhi: I’d like to welcome today Rajinder Kaur, who is here all the way from India joining us. She represents a charitable organization in India called Prabh Aasra trust. Joining her are Sunny Gill, Sandy Grewal, and Sukhwinder Mann from the Sahaita organization. Thank you for joining us today.

Ms. Eleanor McMahon: I’d like to introduce Dr. James Ellison, a psychiatrist from Nottingham, England, and the cousin of my executive assistant, Steve Shapka. He is joining us at Queen’s Park today. Welcome.

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

The House recessed from 1137 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Gila Martow: I’m happy to introduce once again—he’s back for the afternoon, I guess he enjoyed the morning so much—my friend Trevor Kahn from Richmond Hill.

MEMBERS’ STATEMENTS

SUKKOT

Mrs. Gila Martow: Sukkot is a Jewish holiday that takes place five days after Yom Kippur. Historically, Sukkot commemorates the 40 years which the children of Israel spent wandering the desert, living in temporary shelters, or booths, after fleeing slavery in Egypt over 3,000 years ago. Agriculturally, it is a major harvest festival with an abundance of fresh fruit, vegetables and nuts.

Over the seven-day holiday, the Jewish people are expected to eat all their meals in a sukka. When I was a child, everybody’s sukka looked pretty much the same: plywood walls with leafy branches for the ceiling. It was the children’s job to do artwork to decorate the sukkas, which are placed in backyards all across the province and country, and around synagogues as well.

Sukkot is not just about gathering food from the harvest; it's a week-long celebration spent gathering with friends and relatives. Last night, my family and I had dinner in Rabbi Janowski's large sukka in Thornhill.

I just want to finish with a quick joke. Imagine the first Jewish President of the United States calls to invite his mother for Sukkot, but she tells him, "I don't like to travel." "Come on, Ma, it's going to be great. I'm going to send Air Force One to pick you up." "I'd really rather not." "Ma, there will be a limo to meet you at the airport." "It's really much too tiring." "Ma, we'll have lots of big-shot politicians and famous celebrities for parties at the White House sukka." "All right, I'll go." When she returns, her neighbour asks where she went for Sukkot. "To one of my son's." "The doctor?" the neighbour asks. "Nah, the other one."

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

EDUCATION

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I rise again completely dismayed at the status of our education system under the watch of the current Liberal government. There is no question that this system, under the watch of the Liberals, is in complete chaos. We only have to look at how they're treating our education workers. They won't bargain in earnest with them. They had to file a grievance, a charge of bad faith, to finally get this government to return to the table to bargain with them.

In fact, the Liberals' very own budget states that they are committed to cutting \$500 million from education by 2017. They are well on their way. They have five schools in my area—Harrow Public School, Harrow high school, General Amherst, Kingsville high school and Western Secondary School—that are on the chopping block. These are schools that are foundational in our communities. You cannot simply warehouse students in rural Ontario and expect to get the same results. These are small community schools; they are the lifeblood of these communities.

I'll tell you that the two of them that are most precious to our community are Harrow high—they've been fighting for their high school for years and years—and Western Secondary, which is the only vocational school anywhere from Windsor to Sarnia that you'll find. They have an amazing program there: industrial kitchen, shop, metalworking. This is where you're going to train those workers of tomorrow, but you're going to cut that school.

Here's a warning: You're going to have parents and community members chain themselves to the door to protect those schools.

HISPANIC HERITAGE MONTH

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I rise today to kick off the first-ever Hispanic Heritage Month in Ontario. This past May, my first bill as MPP, Bill 28, An Act to proclaim the month of October as Hispanic Heritage Month, was

passed in the Ontario Legislature. By proclaiming the month of October as Hispanic Heritage Month in Ontario, our province will recognize the rich contributions of Hispanic and Latino Canadians to our social, economic, political and multicultural fabric.

I'm very proud that Ontario is home to more than 400,000 Canadians of Hispanic and Latino origin. As early as 1914, Canadians who originated in Latin America and Spain began immigrating to the province, and today the Hispanic-Latino community is one of the fastest-growing and most diverse groups in our province. I'm truly humbled to personally represent 10,000 members of the Hispanic-Latino community in my riding of Davenport.

Whether you are a new immigrant to Ontario or a second- or third-generation Canadian, it means something to belong to a cultural community. It is important for us to be proud of our roots.

Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to urge all members to join me tonight for a reception in rooms 228 and 230 to recognize and celebrate the first Hispanic Heritage Month in Ontario, and to pass by room 212A for an exhibit showcasing art from the Hispanic and Latino community.

I'm truly grateful that I was able to make Hispanic Heritage Month a reality in Ontario. Muchas gracias.

MUSLIM COMMUNITY

Mr. Bill Walker: I'm pleased to rise today and recognize the important role the Muslim community plays in the shaping and building of the free, peaceful and pluralistic province we all have the privilege to live in. The Muslim community does amazing work to enrich our beautiful province, and I commend their continued efforts to promote cultural understanding and harmony.

I had the privilege of attending an Eid celebration in Mississauga recently, together with the leader of the official opposition, Patrick Brown, where we met with many community leaders and had an opportunity to learn more about Muslim culture and their leaders' efforts in building greater understanding and unity across our diverse communities.

I also had the privilege of attending the Canada Pakistan Business Council awards, which highlighted the positive economic impact of the efforts of a very entrepreneurial culture. This of course extends to the social and community benefits that our communities, province and country enjoy as a result of the efforts of the Muslim community.

This month we celebrate Islamic History Month in Canada, a celebration of the rich history of a civilization. Islamic History Month in Canada gives the Muslim communities throughout the country an opportunity to share the rich heritage of the Muslim world, the contributions made by Muslim scholars and inventors, and the valuable stories of Muslim people, who now make up over 25% of the Earth's population.

On behalf of Patrick Brown and the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party, I applaud the Muslim com-

munity for their great efforts and contribution to our great province and our country.

PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

Mr. Han Dong: Today, Chinese Canadians across the province celebrate the 66th National Day of the People's Republic of China. Since 1949, China has undergone tremendous transformations. Today, it is one of the world's most influential nations and drives the second-largest economy.

In 1999 the Chinese government expanded the celebrations by several days to give its citizens a seven-day vacation, which is also known as a golden week. The golden week was intended to help the tourism market, make long-distance family visits and improve the standard of living. An estimated 28 million Chinese travelled during the first National Day golden week in 1999. In 2007, this number had increased to over 120 million people.

This has a tremendous impact on countries like Canada, specifically Ontario, where a lot of Chinese families have settled. In fact, I have four friends from China touring Ontario this week.

Canada and China's strong relationship is the work of many visionary pioneers. Some 45 years ago, Pierre Elliott Trudeau led the first official visit to China. In 1985, Premier Peterson signed a friendship accord with Jiangsu province, and last year, the Premier, of course, led her delegation to China, which resulted in \$966 million in foreign investment.

Today, as a member representing Chinatown and of Chinese Canadian heritage, I would like to say happy birthday, China. I would like to invite all members of this House to join us on the south lawn for the flag raising at 4:30 p.m.

SEAN JACKSON

Mr. Tim Hudak: Sadly, Ontario's credit union system and the Niagara community at large have lost a true champion, with the recent passing of Meridian Credit Union's founding CEO, Sean Jackson. I know my colleagues here who knew Sean will join with his wife, Jo-Ann, and their daughter Kailene in mourning Sean.

I want to use a moment today to celebrate his contributions to the province, to the credit union system and to the Niagara community. He's been remembered by people who knew him and worked with him as having an incredible passion for people—it's what drove Sean's business success, his leadership style and his exemplary community work, and it's a quality in Sean that I got to know over many years as a Niagara MPP that I admired personally and saw in action.

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Described as a one-of-a-kind leader, Sean joined our credit union in 1983 and within 10 years had climbed the ladder to become its CEO. When it merged with HEPCOE Credit Union in 2005 to form Meridian, Sean

became the first Meridian CEO and saw the company through exponential growth to become Ontario's largest credit union.

Under his leadership, Meridian became one of Niagara's most generous corporate donors, supporting many community initiatives, including scholarships and partnerships with charitable organizations.

His generosity didn't end there. He led the Niagara Community Foundation as a founding director, as a leader in the Hotel Dieu hospital, past vice-chair of the United Way campaign, and worked with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Niagara.

I have one last thing. They have actually named a scholarship after Sean Jackson as well. It's a commitment to community scholarship. It will recognize, like Sean, an Ontario student who has a big heart, who gives back to the community and also excels academically. What a fantastic way to recognize Sean's legacy in the peninsula.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: I have spoken about US Steel many times in this Legislature. I've repeatedly urged government ministers to act. I've spoken at rallies in support of the workers and pensioners. I have twice introduced legislation to strengthen the province's pension protection fund.

US Steel bought Stelco back in 2007 with government assistance contingent on its promises to maintain production and jobs. It has broken those promises again and again, enabled by the federal government, and now it brazenly threatens thousands of Ontario jobs and pensions. It is a disgrace that US Steel intends to suspend all obligations to pay post-employment benefits—health, medical, dental and life insurance—in order to pad the pockets of their US parent company.

Earlier this month, it transferred many of its Canadian contracts to the US plants. Now it says its loss of contracts—which it caused—means it's too poor to meet its obligations. It wants to stop paying municipal property taxes as well. It wants to stop paying post-employment benefits—health, medical, dental and life insurance—a slap in the face to the retirees who have suffered tremendous health difficulties because of their work. These benefits are depended on by retirees like people who have spent 30 to 40 years in the industry, in many cases, giving their all to a company in a town that had always been proud of its role in the steel industry. These benefits are deferred wages negotiated through collective agreements. They're not handouts; these were negotiated over the years.

Speaker, this is a disgrace. This is also going to happen in many other situations in our country if we don't lock down this situation.

HUMBER RIVER HOSPITAL

Mr. Monte Kwinter: This morning, I had the honour and privilege to stand with Premier Wynne, Minister

Hoskins, Minister Sergio, MPP Albanese, and with Paul Allison, Dr. Rueben Devlin, Barb Collins and Don Loeb of Humber River Hospital, when I attended the official ribbon-cutting ceremony for the new Humber River Hospital, which is located in my riding of York Centre. The hospital will be fully operational as of October 18 and will service the communities located in the northwest GTA.

Humber River Hospital's redevelopment plan, which was approved by our provincial government, saw the official groundbreaking ceremony take place on December 2, 2011. Since then, 1,300 dedicated and skilled workers diligently worked each day, every day, to ensure that the hospital was completed on time and on budget.

This state-of-the-art facility is North America's first fully digital hospital and will focus on using the latest technology to treat patients more efficiently and effectively. The 1.8-million-square-foot hospital will offer greater access to high-quality acute care hospital services, have reduced wait-times, expanded emergency services and modern diagnostic equipment for better patient diagnosis and treatment. In addition, it has updated its infectious disease containment systems to monitor and prevent a broad range of infections.

As MPP for York Centre, I take great pride that this project has finally been completed because I know the immediate, enormous and positive impact it will have on the surrounding communities. The new Humber River Hospital will revolutionize how health care services are delivered in York Centre and beyond and is yet another shining example of how the Wynne government is committed to meeting and surpassing the health care needs of Ontarians.

ATTENTION DEFICIT HYPERACTIVITY DISORDER

Ms. Soo Wong: I rise today to talk about attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD, a neurobiological disorder and the most common childhood mental health condition.

October is known as ADHD Awareness Month, and I would like to raise public awareness of this lifelong mental health issue currently affecting more than one million Canadians. It is estimated that ADHD affects one to two children in every Ontario classroom and four out of every 100 employees in the province.

Recognizing the seriousness of ADHD, the Ontario government has invested almost \$900 million in mental health services since 2013. In 2014, the government provided \$440 million specifically to the children and youth mental health sector.

Across the province and in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, there are a number of individuals and organizations working tirelessly to support individuals with ADHD and their families every day. I'd like to recognize them: Heidi Bernhardt, a resident of Oak Ridges–Markham and a constituent of the Minister of Community and Social Services, Helena Jaczek, for her

work and leadership with the Centre for ADHD Awareness, Canada; and Catherine Chan and her colleagues at the Hong Fook Mental Health Association, for helping individuals overcome cultural barriers to access mental health services.

With October being ADHD Awareness Month, I encourage Ontarians to increase their awareness and share the message about ADHD.

VISITORS

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

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I apologize to the members; I have some visitors from the ADHD community who are visiting the Legislature. I'm going to welcome them and also recognize them: Heidi Bernhardt, Russ LeBlanc, Charlene Britto, Jim Parsons, Sheila Kornhauser and Pierre Seguin. Welcome to Queen's Park, and thank you for what you do every day for the ADHD community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome our visitors.

I thank all members for their statements.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mrs. Gila Martow: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Liberal government has indicated they plan on introducing a new carbon tax in 2015; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers have already been burdened with a health tax of \$300 to \$900 per person that doesn't necessarily go into health care, a \$2-billion smart meter program that failed to conserve energy, and households are paying almost \$700 more annually for unaffordable subsidies under the Green Energy Act; and

"Whereas a carbon tax scheme would increase the cost of everyday goods including gasoline and home heating; and

"Whereas the government continues to run unaffordable deficits without a plan to reduce spending while collecting \$30 billion more annually in tax revenues than 11 years ago; and

"Whereas the aforementioned points lead to the conclusion that the government is seeking justification to raise taxes to pay for their excessive spending, without accomplishing any concrete targets;

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

"To abandon the idea of introducing yet another unaffordable and ineffective tax on Ontario families and businesses."

I am pleased to sign my name and give it to page Sameer.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mrs. Lisa Gretzky: I have a petition called “Privatizing Hydro One: Another wrong choice.”

“Whereas once you privatize hydro, there’s no return; and

“We’ll lose billions in reliable annual revenues for schools and hospitals; and

“We’ll lose our biggest economic asset and control over our energy future; and

“We’ll pay higher and higher hydro bills just like what’s happened elsewhere;

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

“To stop the sale of Hydro One and make sure Ontario families benefit from owning Hydro One now and for generations to come.”

I fully support the petition and will send it to the table with page Matthew.

LUNG HEALTH

Mr. Han Dong: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children. Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

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

“To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry’s private member’s bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

I support this petition and I will put my name to it.

DENTAL CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that has to do with dental care, and it reads as follows:

“Whereas thousands of Ontarians live with pain and infection because they cannot afford dental care;

“Whereas the promised \$45-million dental fund under the Poverty Reduction Strategy excluded impoverished adults;

“Whereas the program was designed with rigid criteria so that most of the people in need do not qualify; and

“Whereas desperately needed dental care money went unspent and was diverted to other areas even though people are still suffering without access to dental care;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“To do all in its power to stop the dental fund from being diverted to support other programs; and

“To fully utilize the commissioned funding to provide dental care to those in need.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it, and Siena will bring it to the Clerks.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas there are critical transportation infrastructure needs for the province;

“Whereas giving people multiple avenues for their transportation needs takes cars off the road;

“Whereas public transit increases the quality of life for Ontarians and helps the environment;

“Whereas the constituents of Orléans and east Ottawa are in need of greater transportation infrastructure;

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

“Support the Moving Ontario Forward plan and the Ottawa LRT phase II construction, which will help address the critical transportation infrastructure needs of Orléans, east Ottawa and” our wonderful “province of Ontario.”

It gives me great pleasure to affix my signature and give it to page Jacob.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the rightful purpose of Ontario’s Environmental Protection Act (EPA) is to ‘provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.’...; and

“Whereas ‘all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.’—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

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

“That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and

other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario.”

I affix my signature and I thank you very much for the opportunity I have to present this petition to you, Mr. Speaker.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by Rose Smith from my riding in Val Caron, and it reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

STUDENT SAFETY

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

“Whereas there are no mandatory requirements for teachers and school volunteers to have completed CPR training in Ontario;

“Whereas the primary responsibility for the care and safety of students rests with each school board and its employees;

“Whereas the safety of children in elementary schools in Ontario should be paramount;

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

“To work in conjunction with all Ontario school boards to ensure that adequate CPR training is available to school employees and volunteers.”

Speaker, I agree with the petition, affix my signature and give it to page Jaleelah to bring down.

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by Mr. Mike Brady, from my riding, in Garson. It reads as follows:

“Whereas quality care for the 77,000 residents of long-term-care (LTC) homes is a priority for many Ontario families;

“Whereas over the last 10 years 50% of Ontario’s hospital-based complex continuing care beds have been

closed by the ... government” and there has been an almost 30% “increase in the acuity of LTC residents...;

“Whereas the provincial government does not provide adequate funding to ensure care and staffing levels in long-term-care homes...;

“Whereas there is extensive evidence that a care standard can result in increased staff levels, which translates into improved quality of care for patients...;

“We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario...”

To amend the “Long-Term Care Homes Act (2007) for a legislated care standard of a minimum four hours per resident each day, adjusted for acuity level and case mix....”

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

LUNG HEALTH

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas lung disease affects more than 2.4 million people in the province of Ontario, more than 570,000 of whom are children. Of the four chronic diseases responsible for 79% of deaths (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, lung disease and diabetes) lung disease is the only one without a dedicated province-wide strategy;

“In the Ontario Lung Association report, Your Lungs, Your Life, it is estimated that lung disease currently costs the Ontario taxpayers more than \$4 billion a year in direct and indirect health care costs, and this figure is estimated to rise to more than \$80 billion seven short years from now;

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

“To allow for deputations on MPP Kathryn McGarry’s private member’s bill, Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, which establishes a Lung Health Advisory Council to make recommendations to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on lung health issues and requires the minister to develop and implement an Ontario Lung Health Action Plan with respect to research, prevention, diagnosis and treatment of lung disease; and

“Once debated at committee, to expedite Bill 41, Lung Health Act, 2014, through the committee stage and back to the Legislature for third and final reading; and to immediately call for a vote on Bill 41 and to seek royal assent immediately upon its passage.”

I support this petition, affix my signature to it and hand it to page Anna.

PERSONAL SUPPORT WORKERS

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

“Whereas personal support workers are the largest group of unregulated health care workers in Canada; and

“Whereas PSWs take care of society’s most vulnerable citizens including seniors in long-term care, home

care, hospitals and retirement homes, and adults with disabilities in supportive housing; and

“Whereas there is an increasing demand for PSWs and they are a key component of a sustainable health care system; and

“Whereas PSWs do not have a set scope of practice, standards of practice or curriculum; and

“Whereas PSWs are left to perform one of the most important jobs in health care without the proper tools;

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

“To designate personal support workers as a regulated health profession and enact according legislation.”

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

1330

HOSPITAL FUNDING

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that was collected by Mr. Gary Gray in my riding, from Capreol. It reads as follows:

“Whereas Health Sciences North is facing major budget shortfalls leading to a decrease of 87,000 hours of nursing care in psychiatry, day surgery, the surgical unit, obstetrics, mental health services, oncology, critical care” and emergency...;

“Whereas Ontario’s provincial government has cut hospital funding in real dollar terms for the last eight years in a row; and

“Whereas these cuts will” lead to “higher medical accident rates as nursing and direct patient care hours are reduced all across the hospital;”

They “petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“Stop the proposed cuts to Health Sciences North and protect beds and services.

“Increase overall hospital funding in Ontario with a plan to increase funding at least to the average of other provinces.”

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

ONTARIO RETIREMENT PENSION PLAN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with the petition, sign my name and hand it to page Gabriel to bring down.

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

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

“The purpose of this petition is to institute a law allowing citizens with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) to have access to a service dog. A service dog greatly reduces the social anxieties PTSD victims suffer. This will allow every citizen the ability to enjoy the quality of life our government works hard to ensure its people have.”

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

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time for petitions has expired.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT ACT (REHABILITATIVE OR THERAPEUTIC PURPOSES EXEMPTION), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA LOCATION À USAGE D’HABITATION (EXCLUSION POUR SERVICES DE RÉADAPTATION OU SERVICES THÉRAPEUTIQUES)

Ms. Hoggarth moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 121, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 with respect to the exemption for living accommodation occupied for the purpose of receiving rehabilitative or therapeutic services / Projet de loi 121, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d’habitation à l’égard de l’exclusion applicable aux logements occupés pour y recevoir des services de réadaptation ou des services thérapeutiques.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation. I recognize the member for Barrie.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Speaker. I rise in the House today to open debate on Bill 121, which aims to improve the lives of those living on the margins of our society, on the brink between a traumatic past and a hopeful new life.

I'm going to begin with a story. Of course, the name of the person has been changed for privacy reasons.

Jennifer had her first child at 17 and cut her education short because she could not afford daycare and her family had disowned her. Her situation got steadily worse as her boyfriend became physically and emotionally abusive. Pregnant with her second child, Jennifer escaped the abuse when she was connected with the Samaritan House transition housing program.

The transition housing program allowed Samaritan House to offer Jennifer and her child one year of safety and support in a fully furnished three-bedroom apartment as they helped her rebuild her life—one year to rebuild her life, and the clock was ticking. But physical and emotional abuse had taken their toll. Jennifer used to shake at the mention of her abuser's name. She was terrified that he would find her, and it took over three months before she even felt secure enough to leave the apartment, let alone plan for the future. But with support, she started to look to her future and the future of her children.

Samaritan House helped her register to complete high school, and Jennifer completed two credits, but her second baby arrived before she could complete the final two that she needed. By this point, Jennifer had been there a year and, under the current rules, her time was up. Jennifer needed to be ready to become fully independent, but she wasn't ready.

She worked so hard while in the program, learning to identify abuse, how not to fall back into an abusive situation and how to survive on her own. She worked diligently finishing her two credits, often late at night when her children were in bed. But one year just wasn't enough time to fully recover and get on the path to better employment, so she got stuck working minimum wage jobs and depending on Ontario Works for financial security.

Jennifer had dreams of going on to college or university and wanted to work in social services. She wanted to give back and to help others in her same situation. But without a high school diploma, her options are limited, and she no longer believes that she will ever make it to post-secondary education.

Imagine what six more months or one more year of support could have done for Jennifer and her two kids, and then consider how many people confront the same impossible reality each year.

My bill would amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, so that housing transition programs can truly support women like Jennifer and all those whose circumstances in life have put them on the brink. As I noted in the introduction of the bill, the current subclause 5(k)(ii) provides that the act does not apply to certain living accommodations occupied for the purpose of receiving rehabilitative or therapeutic services if the accommodation is intended to be provided for no more than a one-year period. This bill amends this time period by extending it to three years for people living in temporary transitional housing.

Transitional housing is an intermediate step between emergency crisis shelter and permanent housing. It is meant to provide a safe, supportive environment where residents can overcome trauma, begin to address the issues that led to their homelessness or kept them homeless, and begin to rebuild their support network and their lives. These programs are offered by organizations such as Covenant House Toronto, Samaritan House in Barrie, SouthWesthealthline, Transitional House and transitional housing at Serenity House in Ottawa, just to name a few. They tell us that, sadly, Jennifer's experience is not unique. There are lots of people who aren't ready to leave transitional housing programs after just one year.

Our friends at Covenant House in Toronto and Samaritan House, which is in my riding of Barrie, are particularly interested in seeing this legislation passed. Covenant House deals primarily with youth homelessness. They operate a 28-bed transitional housing program on-site that they call Rights of Passage. Typically, about 60% of the youth graduate from this program, and average stays run roughly 200 days per youth. They are currently seeing a trend of younger youth in the program as well as more youth with mental health issues. Over the years, they have had many cases where a youth would have benefited enormously from staying in the program beyond the one year allowed through the Residential Tenancies Act. This could be for several reasons, including some of the following:

- the youth are not ready because they've not learned the skills they need to move to independent living;

- housing affordability or wait-lists mean that there is no other housing available at the time their one-year term under the Residential Tenancies Act ends;

- the youth may suffer from attachment disorders, addiction, mental health, trauma or other issues that require more time before a sustainable, independent life is even possible;

- they might be in school and cannot afford to move to independent living; or

- there are times when they are ready to move out but have a sudden emergency that makes independent living impossible or unsustainable, such as sudden unemployment or a relapse into the issues that brought them there in the first place.

1340

If we continue to allow people to leave these programs with no hope, it means we are failing them and we are failing ourselves. Over and over again, when people are forced out before they are ready, they fall back into poverty or addiction, or return to an abusive spouse. As policy-makers, we need to say that this is not right. We understand that people learn at different paces and that people understand in different ways. People heal in different ways and at different rates. We cannot say that one year is enough for everyone.

Samaritan House transitional housing provides safe housing for women and children recovering from domestic abuse or violence. It provides programming that

helps women break the cycle of violence, as well as life skills, education and job search training. The staff at these programs are incredible, and they provide as much education and empowerment as they can, over the length of the program. But as with Jennifer, it often takes a good three months for these survivors to feel safe and secure. So it takes quite a while before they can give 100% to the programs. Even then, they often have self-esteem issues: fear of simple things like making a phone call to take care of an issue, or going for job interviews. As well, the end portion of someone's stay at Samaritan House, although still working on the programs, is also heavily focused on assisting them to become stable once they leave.

In my riding of Barrie, there is a housing shortage. Believe it or not, Vancouver, Toronto and then Barrie have the highest rental costs in Canada. We need to understand what this means for vulnerable people in transition. It means that they can work as hard as possible at the program and make incredible progress, but if they don't have enough time to secure their finances before heading off on their own, we're dooming them. The difficulty of finding permanent, affordable housing once they leave is a huge issue. The worst part is that it is the lack of stability that makes the children victims of these situations too, endangering their chances for a stable future.

That is what makes transitional housing so great. It provides time with reduced rents and supports so that the people in the programs who haven't completed high school can get their last credits and get their high school diploma. After the initial settling in to living in transitional housing and the beginning of working through the offered programs, it takes time to convince them that this is something that can be accomplished while living in this housing program. Their self-esteem is lacking; they have no confidence in their abilities. By the time they decide to do this, apply to do it and then work through the courses, the year is over.

From a financial perspective, this bill would save a lot of money as well. The average monthly cost to help someone who is homeless starts with a shelter bed. It costs \$1,932 per month for someone to stay in a shelter bed. It costs \$4,333 per month for someone to stay in a provincial jail, and it costs \$10,900 per month for someone in a hospital bed, versus \$199.92 per month for social housing or \$701 per month for rent supplements.

It makes social and economic sense to pass this bill. It's good for everyone.

I want to conclude with the story of someone who did get to extend his stay in transitional housing. Let's call him Mike. At 22, Mike was at Covenant House and managed to find work in building maintenance, but it was precarious. He could not support himself after his year in the community apartment program was up, but thankfully his stay was extended. In the second year, Mike entered a trades training program and continued to work. In the second year, Mike found his path to a brighter future.

All in all, this bill would help people in my riding as well as many ridings across the province. The amazing

organizations that run these programs would be able to provide individualized support to those people who need a little more time to become high school graduates, post-secondary students, employees and full members of our society. That is the right thing to do. It's the smart thing to do.

I urge you to support this bill, and I look forward to hearing from everyone who is going to speak about it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to commend the MPP for Barrie for bringing forward this bill to try to help people who rely on transitional housing for those receiving rehabilitative and therapeutic services. We understand the importance of this housing to help people who are transitioning from homelessness, addiction and other challenges. The Canadian Mental Health Association states, "Research indicates that a stable and supported living environment is essential to maintaining the health and well-being of people with serious mental illness and is integral to their recovery."

I understand that the member's goal is to ensure that people who need these housing programs for more than a year aren't pushed out, but we need to remember that the Residential Tenancies Act is there to protect tenants. We need to be cautious that expanded exemptions might reduce the protection to the very vulnerable people we're trying to protect. The programs that the member is talking about are not the ones that are regulated by that time frame in the tenancies act. It means that the tenancies act does not apply to those establishments. Putting them in those establishments, all kinds of other restrictions fall upon them. What we're really looking for, in my opinion, and what the member is putting forward, is to provide an extension of the actual services provided in these places rather than whether it is or is not covered by the tenancies act.

If it is happening that some of them are getting pushed out, I think we all need to do more to make sure that that doesn't happen, that they have to get pushed out before they're ready. Halton has put together a report on best practices for transitional housing called More Than a Roof. This report was funded through a grant from the federal government, and it found that "transitional housing programs are more effective if there are available options in the community for permanent (affordable) housing, as well as ongoing supports through community services."

Quite frankly, this government is failing on affordable housing. The Halton report did a great job of outlining the spectrum of housing from homelessness to transitional housing to affordable housing, all the way to homeownership. This bill addresses one small aspect of transitional housing. Again, I want to commend the member for her efforts, but I hope that the government will take this and build on it to address the many housing problems we have in Ontario. Over a year ago, the government declared their goal to end homelessness, but since then, we have seen very little progress made. In fact, our housing problems are getting worse.

Last year, the Canadian Network of Women's Shelters and Transition Houses released a survey of shelters across Canada. They found that one of the things that would make things better was, "Access to safe, affordable and permanent housing options. We find that this is one of the main reasons that women end up going back to the abusive relationships time and time again."

Every year, our affordable housing wait-list seems to reach a new record high. There are currently 168,000 families waiting for affordable housing in Ontario, and the wait-lists are measured in years. If this continues, we will soon be measuring them in decades, Mr. Speaker.

On the far end of the spectrum, the cost of buying a house or a condo in Ontario continues to increase. This government continues to implement more policies such as allowing higher development charges and increasing hydro rates, which force up the cost of housing. Pricing is out of reach for more and more Ontarians, resulting in more and more people needing affordable housing. Across the entire spectrum, we need to do better, and there are things that we can do. We can look at models like Housing First, the successful model used in Medicine Hat; we can look at the city of Vancouver's plans to encourage the building of more rental housing; and we can allow housing service providers to spend their money more effectively by no longer forcing them to purchase natural gas and insurance through the Housing Services Corp.

This organization was created to save social housing providers money by negotiating bulk purchasing discounts. They were supposed to pass those savings on to the housing providers, but that isn't happening. Toronto Community Housing has boarded up a number of their units because they simply can't afford to fix them, but the TCHC's own numbers show that if they had been allowed to purchase natural gas with the city of Toronto instead of the HSC, they would have saved \$6.3 million in one year. Think of how much housing that could have provided, Mr. Speaker. Think of the difference that that \$6.3 million could have made to the families waiting for affordable housing.

And it's not just Toronto. A report from Hamilton shows that they would have saved over \$1 million if they hadn't been forced by the provincial government to purchase gas through the HSC. Just this summer, a city of Stratford report found that they would have saved \$41,000 by not purchasing gas through the HSC.

1350

As I mentioned earlier, the challenge that transitional housing providers face is that there aren't enough affordable housing options available. The system isn't working. The money going to the HSC is just part of the problem, but one that this government can easily fix and it will have a real impact.

One of the things that is disturbing is where the money is going. While 168,000 families are waiting for affordable housing, executives at the Housing Services Corp. are jetting off to Europe, California and Australia. There are even unexplained expenses from Palm Beach and

Rome. While these families are struggling to put food on the table, executives at the HSC are expensing alcohol, dinners at Canoe and fancy restaurants, and \$8 water. While these families are on a waiting list that lasts for years, executives at the HSC are putting money into questionable business ventures, including over \$1 million to a solar panel company and a company in Manchester, England, that never even existed except on paper. The people of Ontario deserve better.

Again, I want to commend the member from Barrie for her interest in helping people who need transitional housing. Let's take one more step and really solve the problem of affordable housing in Ontario.

Thank you very much for your efforts. We look forward to working with you to solve the problem.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I listened with amazement to the member from Oxford. I mean, Conservatives speaking in favour of affordable housing? The moon is rising as we speak. Was this not the party—I'm sorry; how long has Prime Minister Harper been in office where we have not had a national housing policy? Just saying, just saying. Hey, I'm a United Church minister. I believe in the road to Damascus and conversion moments, so let's acknowledge this is one of them.

I want to commend the member from Barrie. Absolutely, we, as New Democrats, will support this motion. Of course, what would we like to see? We would like to see this motion not be necessary because we would like to see affordable housing in the province of Ontario. We would like to see those—my figure is a little bit different from the member from Oxford's—170,000-plus families in Ontario waiting for affordable housing to be able to get affordable housing. We would like to see youth, in particular, those who are served by places like Covenant House—let's give a shout-out to them. They do phenomenal work and I've been cognizant of them, both as a clergyperson and also as an MPP, for decades now. They do amazing work.

Of course, she's right, absolutely right: We should not be turfing children and women out on the streets from the only housing they know. That's the reality. Would that housing be permanent? Yes, it should be permanent, absolutely. I hearken to, hey, a bill that this House passed: inclusionary zoning. I know that the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore tabled a bill on inclusionary zoning, as have I for many, many years now. We need a system whereby municipalities can dictate that developers of over, say, 50 units actually set aside some of those units for affordable housing. Then we wouldn't have this crisis that pre-empts this bill.

So, yes, we need affordable housing. We need new builds. We need inclusionary zoning. And, by the way, we need real rent control. Let me tell you that in South Parkdale, where a one-bedroom goes for over \$1,500 a month, vacancy de-control is not working. Property managers and the owners of the buildings can muscle out people, especially people without the knowledge to fight

them at the tribunal—muscle them out of their apartments and then double the rent. That’s not okay. That’s not rent control. We need real rent control.

We in the New Democratic Party have put forward that policy for years, many, many times—decades now. Yet somehow this Liberal government sees fit to side with the owners and the developers and not with the people who rent and who need housing—sad.

Getting back to the member’s bill: I just want to tell a story, because I was one of those kids. I actually left home at 15, a long, long time ago. It was not a safe home that I came from. For many of our homeless youth, that’s the reality. For many of our homeless youth, the streets are safer than home. I’m going to repeat that: The streets are safer than home. We don’t understand homelessness, especially homeless youth, unless we understand that salient detail: that the streets are safer than home.

As you walk out from this place, along College Street, Dundas Street and Queen Street, you will see homeless youth, and you will know that they’re not there on a whim. They’re not there because this is cool. They’re not there because they’re stoners. They are there because the streets are safer than home.

When you grow up in a violent home, when you grow up in a home that is unsafe, and you leave home at 15, 16, 17 or 18—back in my day, we had no place to go. We had our friends’ couches. We couch-surfed or—I often tell this story, because I think it’s a story of hope: Before I was elected here, I slept in Queen’s Park. I slept just north of this building for many, many nights in the summer, because it was warm and it was free.

I know what it is to be a homeless youth, I know what it is to leave home and I know how desperate that story can be and how desperate that life can be. Think about it. If any parents here who are listening or who are in the crowd—I know myself, because I have two 30-something children. I think of them. When I was 15 or 16, literally with nothing—you can’t work. What are you going to do, Mr. Speaker? You can’t work. You can’t go home. Where do you go? What do you do?

In my day, there was only the Fred Victor Mission, the one mission. I want to give a shout-out to them, because they have been around in the downtown centre of Toronto for decades, and they have provided such support. But even for children back then, that was no place to stay. You couldn’t stay there. That was older men. As a young woman, homeless—a kid—you didn’t stay there. You couch-surfed and you slept in the park. That’s what we did.

Now we have options. We have options like Covenant House, and those options need to be able to do their job. They need to be able to care for these children where the home life doesn’t. Again, when the streets are safer than home, where do these children go?

So yes, absolutely, I support this member’s bill. We need so much more, though, of course. We need inclusionary zoning. We need new bills. We need money into housing, both federal and provincial, and I have to say, we need a national housing strategy. We need all of the above and we need the member’s bill, because we at

least need those providers who have been providing for decades without a whole lot of support to be able to do their job, to be able to look after the children whom we as a community haven’t looked after very well in the past. We haven’t done it.

For the child that was me way back then, and for the children now, just a note: As you walk past those children and see them and think, “Oh, they are there because of drugs. They are there because of addiction. They are there because of mental health issues”—maybe, but they are also there because the streets are safer than home.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I’m pleased to stand and speak to the bill put forward by the member from Barrie. I’d like to begin by applauding the member for her work on this vital issue, and I’m thankful to have the opportunity to say a few words in support of this important bill.

Halton is one of the fastest-growing and most affluent communities in the province, and I can’t think of a better place to live, work or raise a family, but we still have too many residents who face significant difficulties in their day-to-day lives—whether it is drugs, alcohol or other addiction-related ailments, there are individuals in our region who are struggling to control their lives, and they sometimes need a helping hand to keep them on the path to recovery.

That’s why this bill is so important: It gives Ontarians facing serious challenges the help they need to get back on their feet.

1400

In Halton, ADAPT, or Alcohol, Drug and Gambling Assessment Prevention and Treatment Services, is that helping hand. For years, this dedicated and inspiring group has worked tirelessly to offer youth and adult services to individuals struggling with substance abuse. They offer treatment plans, counselling and referral assessment, as well as community support and education. They do an incredible job building up our community and making sure that our neighbours don’t fall through the cracks.

But sometimes the people who rely on ADAPT’s support need more time before they can get back on their feet. A one-year restriction on the length of time an individual can stay in this transitional support program is too limiting for the most vulnerable residents. A three-year limit will be a responsible and pragmatic approach, allowing incredible organizations like ADAPT to better serve and help their clients.

This support will help Ontario families, our economy and our province. An extended limit would help cut costs, improve efficiency and help more people turn their lives around, and that really is what it’s all about.

It’s tragic that anyone in Halton—or our province, for that matter—should have to go through life struggling with substance abuse. That’s why I’m proud that our government continues to discuss these important issues.

I believe this bill will greatly improve the lives of our most vulnerable residents. I applaud the member from Barrie.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: Bill 121, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006—of course, we will be supporting this bill. But with all the health care cuts, I was hoping for more from this Liberal government. It's a very small step from a government that has a questionable record on both social services and health care.

This, of course, is conditional on a person actually getting into housing for which they qualify. And whether or not they qualify for it, there is just a lack of housing. Unfortunately, with this bill, it just means that there will be more people waiting. We have a drastic shortage of affordable housing, and we see that everywhere. I see people in my community of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry who continually qualify for services but can't get them. They're on a waiting list.

Just a couple weeks ago, a lady from the village of Williamstown, where I live, told me that she finally got some respite help for her developmentally delayed daughter, after years of applying to all these wonderful programs advertised by this government. Go to the website and there's no shortage of programs. It's a very familiar process. They're told to apply. If they're lucky, they get on a wait-list, and they stay there until either their children get too old to qualify or the program changes and they have to reapply. It's a continuous story that we hear and a sad story, because these people need help in looking after their children, in many cases, or family members, and they are at their wits' end. There's just no help.

She was thanking me for the help she finally received, after getting some advice from the office. But it wasn't from a government program. It was from a not-for-profit we are sending them to, to get some help, because the fact is, they just don't get any help from the government programs. It was the first time she had received any help, and it's truly a sad state of affairs, but it is typical of health care in this province.

We have a Premier who sits here and complains about the federal government not doing their fair share, but we don't have to look much further than this year's budget, with the old scheme of promising one thing, doing something else and then blaming somebody else. They're so desperate for money that they actually cut \$54 million from the federal government's increase in health care spending to cover non-health care projects like their cancelled gas plants.

The Auditor General warned us just last year that this wasteful spending would start to crowd out services, and we're seeing it in a bill like this today, which really doesn't do anything other than put more people on a waiting list. So almost \$65 billion in extra income that this government's got—doubling the revenue—and all we're seeing is programs being cut and infrastructure not being placed. It's just a sign of waste that's affecting everyday people not getting the services they need.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm very pleased to join the debate. It is quite difficult to follow the comments made by my colleague the member from Parkdale–High Park. She hit every note on this and many more bang-on, and kudos to my colleague.

Also, she expressed the amazement that we all feel in this House in hearing some of the newfound priorities on the PC side. They are the defenders of public health care and social housing and social programming. This is child care. I mean, the environment—what's next? They're veritable socialists, Speaker. It's incredible. We'll sign them up, though. If they want to sign a membership card, we'll sign them up. The only thing that's different—I mean, they're defending public hydro now. The once-ardent propagators of selling it and shutting it down are now the ones who are standing in defence, apparently. So this is funny. It's funny to be a part of that in this House.

But seriously, this is an important bill. I want to commend the member for introducing it, especially given that it isn't one that you see highlighted in the media. You're not catching headlines here, and I certainly applaud you, member from Barrie, for taking this on. My hope is that your party and your caucus support it wholeheartedly and do everything that they can to move this thing along, because it is quite straightforward. We are supporting people here who need that support. We are giving them an extension on what, essentially, is a lifeline to getting themselves back on their feet, establishing their roots in their communities, and transitioning through hard times, which we know everyone is susceptible to. You can never pinpoint when you might be affected—the loss of a job, unexpected illness, tragedies in your immediate family. This is stuff that gets triggered without any warning, and these supports have to be there. They have to be not only timely, but they have to recognize that sometimes it takes more time, and this is what you are doing here with this bill.

Certainly many stakeholders in Ontario are supportive of it and, I think, have worked closely with you to develop the content of this bill. Covenant House and Samaritan House have identified clearly that one year is not long enough for a person to do all the things that it takes to get established in a new life after entering transitional housing. For many, it takes time to become well enough to focus, to find a job, to complete training, to address their health care concerns and learn new behaviours, finish school and get into suitable housing.

My colleague from Parkdale–High Park, again, hit the nail on the head in addressing or highlighting the need for affordable housing. Coming from a riding like Essex, we are a rural riding. We have small hamlets, small communities. They're wonderful. Actually, if you look at our housing costs, they are, compared to the rest of Ontario, relatively low, although there are certainly many, many people in my riding who find it challenging to find affordable housing, even given the circumstances around real estate prices.

This is a problem that successive governments—federal and provincial, Liberal and Conservative—have failed to address in any wholehearted way. It's one that

we can do, we should do and we need to do. It makes sense not only socially but economically.

Inclusionary zoning: The member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, you had a bill that was on the right track. We all knew that and we certainly were supportive of it. We'd like to see that again. We'd like to see some of the content of that bill wrapped into other measures that the government has put forward. I don't know why they're so reluctant, but it's something that is quite clearly needed in our provincial policy here.

Speaker, this is really one of those common-sense bills that we can all get around. I'd love to see it receive quick passage and I commend, again, the member from Barrie for bringing it forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's a pleasure to rise in support of this bill from my colleague the member from Barrie. The community of Barrie is indeed very lucky to have such a caring and compassionate representative.

Mr. Speaker, this bill proposes a very simple change, but a very important one. The ability for transitional housing to be allowed for people to utilize for a period of up to three years, as opposed to just one, for many people in these precarious situations will be immensely important. Transitional housing is just that. It's not meant to be a long-term solution, but as the member from Parkdale–High Park so eloquently put it, when the streets are safer than a home, it might take longer than 12 months to secure the housing, the supports, the placement for education, employment—whatever an individual needs to be able to move on to more permanent housing.

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Mr. Speaker, in my own community of Etobicoke–Lakeshore, we have a number of transitional housing facilities, some of which have this challenge about what happens after 12 months to some of the people who are living there. One facility in particular, Women's Habitat, has been around since the late 1970s or the early 1980s. It just recently underwent a major renovation and expansion of its facilities. That shelter serves women and families that are escaping domestic violence. In some cases, that 12-month period simply has not been enough. Actually, this shelter has allowed some women and some families to continue to live there beyond the 12 months, simply because the circumstances of their situations mandated that they needed to stay there to be safe.

Mr. Speaker, I also have a facility, Elisa House, run by the St. Vincent de Paul Society, in my riding, also providing transitional housing services for women, particularly women with addiction or mental health issues, or those escaping abuse.

I also have another facility, the Reconnect short-term crisis beds, for people who are in the criminal justice system and perhaps have mental health issues, and they need that transition back into society.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud this bill. It's going to help very many vulnerable people in this province. It's a simple solution that will make a big impact. I trust that all members will support it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm very happy to speak on the member from Barrie's private member's bill, Bill 121, Residential Tenancies Amendment Act. I think that in the House, opinion is not going to differ, and if you just go on the street and you ask random people anywhere, we want to help people. I think we're all here to help people, not just women who are escaping abusive relationships or abusive situations, but children, the elderly, people with disabilities, people who are struggling, and immigrants. We're seeing waves of refugees all over the world. We all want to do more.

What does it come down to? It comes down to resources. The more you help, sometimes one person, perhaps Jennifer, the girl whom the member from Barrie spoke about—perhaps if we allow Jennifer to stay an extra year, maybe there is another Jennifer who is waiting for a spot and then she has to wait longer because there aren't extra resources put in place. It really does come down to the resources.

What does that mean, "resources"? It means that we take in a certain amount of revenue. The government shouldn't operate any differently than a company or a household. We take in revenue. The revenue that we take in isn't from selling a product the way a company does. It isn't from a salary income the way a household is. It's from tax revenue and service charges and things of the like, and perhaps even selling off important government assets like Hydro One. That's where our revenue comes in. What happens with that revenue? That is for us to decide, all three parties.

I think we all agree that a lot more resources should be put into things like helping people escape and get back on their feet, especially those with children. It means focusing, making our priorities, not wasting money, Mr. Speaker. Maybe it means having those audited discussions about what our priorities are as a society here in Ontario.

Do we want to host the best Pan Am Games in the world, or maybe we just want to host decent Pan Am Games, respectable Pan Am Games, fun Pan Am Games? We're all seeing the Blue Jays. It's a lot of fun to see the Blue Jays winning. Guess what? It's not costing the taxpayers any money at all, and they're winning. I think the province is getting a lot of spirit out of it, as they did from the Pan Am Games.

But it all comes down to where we spend that money.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: It gives me pleasure to rise today on behalf of my constituents in Cambridge and North Dumfries township. So good afternoon to all, including Bev at home, who I know is watching on the television set this afternoon.

I'm here really to commend and support the member from Barrie's private members' bill, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006. One of the reasons I commend her for her work this afternoon, and why I was very excited to come and speak to the bill, has been my former work as care coordinator for CCAC, the com-

munity care access centre. I spent many years in that organization as a care coordinator for hospital—when we would often get individuals in that were homeless. They ended up in the emergency department night after night with no housing to go to. When we finally got their housing needs addressed with transitional support programs and transitional housing, we noted that their visits to the emergency department did slow down. That was a cost savings for us, but it was also better for them. As a care coordinator, I then went to the community, and I ended up with the hardest-to-serve population: the chronic complex adult population.

I wanted to tell you a little about Joe. Joe experienced chronic homelessness. When I met him, he had been in and out of hospital for the previous few weeks. He finally had a bed at the Cambridge Shelter Corp.'s The Bridges, which is one of our transitional housing programs within a bricks-and-mortar housing complex.

Joe suffered from a number of different issues. He was in his mid-fifties. It's not his real name. He suffered from alcoholism and diabetes, and because he was homeless he didn't look after it. He was a double-below-knee amputee, so he was in a wheelchair. He was a chronic smoker; he had issues with emphysema and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. In essence, he was a gentleman who also often had angry outbursts and was not always able to comply with the client code of conduct which is often posted in homeless shelters and in men's shelters, so he had been banned from a few of those things.

Very, very fortunately, he had a transitional apartment that was brought forward from the Cambridge Shelter Corp. It was a small one-bedroom apartment that he was in for a period of one year. Once he got into that housing program, then he got an awful lot of wraparound services to help start addressing some of these issues. But as the member from Barrie has pointed out, one year was not enough for this gentleman. Out he went at the end the year, and, within the first week, he was back in the emergency department, and the same cycle happened again. Fortunately, he was able to get into another transitional support service program in the same residence and he was able to then move into an apartment, where he stayed for a number of years to help address his complex needs.

What Joe points out is some of the barriers and some of the issues and why they become a hard-to-serve population. The barriers are many, but I wanted to list a few of these from my own experience as a nurse with this population: mental health and addiction issues; inability to take medication at a certain time and manage their medications; alcoholism; lack of literacy; chronic pain; post-traumatic pain syndrome; refugees and new Canadians with a language barrier who had a number of chronic health issues needed these services; and as I said, inability to comply with a client code of conduct, so they may be kicked out of some of the men's shelters.

In Joe's instance, with the transitional support program, he was able to move out of that, and it took longer than a year. Some of his wraparound services included, from Cambridge, a variety of services: literacy skills, life skills, a trustee program, individual family case plan—

these are all services that are provided from the Cambridge Shelter Corp.—housing help, job-search help, linkages to other community resources such as Cambridge Active Self Help, the Self-Help Food Bank, the John Howard Society, employment options, job skills, and early years. The list goes on.

1420

What I wanted to point out was that the issues that bring an individual to the point where he needs that support system around him means that those are the individual reasons why one year in a transitional program is not going to be adequate. They need to address so many things, develop trust with their workers and have some fairly intensive case management to be able to bring that person to the point where they can transition out of that program and into a life that they're able to create for themselves.

I put my full support behind this bill. I do believe that three years is a much more reasonable program. It saves us money in the long run, and I really appreciate the chance to speak today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? Further debate?

I now return to the member from Barrie. You have two minutes for a reply.

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: Thank you, Speaker. This bill is important to me because very easily I could have been Jennifer. I was married at 19 and had a child when I was 19. I was fortunate enough, however, to be married and also I was fortunate enough to have family, both my husband and I, who supported us. Very clearly, circumstances could have been different. Things have turned out very well, but I very easily could have been Jennifer, and that's why it's important to me.

Also, I'd like to thank the members from Oxford, Parkdale–High Park, Halton, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Essex, Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Thornhill and Cambridge for speaking on behalf of this bill. I hope you will support it. I have to say that, yes, we do know that more affordable housing is needed. It has become an issue everywhere in North America, I believe. Our government is working towards reducing waiting lists by building this province up. We hope less people will need subsidized housing.

However, I do not agree that there is an easy solution, as one speaker said. I do agree that we can work together to help alleviate this problem. Thank you for your support.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will take the vote on this item at the end of private members' public business.

CAPPING TOP PUBLIC SECTOR
SALARIES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE PLAFONNEMENT
DES HAUTS TRAITEMENTS
DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

Mr. Bisson moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 124, An Act to cap the top public sector salaries / *Projet de loi 124, Loi plafonnant les hauts traitements du secteur public.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation. The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time that I've brought this bill to the House; it's the second time. We're bringing it back for a very simple reason: that we still have the same problem.

The government says, "Oh, but you know, we brought in our bill and we moved to cap public sector salaries." But that phenomenon of public CEO salaries being extremely high and way out of whack with the rest of the salaries that they should be is still prevalent across the civil service and agencies across this province.

I was raising at question period today what happened with Hydro One. Hydro One has a CEO. That CEO was getting paid \$750,000 a year, which is quite a bit more than what our Premier is getting. She's getting \$240,000 a year. Last time I checked, she's responsible for a budget of about \$130 billion, and the CEO of Hydro One—a good man who works hard and does what he can—is responsible for an organization that's far smaller when it comes to the amount of money that it's responsible for.

Here's what has happened: The government has said, "We want to privatize 60% of Hydro." So what they did is they took away the oversight from our ability of the officers of the House to look at what's going on within this new, privatized hydro system. But thank God, we were still able to FOI through the prospectus they had at the Toronto Stock Exchange. We find out how much they are going to be paying this new CEO: four million bucks. They go from \$750,000 to \$4 million to run the same organization, and the government says, "Oh, but it's the private sector. We've got to do that to be able to attract somebody to do it." Come on. We had a person who was doing it for \$750,000—which was well paid, thank you very much—and now we're going to have somebody who is going to come over and run this corporation for four million bucks?

This is under the legislation that the minister got up about today and defended herself by saying, "If only the NDP had supported our bill, we would have been able to work on this so much faster." You would have had more people getting paid more money quicker. Thank God we held it up somewhat.

But here's the thing: In the end, it's the public's dime. The public says, "Listen, we don't have a problem with people being paid fairly." People understand that if you have somebody who works at a job and there are some skills involved, those skills are worth some dollars and you've got to pay those dollars. I don't think the public has any problem with that. I don't think anybody in this House has a problem with that. But to pay our CEOs the amount of money we're paying them now in our public institutions is way out of whack with what is happening

in other provinces across Canada. If you look at the CEO salaries compared to other provinces in Canada, a lot of CEOs in our organizations are being paid quite well.

Now, the latest round we saw is what happened with the report by the auditor of the province, who came back and said, "Hey, you know what? We privatized the CCACs. Aside from the fact that it's costing us more money"—

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Privatized the CCACs?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We privatized the CCAC system.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We did not privatize the CCACs.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, we did, under Mike Harris. You weren't here. We used to have all not-for-profits that ran the services of CCACs, and the CCACs were allowed, under the Mike Harris government, to privatize those services that used to be delivered under the—you should know that as a former Minister of Health.

But my point is, now that we've moved to this system and have been there for some 15-odd years, it costs us more money to run the CCACs. But here's the one that really gets you going: The salaries of CCAC CEOs over the last four years have gone up by 24%. Now, who do you know out there who is working at any job in this province and got a 24% increase over the last four years?

I look at the workers in your riding, my riding, in Hamilton and across this province. Let's look at the private sector. You're lucky if you get 2% per year in the private sector. You'd be lucky to get 2% on a settlement when it comes to bargaining in the private sector.

In the public sector, a lot of people have been frozen at 0%. Teachers just went in and negotiated. They had to scratch and claw with the government in order to get 1.5% over, what, two years? So how do you get off, as the CEO of a public organization such as those CCACs, turning around and getting a 24% increase when you're giving your workers zero or giving them 1% or 1.5% a year? It should be that you lead by example. If you, as the head of an organization, ask your workers to be more frugal in their demands when it comes to wages, because that's what they've been doing, well, what's good for the goose is good for the gander. They should, quite frankly, be doing the same themselves.

But it doesn't end there, Mr. Speaker. The Pan Am Games: It turns out that Pachi and his friends were doing quite well. I've got to say that it was pretty galling. We paid these people good money—all right, fair enough. They got paid a good buck in order to run the Pan Am Games, and we obviously want good people doing that; it's a world-class event, and we need to make sure that we have good people organizing those games. I don't begrudge people getting paid a fair wage to be able to do that and to be able to try to pull off running an effective Pan Am Games.

But we gave these people bonuses, just for having done their jobs, that doubled their salaries. So if you were getting 400,000 bucks, you got a bonus of 400,000 bucks just for having done your job, because you stayed until the end. My God.

1430

But here's the thing: How fair is that? How many people do I know who work for Xstrata, Placer Dome or Tembec, who even run those organizations—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): If some of you would just pay attention when the Speaker is standing, you might know what's going on in the House. There's only one person debating, but I hear two or maybe three debating each other. If we could just continue that other debate, I'd like to return to the bill.

The member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I quite appreciate the heckling that's going on in the House, so please don't interfere if you don't have to. I like it when members in this House engage and heckle me when it comes to what I have to say, because you're able to—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I don't think it's appropriate to challenge the Chair in his decision. You might have a wish, but I have a job.

Carry on.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I only wish you didn't have that job, in the sense of holding them to account when it comes to my ability to have people heckle me. It's okay. I'm just saying I don't mind the heckling, Speaker. You have to do your job, and I understand that. It's a little bit of levity there.

But the point is this: People across this province work hard. They go to work every day. They don't get paid a lot of money, and then they see somebody who is making \$4 million a year to run a public institution. They see the head of a CCAC get 27%, I think it was, on average in increases over the last four years. They see people getting performance bonuses just for doing their jobs. As I was saying before I was so rudely heckled from across the way, how many people get a performance bonus in their jobs just for showing up?

I know all kinds of people who run corporations in this province and in my riding. They don't get performance bonuses of double their salary for showing up in the morning and keeping the plant going. For doing a good job, they get to keep their job and they get to keep the jobs of all the people who are working there.

What's good for the goose is good for the gander, so we've put forward this bill as a party, under my name. It's a very simple bill that would essentially say that you're going to cap the salaries of CEOs at twice—twice, I want to make clear; I said “two and a half times” in the question today, but actually it's two times—the salary of what the Premier gets.

The logic is pretty simple. If you look at the comparators across the country, it's more in line with what's happening in other provinces. But more importantly, it's what's fair. If I'm running an organization in this province that is far smaller than the province of Ontario as far as what the government delivers—the Premier has a budget of \$130-billion-plus, and she's getting paid \$240,000 a year. It's not a heck of a lot of money in the grand scheme of things. But I think at one point you have

to have a bit of a reference, a bit of a reality check on what you pay other CEOs who run organizations in the public sector that are a lot smaller than what she's responsible for.

I'm just saying, as the bill is put forward for New Democrats, that we pegged the salary of those people at two times the salary of the Premier. I think that's ultimately fair, and I think it allows us to go out and recruit the people who we need to be able to run our institutions, and to do so in a way that is responsible to the taxpayers.

C'est important qu'on garde la confiance du public quand ça vient à l'habilité de s'assurer que ce qu'on paie nos fonctionnaires dans le—pas les fonctionnaires, mais ceux en charge de la fonction publique, qu'ils ont l'habilité d'être payés ce qu'ils sont dus; pas de question. Il n'y a personne qui va dire : « Le monde qui gère nos centres de santé communautaire, nos écoles, nos conseils scolaires et autres, ils n'ont pas le droit à un bon salaire. » C'est pareil comme n'importe qui d'autre.

Mais quand on paie quelqu'un quatre millions de dollars pour gérer une organisation telle que Hydro One, quand on paie le chef d'une université, comme on avait à Western, un million de dollars—lui, il a eu une augmentation de 500 000 \$ à un million de dollars, et il l'a fait lui-même avec les processus du CA de cette université. Ça ne se tient pas debout. On a besoin de s'assurer, pour le monde qui paie leurs taxes dans cette province et qui donne l'argent à la province, qu'on respecte ce droit qu'on a été donné de gérer le système pour eux autres et de s'assurer que l'argent que ceux-là sont payés est raisonnable.

Donc, nous autres on pense que si la première ministre de la province est payée environ 240 000 piastres par année, ça fait quasiment beaucoup de bon sens que les salaires pour ces dirigeants-là du secteur public ne soient pas plus de deux fois le salaire de la première ministre. Pourquoi? Parce que c'est raisonnable. Deuxièmement, c'est pour respecter le public à la fin de la journée.

This is all about respecting the public. People at the end pay their taxes, they work hard, and they want to know that when we go get the money from them through the various taxes they pay the province of Ontario, we're going to respect them when it comes to how we spend those dollars. Giving somebody \$1 million to run a university, giving somebody \$4 million to run Hydro One or other examples that are out there is unreasonable when it comes to what people are expecting.

Yes, we need to pay people a reasonable rate, the same way that we pay a teacher, a doctor, a municipal worker or whoever a fair wage. Nobody argues against that. But we need to make sure that the wages we pay the CEOs who run our public institutions are being paid at a reasonable rate, and we think it's very reasonable to say that that be capped at two times the salary of the Premier.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Etobicoke Centre.

I want to start with agreeing with the member from Timmins–James Bay and the NDP caucus. We share the frustration around compensation for executives in the public sector, and we absolutely believe that Ontarians need a clear rationale as to why people are paid what they're paid. We think that every dollar counts, that everybody needs to do their part, and we are as outraged as anyone at some of the examples we have seen where there isn't a clear rationale.

We agree this issue is one that needs to be addressed. We support the desire of the opposition to take a strong stand. However, we have already done it. We've already taken a strong stand when it comes to executive compensation. The member from Timmins–James Bay is right: We need to take a good, hard look at compensation. He's just two years late to the party, Speaker.

You see, we have already passed, without your support—I just want to remind you what's in Bill 8. Let's look at Bill 8 that's already passed. We're implementing Bill 8 now.

It expands the Ontario Ombudsman's role to include municipalities, school boards and publicly funded universities. The NDP voted against that.

It requires cabinet ministers, parliamentary assistants, opposition leaders and their respective staff to post expenses online, making Ontario a leader in expense reporting. The NDP voted against that.

Bill 8 requires the Speaker to post online MPP expense information for out-of-riding travel, hotel accommodations related to that travel, meals and hospitality. NDP, where were you? You voted against it.

The patient ombudsman—you voted against the patient ombudsman. You voted against expanding the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth's mandate. Bill 8 gives the government greater oversight over air ambulance providers. You voted against that.

I could go on and on about what Bill 8 does, but among those other things—

Mr. Paul Miller: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock. Point of order, the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: The minister is really drifting from what we're supposed to be dealing with.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): That's not a point of order.

Carry on, Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Maybe this will make the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek happy: Bill 8 puts hard caps on executive compensation—and you voted against it. Your bill deals only with people who are hitting that maximum of \$480,000. Our bill covers all people, all executives with compensation well below that.

The member opposite goes on about raises to CCAC CEOs. His bill does not capture that, because none of them are at twice the Premier's salary max. The bill you voted against addresses that; your bill does not.

So in honour of David Letterman, I have put together the top five reasons to vote against this bill.

Number 5: This bill—

Interjections.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock one more time.

I know the member for Timmins–James Bay and the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek would like me to allow the heckling, but I think we need to be a little civilized, so can we keep the heckling down?

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, I ask you to come to order.

Carry on, Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The number 5 reason to vote against this bill: This bill explicitly states that the cap would not apply to salaries currently being paid in the broader public private sector. If someone stays in the same job, they keep their current salary even if our review shows that they're overpaid. In contrast, our bill applies to all executives in the broader public sector, after a three-year notice period, even if they stay in the same job.

The number 4 reason to vote against this bill: There's no enforcement, no compliance—what is your plan to hold people to that cap? I think they are suggesting the honour system. Our bill includes significant compliance and enforcement measures, including requiring the organizations to repay the amount over and above what's authorized.

The number 3 reason to vote against this bill: We're taking the guesswork out by providing a clear and detailed definition of what compensation is. That way, we won't end up with these great big loopholes that are included in the bill we're discussing today.

The number 2 reason to vote against this bill: We already passed a bill.

Finally, the number 1 reason to vote against this bill: It does nothing for any executive with compensation less than \$480,000. All of the other examples that you've been talking about would not be captured in this bill. They are captured in our bill.

The third party has a good bumper sticker here, but it's bad public policy. They're looking for a quick political win.

We are taking a strong, fair, evidence-based approach by creating these frameworks. We're doing our homework. We're setting reasonable compensation caps.

I know the NDP doesn't like it when I do this, but I'm going to remind them once again: They voted against Bill 8. They forced an unnecessary election. They delayed Bill 8 implementation.

I look forward to hearing further debate in this House. I look forward to hearing what people have to say, but I certainly will stand in my place and vote no to this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 124, the Capping Top Public Sector Salaries Act.

The bill enacts the Capping Top Public Sector Salaries Act of 2015. Under the act, a public sector employee's salary shall not exceed the amount that is twice the Premier's annual salary. We've heard this. Exceptions are provided for salaries that were established before the bill comes into force, for salaries that are established under a collective agreement, and for salaries of employees prescribed by regulation for work of a scientific or technical nature.

While we have voted twice against this in the past, circumstances have changed. In light of the outrageous salaries at Hydro One and in light of the egregiousness of the Hydro One executive salaries when compared to their counterparts in Quebec, we are going to support this bill.

When we look at the exorbitant pay increases going to executives at the community care access centres, it further solidifies the case for capping the salaries.

Let's first look at the situation at Hydro One. The Liberal government's alarming compensation packages to Hydro One executives totalling \$24 million, in conjunction with the fire sale of this crown asset, is a slap in the face to average Ontario families who can't afford to pay those hydro bills or make ends meet.

According to the Toronto Star, Hydro One's chief executive, Mayo Schmidt, started work September 3 and by the end of the year will enjoy \$1.36 million in base pay, incentives and pension value. The man he succeeded, Carmine Marcello, got \$1.2 million for all of 2014.

Electricity rates are based on the costs of running Hydro One, which will now surely increase because of these exorbitant salaries, severances and gold-plated pensions. It's no wonder that Ed Clark and Premier Wynne cannot and will not confirm that electricity prices will not increase as a result of the fire sale of Hydro One, because they knew what the compensation packages were going to cost when they started this. Since the Wynne Liberals have removed independent oversight, Ontarians won't ever know if we received fair value for this asset.

It's clear, based on the fat-cat payouts for the Hydro One transition team, that Premier Wynne is not in it for Ontario any longer and is out of touch with families. She doesn't understand their daily struggles to make ends meet, including keeping the lights on. Her priorities are not those of Ontario. Premier Wynne should listen to the thousands of Ontarians who believe that this sale will increase their hydro bills and who are deeply offended when they hear of these enormous executive salaries.

Speaker, I'm going to tell you the story I've told in this Legislature before of Jennifer, a woman whom all three parties met at the pre-budget consultations in Ottawa. Jennifer sat in front of the parties and she told us that she has to turn her electricity off every morning at 6 a.m., turn it back on again at noon, turn it off at 3 p.m. in the afternoon and turn it on again at 7 p.m., so that she can have enough money to buy food. That's what has happened to the hydro system here in the province of Ontario.

It doesn't end there, Speaker. Last week, the Auditor General released her report on community care access

centres, and it was shocking, quite frankly. We learned that only 61% of CCAC dollars go to face-to-face care, while the rest is spent on administration and bureaucracy, not the 92% the government claims. That is \$900 million and five times more money diverted from direct patient care than they led us to believe. But just as offensive as that: CCACs' CEO salaries skyrocketed by 27% between 2009 and 2013. Again, it gets to the crux of this bill and what it aims to do. It aims to prevent patients from being told that they must wait to receive the care that they desperately need, with 47% of patients not being visited at home within 24 hours of being discharged from hospital, as an example. The government failed when they allowed 40% of the funding to go directly to bureaucracy, and, as the CCACs cry poor and turn away Ontario's most frail, that is unacceptable.

The government must take action now to take an approach that puts patients, not administrative waste, at the centre of decision-making. If Ontarians are concluding that this government isn't up to the job, I'd have a hard time, Speaker, arguing against them.

In conclusion, in light of the out-of-control executive salaries at Hydro One and at the CCACs, it's clear that this government can't be trusted to do the right thing, and I look forward to supporting this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's interesting, sometimes, the dialogue that you hear back and forth, because the President of the Treasury Board said, "Oh, the PCs brought in these bonuses," when this discussion was happening. Of course, the Liberals doubled down on those bonuses, and that is why we have to continue to bring motions. This is the third similar motion that we've brought to the floor of this Legislature to get public sector executive salaries under control. Then I also heard the Minister of Tourism—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Associate Minister of Long-Term Care and the Minister without Portfolio, would you both come to order?

Ms. Catherine Fife: —say, very clearly, "You know that those Pan Am executives who are making all of this money start looking for a job six months before the games start." Well, design a contract that says that you stay to the end of your contract and then you get paid. You shouldn't have to pay somebody twice their salary just to stick around to do their job. What I see very clearly from this government, and we have example after example, is that you have the inability to actually do your financial and fiduciary due diligence on contracts.

1450

The Auditor General has identified so many instances where the i's were not dotted, the t's were not crossed. She found this government was awarding contracts to winter road maintenance companies that didn't have the equipment to do the work. We found the Auditor General identified that 61% of the funding to CCACs is all that goes to the front line. The rest of it is going to a growing

number of executives. We have executives who have assistant executives, who have vice-presidents of executives in the CCACs, which is not benefiting the front-line staff who are often paying. We had to fight for a minimum of \$15 an hour for a PSW.

And then, of course, the contract with Ontera, which is just this week's scandal, really. Every week offers another example.

Infrastructure Ontario had to hire \$6.5-million worth of consultants to determine that a \$61-million company could be bought for \$6 million.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: You can't make it up.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You can't make it up, Mr. Speaker.

You can't blame us for continuing to try to hold the line on these ridiculous salaries because people in the province of Ontario have had it.

The President of the Treasury Board says we've come late to the party. Let me tell you, you have been partying on the taxpayers' dime. You are drinking red, and the people of this province are seeing red.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Yvan Baker: It's an honour to rise to join the debate on this bill. It's a particular honour to speak following the President of the Treasury Board.

When I was campaigning—and I've shared this story with some of you before—as we all do, I heard a lot of feedback from my constituents in Etobicoke Centre. The people in my community said a range of things. They certainly made it clear that they expected that we would be strong shepherds of the taxpayer dollar, that we would spend their dollars wisely, that we would be fiscally responsible.

But they also spoke about the various services that they expect from their government, things like quality health care, quality community care, quality education, post-secondary education, infrastructure and all the other things that we debate in this Legislature every single day. Taxpayers have a right to know how their dollars are spent but they also want strong services. They also want strong leadership to ensure we're providing those services that I just spoke about, that they expect and they demand from their government.

When I think about that, that's why I'm so proud to stand here today. I'll speak to the bill in a minute, but I'm proud to follow the minister because that's what I have the privilege of working with her on every single day, with her and her team. I had the privilege of working with her on Bill 8. I have the privilege of working with her every single day on thinking about how to make sure we get good value for the taxpayer dollar while also delivering strong services for Ontarians.

Now I have the privilege to rise and speak to this important issue. I want to share with you that I share, just as the minister does, the frustration around executive compensation. But to address the problem, we need to do exactly what the minister is doing right now, which was enabled by Bill 8.

Let me remind the members opposite what Bill 8 does. When we passed the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act—the act came into force in March—it allowed the government to put in place hard caps on executive salaries, including universities and colleges. The restraint applies to designated executives and office-holders who earn \$100,000 or more per year at hospitals, universities, colleges, school boards and Ontario's hydro entities.

Mr. Speaker, our government is the first in Ontario's history to legislate caps. The NDP didn't do it; the PCs didn't do it. We are the first. In fact, the NDP voted against the bill that's enabling us to do just that.

We're taking a thoughtful, evidence-based approach to controlling executive compensation. It is important that we're thoughtful and that we do our homework on this. What that means is identifying what works best in other jurisdictions so that the caps we implement are reasonable and allow us to manage public dollars responsibly while continuing to attract good talent.

I started by telling the story about my constituents, who want strong services but also want value for money. That requires a balanced approach, that's what Bill 8 enables and that's what the minister is in the midst of implementing.

Mr. Paul Miller: Five million dollars is a balanced approach?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, you are named.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Bill 8 also enables, and the minister is implementing, significant—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, if you haven't heard me, you're named.

Mr. Paul Miller was escorted from the chamber.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Continue.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Thank you, Speaker.

The plan also includes significant compliance and enforcement measures, which, for example, would require organizations to repay any amount that is above the compensation frameworks. The frameworks will be fully applicable to existing executives following a three-year transition period.

I believe the member's bill that we're debating today falls short in a number of ways. First of all, it's just an utterly blunt instrument. Secondly, it doesn't consider the sector-by-sector issues, the individual-by-individual issues, that the minister is working on to make sure that we can attract the best talent but also deliver those strong services that the people of our communities expect. It also, as the minister pointed out, applies only to those folks who are making twice the Premier's salary today, which is about \$440,000. It wouldn't touch those CCACs that he so passionately spoke about a few moments ago, and it wouldn't address a whole series of other executives in the public sector. Our bill, Bill 8, and the work that the minister is doing, touches folks with incomes of

\$100,000 or more. The bill doesn't even do what the member says it's going to do.

In addition to that, there are a few other things I want to raise. The government's legislation applies immediately to new hires, to those who have changed positions and to all executives after a three-year period. The private member's bill, in contrast, explicitly states that the cap would not apply to any salaries established before the act comes into force. In other words, it wouldn't apply to salaries currently being paid in the broader public sector. So basically, most of the folks in the broader public sector wouldn't get touched by this bill.

The government's approach to compensation control realizes that there should be mechanisms in place to ensure accountability and respect for any restraints imposed, and so we have compliance and enforcement measures, which the member doesn't have.

The member only talks about salary in his bill. There is much compensation that goes beyond salary. There are various forms of compensation. The minister is working on that. This bill does not address that.

I started by talking about the fact that the members of my community and Ontarians expect strong services and value for money. The member's bill doesn't ensure value for money and it doesn't ensure strong services; in fact, it could harm strong services. The bill doesn't do what the member claims it will do, and for that reason I stand against it and I hope we all defeat it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to join in the debate today. I want to take the few moments that I have by responding to the previous speaker because I, too, will be supporting this bill, but the reason for that is because we need this kind of fulsome discussion. That's the point of having private members' time, so that we can look at things that we might want to move on in second reading.

I think the criticisms that have been suggested are ones that demonstrate not the intent of the author of this bill to bring this back into the Legislature for more fulsome discussion. While, as my colleague a few minutes ago remarked, we have in previous times voted against this, today we will be supporting it. It comes because of the fact that we keep seeing more examples of the gap between people who have responsible senior jobs but don't earn hundreds of thousands of dollars and some who do. When you look at the growing sunshine list, the outrageous salaries at Hydro One and the increased pay of CEOs in community care access centres, this brings about the opportunity that there is a clear and important need for fiscal restraint.

1500

I'm going to speak about, first, the CCAC dollars, because the Auditor General made public her findings earlier this week. One of the things that was very disconcerting was that in her findings, she said that 61% of CCAC dollars go to face-to-face care. This means that 40% of the budget is going to administration.

This comes at a particularly sensitive time for members of the chamber because we hear the phone calls. We take the phone calls of the people who are having their services either reduced or simply eliminated. So it seems to us to be a discrepancy that we cannot support when you have increases in salary in the nature of 54% between 2009 and 2013. This just can't be justified. How can someone go from \$181,000 to \$277,000? For starters, that seems like a very generous base salary.

We have, in York region, in the Central CCAC, 43 people on the sunshine list. While we recognize that it's important that we have to set salaries to attract the highest-quality and the highest-skilled professionals, when you start looking at that argument that the government uses, you can find some interesting contrasts.

I came across, in my research, a snapshot which shows that this is anything but the case. Consider, for example, the pension CEO pay. The three top-paid pension CEOs in the world—all three, the top three—are all from Canada. Their salaries range from \$2.5 million to just over \$7 million. Yet Canadians do not enjoy the highest rates of return on our investments.

If you take that and look at the very poorly planned ORPP scheme, they are going to have to set a salary for a pension board manager. While the CEO of the CPP walks away with just over \$3 million per year, he brought in a return of 16.5%. The Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan CEO earned \$2.5 million for a 10% return on investment. These are among the highest pension salaries in the world. The highest-paid executive of the Australian Super fund earns just about \$1 million; the CEO of ABP in the Netherlands, \$800,000; and the CEO of CalPERS in the United States, just over \$400,000. I cite these as some examples to highlight the fact that multi-million dollar salaries for public sector pension employees appear to be a strictly Canadian occurrence.

To attract the best and the brightest in the business, we simply do not need such generous salaries. Of course we need to reward talent and experience; however, we must also be accountable to the taxpayers. The question that must frame any salary is: Is this appropriate?

There is a public expectation of fiscal prudence that must be respected. In this fiscal climate, where the Premier insists that the only way she can pay for her infrastructure plan is by selling Hydro One and creating an ill-advised pension, public sector compensation must be kept in check.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mr. Wayne Gates: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to the bill today, and thank you to the member from Timmins–James Bay for bringing this bill forward.

This is a very important bill for the people of Ontario. The people of Ontario need to have faith that their government is going to spend their money wisely. Right now, that isn't happening. Instead, the people of Ontario have watched their government waste billions of dollars, from the gas plants to eHealth to Ornge and now the

reckless privatization of Hydro One. This government, time and time again, has shown a staggering disregard for the people of Ontario and their hard-earned money. This bill is an important step in stopping that. Instead of spending millions of dollars in CEO salaries, we will cap them at double the Premier's salary.

In 2012, this government spent \$18 million to cover salaries that were over the cap that the member from Timmins–James Bay is putting forward today. That's \$18 million that could have been spent on so many different things in the province of Ontario. How about repairing our schools or keeping them open in Niagara-on-the-Lake and Windsor; more nurses to help seniors in an aging population; and one that's near and dear to my heart: supporting the Fort Erie Race Track?

In that same year, the finance minister, Dwight Duncan, said about his government, "It will work to bring some of the overly generous compensation packages back to reality." He went on to tell everyone that the government would move forward with the cap that is being proposed today by our member. I'm not sure why he only wanted to bring some of them back to reality and not all of them, but maybe his friends weren't happy about their pay being reduced, or maybe he was hoping to get one of those packages himself. Who knows? It doesn't really matter now, though, because clearly that didn't happen. Not that it would have surprised anyone that this government broke a promise.

Of course, that wasn't the first time this bill was brought up. I won't say—

Hon. James J. Bradley: Who writes these speeches?

Mr. Wayne Gates: Well, I'm not reading the paper—"introduced" because the government didn't even get that close to keeping their promise. No. The first time this cap was introduced was in 2010 by our own leader, the member from Hamilton Centre. She also introduced it again in 2013 after the government had broken their promise.

I say now is the time to get it done. It won't affect the contracts that are currently in place, but it will have a huge impact going forward. There are currently more—and think about this—there are currently more than 200 executives who make more than double what the Premier makes. That makes 200 ways this government can save money and help the people of Ontario in a very simple move. All they need to do is support this bill and cap public sector CEO salaries.

According to the IPO the government put out about their reckless privatization of Hydro One, the CEO of the new private company would make \$4 million a year. That is a 500% increase from the current CEO. How many in this chamber got a 500% increase in their wages? Anybody here?

This is simply ridiculous. The current CEO of Manitoba Hydro made \$463,000 in 2014. Can this government really stand there and tell the House that the difference between those two jobs is worth \$3.5 million? Somehow, I doubt they can.

This morning the government spent a lot of time telling us they couldn't afford to increase pay for the best

doctors in the world, Ontario doctors. They can't afford to do that, but they can afford a 27% increase in CEO salaries at CCACs over the last four years. Again, that's ridiculous. Yet we can't get a collective agreement at CarePartners for our nurses in Niagara. And the CCAC HNHB, in anticipation of the AG's report on CCACs, walked out 10 middle managers in one day last week. Does that tell you how top heavy they are, that they can get rid of 10 in one day?

This government has broken promise after promise and wasted billions of dollars in the fallout. It's time for them to stand up and do the right thing. It's time to cap public sector CEO salaries.

1510

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I'm pleased to join the debate, although it does feel like *déjà vu* all over again. I had the privilege to be here as a member in 2013, when our leader, Andrea Horwath, introduced a very similar motion—I think it was exactly the same—requesting that the government cap CEO salaries at twice the rate of the Premier's salary.

I listened intently to the members of the government who, in defence of their inaction on this issue, attempted to point to Bill 8 as the remedy for all things when it comes to public sector CEO salaries and the high—unacceptably high—levels of salaries we are seeing. I will remind the government that Bill 8 was born out of one of their biggest failures, the Ornge air ambulance scandal, in which they hired a guy who bilked millions of dollars from the public purse and was paying himself upwards of a million dollars for not delivering any service whatsoever. Out of their own failure, a bill was born to address what we know was rampant and continues to be within the public sector at the CEO level, and yet they have done nothing to address the issue.

It was interesting to listen to the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore. I wonder if he ever imagined himself standing in this place, as a newly elected member, in defence of massive CEO salaries at Ontario Hydro, Hydro One and St. Joe's in Hamilton. These guys are making upwards of a million and a half bucks a year, and he's standing there in defence of the President of the Treasury Board's inaction at the same time as teachers, nurses, educational assistants, public sector workers and doctors in his own community are getting the axe—absolutely being fired and being walked out of their jobs. How does he actually stand here in good conscience and defend the President of the Treasury Board? I wonder if he ever imagined that that would be a part of his job.

I say to you, Speaker, that today is an opportunity for him to stand in defence of his community. He can say, in defence of his community, "We will finally address this issue. We can do something about CEO salaries. We can make it more reasonable. We can send a signal to our communities that we have heard them loud and clear, we've heard that they understand and they know that skyrocketing CEO salaries are adding to their burden

each and every day.” It’s adding to their cost of hydro; it’s adding to the cuts in the services they see in their community.

Shame on this government if they are not hearing that message. It has been a long time coming.

We’ve tried unsuccessfully to pass a bill. It is interesting that we’re now going to have the PCs’ support on this. Even they have come to their senses, Speaker. Can you imagine? Could we please get someone on the government side to realize that we’re only asking for fairness here, and it’s based out of concern from our communities.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Timmins–James Bay for a two-minute response.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank all the members who participated in the debate—even the government members, for putting their views on the record. I just want to say to my colleagues on the government side that what you’re arguing is this, “Well, we passed a bill and there’s no longer a problem.” If that’s the case, why did the president of Western get a half-million dollar increase? Why did the Pan Am executives get a doubling of their salaries by way of bonuses they got to complete their jobs? Why is it that the new Hydro CEO went from \$750,000 a year to \$4 million a year? Clearly your bill—

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: It’s a contract.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: “It’s a contract,” she says. Some contract. Line up and get one if you can.

The point is: It has not fixed the problem. In the first part, the government says that the problem is fixed because they passed Bill 8. The fact is that this is still going on. It’s rampant, and something needs to be done.

The second argument I would make is this. I listened to the minister intently: “Well, your bill doesn’t do this, and your bill doesn’t do that.” Fine. Not a problem. Send the darned thing to committee. I’m open to amendment. If you think you can strengthen this bill by fixing parts of it that could be made better, hey, I’m all for that. That’s what the committee process is all about. So vote for the bill and send it off to committee.

For my new-found socialist friends in the Conservative caucus, I just have to say that I’m sure Leslie Frost and other people in the past of this party would be very proud of the shift to the left on the part of the Conservatives.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister without Portfolio, would you come to order, and that’s my third warning.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I only hope that you are able to tell Mr. Harper to do the same kind of thing, because the kinds of things that he has done are pretty right-wing, so I’ll take the support when I can get it. That’s good that the Conservatives have come around to our way of thinking. I think that is what’s important here: that this is not partisan left-right politics: NDP, Liberal or Conservative. This is about doing what’s right for the people back home.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will take the vote on the item at the end of private members’ bills.

MISSING PERSONS

Ms. Catherine Fife: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should, through legislation, enhance the tools available to law enforcement agencies in their search for missing persons while protecting individual rights and freedoms enshrined within the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Fife has moved private member’s notice of motion number 57. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation. The member for Kitchener–Waterloo.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Before I begin, I would like to welcome Maureen and Don Trask to the Ontario Legislature. They have been very instrumental in this entire journey, really, and have provided hundreds of petitions calling on the government to act on missing persons legislation.

As MPPs, we hold a position of privilege and a responsibility to bring the voices of our constituents—their concerns, their stories—and we are called to find solutions. This resolution calls for a legislative solution to the issue of missing persons where criminal activity is not suspected at the time that the person is reported missing. Any proposed legislation will need to strike the appropriate balance between access to key information and privacy rights, which is why the charter is named in the motion.

We have already been in conversation with the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and respective police forces. As in other provinces, we have the opportunity to craft a piece of legislation that would be inclusive of the rights of those who are vulnerable and at risk. This is possible, as other provinces have done so. It is simply a case of political will.

For those of you who are wondering, when we refer to missing persons, who we’re referring to, a missing person is someone whose whereabouts are unknown despite reasonable efforts to search for this person and whose safety and welfare may be at risk. These are parents with dementia. These are children with mental health issues. They are hikers or those seeking adventures. And yes, this is inclusive of missing aboriginal women and youth.

How did we get here? The struggles of families whose loved ones have gone missing first came to my attention through Maureen Trask and her husband Don, constituents whose son had gone missing north of Temagami. In 2011, Maureen’s son Daniel travelled north to Temagami with few supplies, and disappeared. Because no foul play was suspected, the police were not able to conduct a full investigation. When there is no evidence of criminal intent, police do not have the authority to investigate. They cannot open banking records or compel information, like

phone or text records. Many people do not know this. To quote Maureen:

“When my son Daniel went missing in 2011, I couldn’t know the barriers I would face in trying to find answers. It shocked me and other local families to learn that police have no ability to access personal information or locations of our missing adults when there is no evidence of crime.

“How can this be? How can you assume there is no crime if police can’t even get access to information? Missing persons legislation would have helped my family, and will help countless families by giving equal investigative opportunity to find answers. We found Daniel this year but too many other families are still looking, they deserve answers too. Other provinces have implemented legislation; it’s now time for Ontario. It’s the right thing to do to help find missing persons.”

1520

From 2011 until 2015, Maureen and Don had no idea what had happened to their son. Daniel’s remains were found near the town of Temiskaming Shores last spring. For years, Maureen and her husband were left wondering and, I’m sure, in a permanent state of pain. I can’t imagine, as a parent, how difficult those years were. Maureen said back in 2013, “This is not a traditional death. We can’t have a funeral or a memorial because what if” Daniel “shows up? Nobody could have described this to me. You have to live it, breathe it to understand. It’s in your skin. You’re frozen in time.”

There is precedent, though, for this House. In British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, Newfoundland and Saskatchewan, legislation on missing persons has been introduced that helps to provide families like Maureen’s with some degree of comfort. Other provinces have moved forward on this issue. They have passed missing persons legislation. It is time that we do the same.

There are 20 active missing persons cases in Waterloo region at this moment. There are almost 400 across the province of Ontario. The families of these Ontarians are still wondering and looking for assistance. They are not looking for closure. They are looking for justice.

This is an issue that affects every community across this province. There are those who go out into the wilderness like Daniel Trask, but there are also those suffering from mental illness, particularly elderly persons living with dementia and Alzheimer’s. Two hundred thousand people in the province of Ontario currently have some form of dementia. The Alzheimer Society says that over half of those people at some point will go missing. There is no foul play suspected in these cases, and so this limits the options of families to search for their loved ones. But vulnerable Ontarians need protection, and this legislation would allow families and the respective police agencies the tools to investigate.

Maureen has said that these families deserve answers. We should help them to find these answers. We should pass an Ontario missing persons act.

There are concerns, on the other side of this equation, around privacy. However, in conversations with the civil

liberties associations and John Howard societies across the country, some provinces have done a better job, to be honest, than others to address these issues. We should learn from their experience, Mr. Speaker. We’re in a unique position to benefit from other provinces’ mistakes. We could build and craft a piece of legislation which is stronger and which learns from those experiences.

The formulation of this legislation to allow police to investigate missing persons while keeping in mind the protections to individual privacy in keeping with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is possible. There are no more excuses to not move forward.

The Attorney General for BC last year stated publicly, “This legislation acknowledges that access to relevant records can sometimes mean the difference between life and death.”

With knowledge, though, comes the responsibility to act. There are many voices of support for this legislation. They first came forward in support of the petition that was introduced in this House, which I sponsored and was motivated to do so by Maureen and Don. These voices, these associations are the Canadian Mental Health Association, Community Justice Initiatives, Waterloo Region Crime Prevention Council, Friends of Temagami. The police chiefs of Ontario have endorsed in principle the concept of having additional tools to look for missing persons.

The province of Ontario, with all-party support, can and should strike the critical balance between disclosing and protecting information with the safety and welfare of vulnerable people as its paramount goal.

We can also ensure that Daniel Trask and the journey that his parents and other families have been on have not been in vain. We can prevent future pain and suffering when a family member goes missing by introducing and crafting a made-in-Ontario missing persons act which reflects what needs to happen in this province. It should be our privilege and responsibility to do so. We need more than sympathy; we need more than empathy; we need more than indifference. We are in a unique position in this House, as individual legislators, to take action and to motivate action in this regard.

It is my pleasure to bring this motion to the floor. I hope that the government, the Attorney General and the minister are listening intently. There are no more excuses not to take action on this issue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Granville Anderson: I will be sharing my time with the member from Newmarket–Aurora.

My compliments to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for bringing this motion forward. I love the debates we have in this House, but I enjoy when we can agree on something that is of benefit to all Ontarians. I am glad today to be speaking in support of this motion.

I want to thank the member for her passion on this subject as well. I know she has spoken many times on this, so I congratulate her on bringing this message to the House today.

The member for Kitchener–Waterloo has often spoken about how Alzheimer’s and dementia play a factor in missing persons and providing police with more purview to assist individuals and families in need when those afflicted tend to wander.

I am fortunate enough to represent the kind of place where younger families move to raise their kids, where you have our lovely countryside, safe neighbourhoods and our good schools while also having easy access to recreation and the sights of the city. The dynamic in our type of community is quickly shifting, and has really already shifted to now raising teenagers while also caring for elderly parents.

I also have several passionate older persons’ organizations in my riding. In the riding of Durham, about 20% of the population are seniors.

While I acknowledge that Alzheimer’s and dementia are not exclusively older persons’ concerns—recently there was a rather poignant article in Maclean’s, I believe, about a man with dementia at 38 years old—I know that care and safety for persons with Alzheimer’s and dementia is of paramount importance to many of my constituents.

I know that our regional police do an excellent job of aiding these families, but I know that wandering is a unique situation that requires a certain finesse on the part of officers. So I think expanding their powers to track down someone who wanders or really anyone who goes missing for any reason is very, very important. I simply can’t imagine the frustration and fears that go through someone who can’t find a family member, especially if it’s a child or a person under their care.

I know how much we rely on officers to know what to do and to help us, so I very much am in favour of providing these tools to law enforcement.

I know that our government is making movements on this front in determining how best to approach these new tools for law enforcement, and I know that the member from Halton is doing a wonderful job on the Alzheimer’s front. But I want to focus today on the qualifying portion of the motion, which I think is very important, and I thank the member for Kitchener–Waterloo for adding it.

The end of the motion that the member just read asks us to ensure that in providing these tools to law enforcement, we protect the individual rights and freedoms provided in the Constitution. I know there are other provinces that allow warrantless entry if a missing person is suspected in a home or personal residence, and while I trust the discretion of our law enforcement in times of crisis, I caution that this type of behaviour and these tools we provide not overextend themselves into violations of privacy and rights.

1530

Fundamentally, the freedom from unreasonable search and seizure and the right to security of the person must be weighed in our considerations so we do not create the type of surveillance state that I imagine the federal government envisions but hopefully, after October, never has the chance to implement.

So I hope that we all agree on this motion, but my suggestion is certainly to highlight the qualifying portion of this motion and to ensure that these rights, and all others, are upheld entirely.

Thank you again to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for raising this issue here in the House, and I thank her for the important way that motion was worded. I look forward to supporting this motion, and I would encourage all my colleagues to do the same.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The member for Kitchener–Conestoga.

Mr. Michael Harris: Thank you, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this important motion, brought forward by my fellow Kitchener–Waterloo colleague, to respond to the call of families in our area and indeed across Ontario to “enhance the tools available to law enforcement agencies in their search for missing persons while protecting individual rights and freedoms enshrined within the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.”

This is both a timely motion and one that is close to our hearts in the Waterloo region. Following the tragic outcome to a mother’s quest to find her son—and his father’s, who is here today; Maureen and Don Trask, thank you for coming—who disappeared in the woods of Temagami, never to return.

As you’ve heard, I speak of Maureen and Don Trask, who, after years of fruitless searching for their son that was continually hampered by a lack of provincial support resources, turned to her provincial legislators to bring her story and her call for support to Queen’s Park.

As the member from Kitchener–Waterloo has detailed, Daniel Trask was 28 years old when he disappeared. It was the discovery of his car near a camp at Ferguson Bay that led searchers and Daniel’s family to comb through the vast forested wilderness surrounding the Temagami area. The search included divers, cadaver dogs, float planes and a volunteer backwoods rescue group from Michigan. But it wasn’t until this past year that the remains of the Waterloo man who vanished into the wilds of northern Ontario were finally and sadly discovered.

In the three years in between, the lack of tools and increasing barriers that Mr. and Mrs. Trask and their family encountered as they looked for help to find their son prompted the Trask family and others to push for support through provincial government legislation.

Indeed, that’s why we’re here today discussing this important motion, and that’s why Maureen, and Lindy Smith, who also encountered difficulties in her search for a missing loved one, visited our offices to see what enhancements the province could offer those facing the unimaginable pain of searching for loved ones who have disappeared.

It was after their visit to my office that I wrote the minister, asking for the government’s response and action. As time allows, I will read a few excerpts from the November 24, 2014, letter:

“I am writing this letter to you on behalf of two mothers who met with me to express their concerns regarding the need for a missing persons act in Ontario.

“Maureen Trask and Lindy Smith, who have both experienced missing loved ones, have voiced the need for families to have access to pertinent information that will help in investigating missing person cases.

“As both Mrs. Trask and Mrs. Smith advised, police cannot access possible locations or personal information if there is no criminal activity suspected. This poses a problem for families who are missing a loved one as there is very little they can do without access to this critical information.”

The petition they have provided spells out the concerns clearly: Ontario does not have missing persons legislation; police are not able to conduct a thorough investigation upon receipt of a missing person report where criminal activity is not considered the cause; which impedes investigators in determining the status and possibly the location of missing persons; legislation exists and is effective in other provinces; and negotiating rights to safety that do not violate rights to privacy has been a challenge in establishing missing persons law.

Specifically, the families with missing loved ones have highlighted the need for investigators to gain access to records in cases where crime is not evident. If authorities could access this information, they would be better able to execute timely and sensitive investigative services leading to the discovery of missing persons.

As I noted, other provinces have already taken action by implementing missing persons acts, provinces such as Nova Scotia, Manitoba and Alberta. These provinces have been able to navigate missing persons’ information without violating people’s rights to privacy. It’s time we consider what Ontario can do to help.

I can tell you what Waterloo region has already done to help. In the wake of the Trask case, the Waterloo Regional Police Service, led by Chief Larkin and, of course, our former chief, Matt Torigian, have taken steps toward a permanent unit that specializes in solving disappearances as they change the way they handle missing person cases—a first step towards a permanent unit that specializes in solving disappearances. Last September, Waterloo region police reassigned two homicide branch investigators to solving missing person cases on a full-time basis. The pair were mandated to focus primarily on finding the missing, including children and the elderly, while another officer was assigned cases involving teenagers. Now, that’s a step, Speaker, but it’s just one solitary step in one community.

Today, we are looking to the government for province-wide responses and further steps that would help families right across Ontario. There are around 370 long-term missing-adult cases here in our province: 370 families searching for loved ones, including about 20 involving people from Waterloo region. As we’ve heard, the specific problem we’re hoping to address is that adult cases often exist in legal limbo. When there is no evidence of crime, police are blocked from getting court orders that could help solve their case.

While the motion we are discussing today is general in its call, I’m led to understand that it is the Manitoba

model of missing persons legislation that the Kitchener–Waterloo MPP is hoping can be replicated on this side of the provincial border. Thanks to forward-thinking legislators in Manitoba who identified similar concerns in searching for missing persons, officers in that province are able to use the Missing Persons Act to access store surveillance footage and phone records, as well as Internet and banking information, to track down missing people. Similar to the Ontario experience, previous to the Missing Persons Act, officers couldn’t access this type of information unless there was evidence that a crime had been committed. That’s why this Manitoba legislation allows the police to get specific information about a missing person when criminal activity is not suspected at the time the person is reported missing.

In addition to the information that police can obtain under the act I mentioned a minute ago, the Manitoba legislation allows for a whole new realm of information and different types of court orders that give them the authority to get information, including a search that allows police to enter a dwelling or other premises to search for missing minors or vulnerable persons, and a record access order giving the police access to records that may help them find that missing person.

In emergency situations, situations in which the police believe a missing person may be at imminent risk of serious bodily harm or death, police can make a written demand directly to any person for access to and copies of certain specific records that are in the custody or under the control of that person. It’s hoped that the emergency demand gives the police immediate access to certain records that could help them find the missing person before that person is harmed. The types of information that can be demanded under a record access order can also include global positioning system tracking records, inbound and outbound text messages, information about travel or accommodation, employment information, and personal health and school attendance information.

1540

Speaker, we do understand the inherent privacy issues, given the nature of the information being requested. It’s for that reason that in the Manitoba example, safeguards are in place to ensure a high level of privacy. Limits have been placed on the length of time the police can keep the information in their files. Internal access to the files must also be limited to those persons directly involved with the investigation. Personal information and personal health information obtained under the act must be protected and securely disposed of in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act and the Personal Health Information Protection Act. The act also requires police forces to give annual reports on how they use the information.

Again, it is this type of legislation that today’s motion is speaking to, to enhance the tools available to law enforcement agencies while protecting individual rights and freedoms enshrined within the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Given the heartbreaking stories that families with missing loved ones are forced to live

through, there is no doubt that Ontario needs to do more to ensure that law enforcement agencies have the proper tools to search for missing persons.

While the Trasks and families across Ontario who have faced barriers in their search for loved ones are calling on the province to help, it's well past time that we act to answer their call. Again, I commend the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for bringing this motion forward, and I would ask all of you to support this motion today and support the call of so many who have waited too long for this province to act.

Speaker, I would like to take the last minute to thank Maureen and Don, not only for coming to the Legislature today to hear the debate, but for their work. Obviously, you struggled for some time, worrying about where your son was. But when you met with me in my office, I know that you had concerns for other families that have had to go through a similar horrific experience. I thank you for putting the time in. Far too often, people are obviously concerned with their loved ones, and when they come to a conclusion or an end, that's it. I commend you, again, for taking the time, putting signatures to petitions and bringing them to us as members of the Legislature.

I thank the member for Kitchener–Waterloo for taking this up. It's important. I hope we can pass this today, and I hope the government will take it back and act upon it, so that memories such as your son's and the horrific instances until his discovery won't be faced by families in the future. Thank you for coming today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Speaker, it is my honour to rise today, on behalf of the residents of London–Fanshawe, and speak to my colleague's motion on missing persons legislation. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo is truly a very compassionate person to bring the tragedy that occurred with the Trask family here and show that she is really a strong advocate and really cares about what she does and the people she represents.

Unfortunately, Speaker, this issue is sometimes a reality for too many Ontarians. When a friend, neighbour or a family member goes missing, it is a huge loss for a community and for their loved ones. In fact, just a week ago in my hometown of London, a young woman did go missing. With little information about where she had been or who last saw her, people were really worried. Fortunately, she was found just a couple of days ago. It happens, unfortunately, too often for our liking.

Speaker, there are many cases where children go missing, as we're talking about today—loved ones and children—and some of them are found. Some of them are not found, and those are not conclusions that we ever want to face. In cases where there is no foul play, there are a series of barriers for the police and the family to help. There are barriers that face police and family, and they can't really move forward and help to locate that person.

My colleague from Kitchener–Waterloo is putting forward this motion after a young man in her riding who went missing in 2011. Maureen Trask, her mom and her dad are here today, and their 20-year-old son. They did an extensive search, as we're talking about. I can't imagine feeling how that would play out in your life, not knowing where your child is and not having the tools to actually look for them. It was four years later when they found Daniel's remains through a group of volunteers, and I thank those volunteers for keeping the hope alive to look for Daniel.

Regrettably, it's not an uncommon event, as we talked about, here in the province of Ontario. Today in Canada there are over 1,200 missing and murdered indigenous women, and that's something that has been a very important topic that's come to light. The federal government has said that it's not a priority for them, and I'm glad we're making this a priority here by bringing this motion forward in Ontario. Other provinces have legislation, and we should implement this.

This motion is calling on the government to enhance the tools available to law enforcement agencies in searching for missing persons while protecting the individual rights and freedoms enshrined within the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Other jurisdictions have recently introduced missing persons legislation. We've named those provinces, and I'd like to see Ontario be part of that list. I hope we can have support for this motion in the House in honour of the parents being here today—Mr. and Mrs. Trask—and show that Ontario is going to be a province that's going to lead missing persons legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Chris Ballard: It's a real privilege to be able to stand in the House today to talk about this motion, and I do thank the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for bringing it forward. I know it was brought forward on a very compassionate basis, and it's a motion that I support and that I know we support.

As you know, our government's most important priority is to ensure the safety and security of every Ontarian. There are too many people in our communities across the province who know the pain caused when a loved one goes missing. That's why all of us in this House today must make it a priority to ensure that members of our communities, our neighbours, our friends, our family members—that anyone who goes missing is safely returned.

We support the motion put forward by the member for Kitchener–Waterloo to enhance the tools available to law enforcement agencies in their search for missing persons while protecting individual rights and freedoms enshrined within the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Presently, missing persons legislation, as we've heard, exists in Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta to assist police officers in locating missing persons. The legislation in those provinces authorizes members of a

police service or any other person to enter, by force if necessary, a private dwelling or other place if there is a reasonable belief that the missing person may be located there.

I think it's important that as we consider this motion, we also look at how legislation has been implemented in those jurisdictions to see how they have worked to bring missing persons home safely while ensuring that citizens' charter rights are protected. The history of implementation in other jurisdictions will inform what tools we could provide to law enforcement agencies to bring missing persons home safely, and how they have successfully been applied elsewhere.

I want to emphasize and to highlight that our government did not wait for this motion to be tabled before taking up this very important issue. We're already exploring various ways of ensuring that missing persons are returned to their loved ones safely while respecting the privacy rights of Ontarians.

I know the member from Kitchener–Waterloo has previously mentioned that those who most often go missing are the most vulnerable members of our society, such as those who suffer from dementia. Just to insert a personal story here that really drives home the point to focus on returning the most vulnerable safely home: It was a summer ago, amidst one of the biggest heat waves Ontario had seen. I was out cutting my grass, and an elderly gentleman came striding down the street, well dressed, with a sweater on. He looked like he knew where he was going, but he looked a little clouded. We had a conversation, and while I distracted him with a cup of water and more conversation, my wife phoned the police. It turned out he was 12 kilometres from his house. He was a man suffering, perhaps, from the early stages of dementia. When his daughter came to pick him up, the relief on her face spoke volumes. We had a fairly well-organized police force that tracked people with dementia, so we were able to return that gentleman to his loved ones fairly quickly. I can only imagine the stress that the daughter and her family were going through for the few hours that her dad was out wandering in the heat, worried that he may never return.

1550

We're working closely with our partners to ensure that those who suffer from dementia are able to find their way home, as I mentioned.

Mr. Speaker, in 2013 our government launched the Finding Your Way wandering prevention program, in partnership with the Alzheimer Society of Ontario and police. This program offers resources, including a safety kit with an identification form for the individual with dementia, on how people with dementia, their families and their communities can recognize and reduce the risk of wandering, while supporting a quick and safe return should a wandering incident occur.

We're also working on a strategy for those who suffer with dementia, obviously. Last month, the member for Halton began participating in round tables hosted by the local Alzheimer Society chapters and LHINs, with

stakeholders, to inform them and be informed on the development of the first comprehensive dementia strategy. These consultations will have exposure to all regions of the province, including northern, francophone, aboriginal, rural and urban. This is the first phase of consultations, and more are expected late this year. The goal of these consultations will be to consolidate recommendations and feedback to use as the framework for further development of the strategy. One part of the strategy will be to increase dementia education and awareness, to ensure quality, coordinated care for patients with dementia and support early diagnosis and treatment. It's critical that we work to prevent those who suffer from dementia from losing their way, and to help them return home if they do.

I'll simply finish by reiterating once again that I can only imagine, as a parent, the pain that people can suffer and that our guests here today suffer when a loved one does go missing, and their desire to have the tools in place to make sure that their loved one can be found in a timely manner. Anyone who has a toddler who has disappeared for 30 seconds knows the terror that can fill your heart when you look for them. I can only imagine, as a parent, what it's like to go months, if not years, wondering where your loved one has gone.

I'll leave it there, Mr. Speaker. I thank the member again for introducing this, and I look forward to supporting it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always a pleasure to stand in my place on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin.

I want to give a great big shout-out to my colleague the member from Kitchener–Waterloo for bringing her motion 57 for missing persons legislation. I also want to say hi to Don and Maureen; I have a little gift for you after.

I think my colleague brought a very detailed background. We heard from numerous speakers here earlier as to why this motion was introduced and as to why we absolutely need this tool for families in this province.

I am the father of two boys, Roch and Matthieu. I love them. They keep me young. They're growing big. They are getting heavy, but I'm not going to give up on that wrestling. I will always stand up and hold my own with them.

I can just imagine the hopelessness and frustration that they were feeling at that time.

We heard earlier, as well, that there are 307 missing persons cases across the province right now. We know of close to 1,200 missing and murdered aboriginal women across this province, and we seem not to be getting anywhere closer to finding out what happened with them.

It's through my research and talking to some of my community members that I actually came across this this afternoon, and I thought it would be very fitting for both you and Don, Maureen. I want to read it to you. It's a

poem that I found. It's entitled *I Walk Between Worlds*. It starts:

I walk between worlds
plumbing depths of oceans, skimming surfaces of delight
embracing my darkness ... and equally, ... my light

I walk between worlds ... experienced and beginner's
mind
—knowing and naivety ... growing up before my time
—love and human depravity

I walk between worlds ...
the childhood war zone; all the lost lives
—lucky to be alive ...
ever peaceful world of spirit calling me home
—so my soul can again freely roam

I walk between worlds ...
small limited human self in this narrow level of
being ...
vast infinite spirit dancing in the unseen

I walk between worlds ... of First Nations, Métis & white
... government definitions disregard my human right

I walk between worlds ... meaningless labels, definitions
—I will not defend
... My Creator knows who I am ... and I'm at peace ...
in the end

I was sitting in my office earlier wondering what I was going to say, and when I came across this, it came as something that I would think a family member is trying to offer to those who are frustrated, who are knocking on doors, and those doors are not being opened for them or those tools are not available to them.

We all have an opportunity here today to provide the family, to provide many across this province, with a tool. It's not a magic wand, but it is a tool that would be helpful to families. We all have this opportunity here today. We can bring a change. We can help a family, a family like the Trasks.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy to add a few minutes to this debate. The motion reads: "That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should, through legislation, enhance the tools available to law enforcement agencies..." I want to talk briefly about one tool that is extremely important in finding missing persons in northern Ontario, and this is the OPP search-and-rescue helicopter. I know that, today, we want to focus on giving the OPP and the police new tools, but there are existing tools that are being taken away from the people of northern Ontario, and that's wrong.

We can see the goodwill in this House today, that everybody understands that if one of our loved ones goes missing, we should do everything we can to try to find

them. But if you live in northern Ontario—and the family knows that well; they lost their son in northern Ontario—then the resources are not going to be there because the government has decided that both search-and-rescue helicopters should be located in southern Ontario, where there are more people. What does that mean for us in northern Ontario? What does that mean for the visitors who come to our beautiful bush and forests? That means an hour delay.

Right now, hunting season is about to start. Harvesting season is in full blast. I can tell you that my riding will be full with hunters, gatherers, boaters, you name it—soon, snowmobilers. Yet this precious tool that used to be located at the Sudbury airport is being moved to Orillia. That means that, for all of those hunters—and make no mistake, Speaker: A lot of those older gentleman who have started a little bit of dementia still want to be out with the boys and go hunting. A lot of these elderly women who have started a little bit of confusion and dementia or Alzheimer's want to go gathering with the women like they've done all their lives. And they are at risk.

1600

Every single year, the OPP search-and-rescue helicopter in Sudbury saved lives. Why? Because they could get there quickly. Right now, by 7 o'clock in northern Ontario, it is pitch dark. Really, a helicopter can't do anything for us till the next morning. But had this helicopter been dispatched from Sudbury, maybe it would have gotten to that person in time. Frost has already started in northern Ontario. Sleeping in the bush when it's zero degrees and you're 90 years old or you're frail? We know what that means. That means a death sentence to those people.

I, too, will support the motion that has been put forward. I do want the authorities to have all of the tools at their disposal to find missing people. But I am really upset that the OPP helicopter is being moved away. When I asked back in April, "When are you going to do this?" I was told, "Oh, we will review this decision." Since then, I haven't been able to find the terms of reference of this review, I haven't been able to find a single person working on this review and I haven't been able to find when this review will be completed.

You know what, Speaker? I don't think there is a review. I think we have lost this tool and that this hunting season that is coming up may be deadly.

I don't want what happened to this family to be repeated. Unfortunately, we make one step forward with the member from Kitchener–Waterloo's motion and many, many steps back with the loss of the OPP helicopter to serve the people of the northeast. I hope everybody supports this motion, but I also hope you realize that, taking one step forward and four steps back, you're still going backward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. You have two minutes.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I think this debate has been a long time coming to this House. I appreciate the feedback

from the members from Durham, London–Fanshawe, Newmarket–Aurora, Algoma–Manitoulin and Nickel Belt. I know that the member from Kitchener–Conestoga has shared in this journey with me as a fellow member of the Legislature. Of course, he spoke passionately about this issue as well.

Going forward is the key piece. The government has expressed support for this motion, and inherently in that motion is the principle that we need legislation on missing persons. So I'm encouraged by that.

I'm a little worried, though, when I hear language like, "We're going to explore some more options, we're going to consolidate our findings and we're going to develop a framework to find a strategy." There are good frameworks already in place. The other provinces have moved forward with this legislation. So we don't have to start at ground zero here. The template is there. Manitoba has a very good template to work from.

Going forward, we're going to continue to involve stakeholders to review legislation, including the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the policing community, and missing persons activists. I want to thank the former chief, Matt Torigian, and our current chief, Bryan Larkin, for their support in this and for giving me feedback on this motion.

The fact of the matter is that these families are not looking for closure—because when you lose a child, that door is never closed; part of you will never be at peace. But they deserve justice; that is what they want. We have that opportunity to give that, and we hold this position of privilege and this responsibility to do so.

I look forward to the government's support but, more importantly, I look forward to action on missing persons legislation in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES
AMENDMENT ACT (REHABILITATIVE
OR THERAPEUTIC PURPOSES
EXEMPTION), 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR LA LOCATION
À USAGE D'HABITATION (EXCLUSION
POUR SERVICES DE RÉADAPTATION
OU SERVICES THÉRAPEUTIQUES)

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 67, standing in the name of Ms. Hoggarth.

Ms. Hoggarth has moved second reading of Bill 121, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 with respect to the exemption for living accommodation occupied for the purpose of receiving rehabilitative or therapeutic services.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to—the member?

Ms. Ann Hoggarth: To the social policy committee, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that it be referred to the social policy committee. Agreed? Agreed.

CAPPING TOP PUBLIC SECTOR
SALARIES ACT, 2015
LOI DE 2015 SUR LE PLAFONNEMENT
DES HAUTS TRAITEMENTS
DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Bisson has moved second reading of Bill 124, An Act to cap the top public sector salaries. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will deal with this item after I'm finished with private members' business, and we'll go to the vote.

MISSING PERSONS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Ms. Fife has moved private members' notice of motion number 57. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, Speaker, there were noes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I did not hear the noes.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Speaker, that's more than once you've done that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): You've got to shout. I didn't hear it. Sorry.

CAPPING TOP PUBLIC SECTOR
SALARIES ACT, 2015
LOI DE 2015 SUR LE PLAFONNEMENT
DES HAUTS TRAITEMENTS
DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1606 to 1611.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Can all members please take their seats?

Mr. Bisson has moved second reading of Bill 124, An Act to cap the top public sector salaries. All those in

favour please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Gates, Wayne	McDonell, Jim
Arnott, Ted	Gélinas, France	Munro, Julia
Bailey, Robert	Gretzky, Lisa	Natyshak, Taras
Bisson, Gilles	Hatfield, Percy	Tabuns, Peter
Fedeli, Victor	Horwath, Andrea	Taylor, Monique
Fife, Catherine	MacLaren, Jack	Vanthof, John
Forster, Cindy	Mantha, Michael	
French, Jennifer K.	Martow, Gila	

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Dickson, Joe	Martins, Cristina
Anderson, Granville	Dong, Han	Matthews, Deborah
Baker, Yvan	Duguid, Brad	McGarry, Kathryn
Ballard, Chris	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Milczyn, Peter Z.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hoggarth, Ann	Murray, Glen R.
Bradley, James J.	Hoskins, Eric	Naidoo-Harris, Indira
Chan, Michael	Hudak, Tim	Potts, Arthur
Colle, Mike	Hunter, Mitzie	Qaadri, Shafiq
Coteau, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Damerla, Dipika	MacCharles, Tracy	Wong, Soo
Delaney, Bob	Malhi, Harinder	Zimmer, David
Dhillon, Vic	Mangat, Amrit	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 22; the nays are 35.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negated.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRENGTHENING AND IMPROVING GOVERNMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LE RENFORCEMENT ET L'AMÉLIORATION DE LA GESTION PUBLIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 17, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various Acts / Projet de loi 85, Loi visant à renforcer et à améliorer la gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant diverses lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I need to know who's standing. I see too many of you.

The member for Eglinton–Lawrence.

Mr. Mike Colle: It's wonderful to make a comment on Bill 85, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. It is an act that strengthens many parts of our

government. As you know, this is a multi-billion dollar public entity that does everything from pay for police officers and nurses to dealing with 400 municipalities and hundreds of hospitals. So, from time to time, there have to be adjustments in legislation to bring these important bodies into present-day form.

That's what this act is about: everyday operation of this government to ensure that people have good, safe workplaces, and to ensure that our cities have good, clean drinking water and good sewage systems, which we forget about. I know that in Willowdale they're very concerned about the sewage system, because of all the condos that are going up there. I get a lot of calls from people in Willowdale who say, "Are you sure we've got enough sewer capacity in our city? Is the province funding enough sewers for Willowdale as they build all these condos?"

This is the type of important legislation that we're dealing with this afternoon, to ensure that everything from the City of Toronto Act, which governs 2.6 million people—I know that Scarborough was once a very small place, but it is now part of the megalopolis, the megacity. Some of us rue the day that that happened, but anyway, the City of Toronto Act deals with everybody, including all the wonderful people in Scarborough and all the wonderful people in Eglinton–Lawrence.

Anyway, this is what this act is about: strengthening government. Government doesn't run by itself. We have to keep fine-tuning it and investing in it to make sure it works for the people of this wonderful province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I think it's important that the government is moving to streamline, look over and do their homework, and to ensure that everything is up to date. As the member from Eglinton–Lawrence just said, we are developing and raising density, so we have to look at everything from sewage to water and how things are run.

We also have to look at new technology. The government has to ensure that everything is as up to date as it possibly can be, in terms of maximizing our use of technology, making things more efficient and making things more transparent. We often hear from this government that they want to provide more transparency. Well, the technology is out there; it's very easy to do. Too often, people say they shouldn't have to file for freedom of information, and that information should be online and easily accessible.

We just heard about a family that was looking for a loved one, and they weren't able to access any personal information because there was no criminal investigation open at that time. We almost have to have a list of what we can do in case of emergencies, because emergencies do happen—people go missing; people get hurt—but we also can have natural disasters. I think we have to look at all our government rules, regulations and legislation, and ensure that everything is set up so that, in case of emergencies and disasters, we are able to deal with problems as efficiently as we can.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for London–Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm happy to rise today, on behalf of the residents of London–Fanshawe whom I represent.

This bill basically addresses seven schedules, and they've named it Bill 85, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. There are going to be some things in here, obviously, that we're going to be critiquing, and one of the parts of the bill that we think needs to really be talked about at length and debated, which our critic for health and long-term care pointed out, is schedule 7 with regard to the Ministry of Transportation to communicate with licence holders and regulations for commercial motor vehicles. Basically, it's transporting patients in emergency situations. We've noted that in 2011 the Ombudsman looked at this particular area of the legislation and felt that there are problems with it. There were words in the report such as "inadequate vehicle safety" and things like that.

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I look forward to more debate on this and bringing out some of those critiques that hopefully the government across the way will pay attention to, listen to and consider when developing legislation, and when it goes to committee, having even more discussion. It's important that we consider Ontarians', patients' and families' safety first—of utmost importance when we talk about that. So on that part of the bill under schedule 7, we have a lot of critiquing and concerns that we want to share in further debate.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to talk about this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: It's a pleasure this afternoon to be able to make some comments on Bill 85, An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various Acts.

The bill comes from the Attorney General's office. There's a lot in here, as has been mentioned, but there are some key amendments I want to bring out. We're making amendments to the Highway Traffic Act on stretcher transportation services. The government's taking action to improve the safety and reliability of private sector non-emergency stretcher transportation services in Ontario.

We're making amendments to the Family Law Act. We're making amendments to the Courts of Justice Act. These proposed changes will help to effectively implement new federal family legislation in Ontario.

We're making amendments to the City of Toronto Act. This will help the TTC to expand service to York region and other neighbouring municipalities by adjusting provisions in the act. This will allow for greater transit collaboration between transit agencies across the greater Toronto and Hamilton area.

So there are quite a few areas that we're working on here, but we're trying to clean things up and basically make changes that will make government more efficient and transparent, and work more effectively.

This bill is not that big, but the changes are quite big. We've had opportunities to speak on this bill. I hope that the debate continues and we hear from the opposition as well, so that when this goes to committee, we're able to open it for public deputations and make any changes that may need to be brought; and then, finally, bring it here for final reading and hopefully have it proclaimed by the Lieutenant Governor.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate? The Minister of Children and Youth Services and minister responsible for women's issues.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I wasn't sure if the opposition was going to weigh in on this. I'm happy to speak to the Strengthening and Improving Government Act.

This sounds very familiar. I think we've talked about it before, and because I've talked about it at length before, I am going to share my time with the member from Scarborough–Guildwood, the Associate Minister of Finance. She can bring some fresh perspective to it and I know will do a great job.

Mr. Mike Colle: And also the Associate Minister of Long-Term Care and Wellness.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Oh, and I hear the Associate Minister of Long-Term Care and Wellness may share some time.

Mr. Mike Colle: And the member from Beaches–East York.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Let's just say it sounds like a number of members will be sharing time with me, including the member from Beaches–East York, who is now in the Legislature.

I remember when I spoke about this before. These are a bunch of small, different measures that will improve the efficiency and responsiveness of government. It is important that we do this. I know that when I first ran as an MPP, some of the goals of this are what I felt were important to me as an MPP, and that is to make government easier to navigate and to be able to access programs and information more readily, because sometimes, quite frankly, governments of all stripes, all levels and jurisdictions can be complicated. So this bill is intended to help with that.

One of the pieces that is very interesting to me—I actually started some of this work when I was the Minister of Consumer Services and working with the then Minister of Transportation—is to amend the Highway Traffic Act to improve the safety and reliability of private sector non-emergency stretcher transportation services in Ontario. People say, "What does that mean?" What that means is that when you see something that looks like an ambulance driving around but it's not really an ambulance—it doesn't have the sirens going; it doesn't have the typical lights going—that's usually what we call a non-emergency stretcher transport service.

This is near and dear to me because my husband, who has been quite ill for the last few years, has had to rely on this kind of service routinely for medical appointments and tests. We wondered, "Who does regulate these

vehicles?" Because they look like an ambulance, but they're not an ambulance and they're not governed the same way ambulances are. The people who run these businesses, I think, most often are very reputable, but there has been a lack of standards in these types of vehicles. From a consumer point of view, people would sometimes think they're getting the same kind of standards as a regular hospital-based ambulance, and that simply is not the case. These are non-emergency stretchers, and they're operated in a private sector context. So I'm very supportive of those amendments to the Highway Traffic Act.

The other one that I feel very strongly about is the amendments to the Courts of Justice Act to help efficiently implement new federal family legislation and to really recognize that families are no longer defined the way families were traditionally defined, and that different families take many forms. It may include same-sex partners. It may include single persons. My understanding is that these amendments to the Courts of Justice Act will help facilitate the new federal family legislation that's applicable here in Ontario.

Then, of course, here in the city of Toronto we have amendments to the City of Toronto Act to make it easier for the TTC to expand to York region and other neighbouring municipalities by adjusting provisions of the act. That will give greater collaboration between transit agencies across the GTHA, the greater Toronto and Hamilton area, and that's very important because—I'm actually the only Toronto member who represents part of Toronto as well as a region outside of Toronto: Durham region. Looking at issues around fare integration and the right kinds of protocols or rules to allow smooth transportation, not just within Toronto but between these other municipalities, is very important, because as you know, Speaker, many people live in York region or Durham but they may work in Toronto. Being able to facilitate these provisions in the act will allow for greater collaboration.

Those are just a few of the notable initiatives. I know there are other ones that are before us in this bill, but I will look forward to the comments from my colleagues and to get their fresh perspective on this, which has been, I'd say, kicking around for a while, so I'm very anxious to see this go forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I recognize the Associate Minister of Finance.

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I'm very pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 85, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. This bill includes a number of small but very important measures that will improve the efficiency and the responsiveness of government. The reason we're looking at this is to ensure that every aspect of government is being looked at. We're trying to modernize our processes and our systems to streamline and make themeasier to navigate. This is important because we want to meet the needs of Ontarians with these public services that require a very solid foundation.

Today, I want to talk specifically to the components that relate to the Ministry of Labour, the Registered

Human Resources Professionals Act, 2013, where we are adding a new regulation-making authority to list human resources designations, and the designations that are currently listed in the statute are being replaced.

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Also I want to talk about the Occupational Health and Safety Act, where we are adding amendments to assist in the adoption of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals.

I felt that these particular areas were important for us to speak to. Currently, the Registered Human Resources Professionals Act does not contain a regulation-making authority to list human resources designations by regulation. The designations are listed in the act itself. Adding a regulation-making authority and moving the human resources designations—currently listed in a table within the statute—to a regulation provides flexibility in adding and removing designations under the act in the future.

Of course, this is very important because we know that the RHRPA empowers the Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario to govern and regulate the practice of members of the association and the firms in accordance with the legislation and its laws. Therefore, this is ensuring that they are able to update its professional certification framework to better reflect the role of human resources in the modern workplace.

Certainly as I travel the province talking about the work that we are doing with respect to the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan, I often speak to employers about the changing nature of work and the fact that work is changing. Ensuring that we have a professional association for human resources that has the flexibility to make those required changes through regulation is very important for us in order to continue to be flexible and adaptable as our labour market needs continue to change and to expand. I think that while that adjustment seems like a simple thing for us to do, it's adding an element of flexibility within the labour market which is important.

I also want to talk a little bit about the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the fact that we are making the amendments to assist in the adoption of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals. The new standards are expected to improve worker health and safety. Employers and workers will have access to a broader range of information about hazardous workplace chemicals, presented in a standardized format considered to be easier to understand than the current labels and safety data sheets.

I believe that this is something that is extremely important for our workplaces. I know that when I worked at Goodwill Industries—I was at Goodwill for over seven years—this was something that we paid particular attention to in terms of the health and safety of our workers. They were handling chemicals that were donated by individuals, and we wanted to ensure that we had a system of standardization so that we could keep our employees safe.

Ensuring that these types of changes and improvements are made is very important in terms of how chem-

icals are handled, that there's consistency in the labelling right across employers and that there is, obviously, training for the workers in that regard.

I want to note that employers are already required to ensure that hazardous workplace chemicals are identified and that safety data sheets for these chemicals are available in the workplace and, of course, that there is safe use, handling and storage as well as disposal of hazardous chemicals. These duties will definitely not change. The main impact is that employers will have to ensure that workers are trained on the appearance and content of new chemical labels and safety in these data sheets. I think this is extremely important.

Before I turn it over to my colleague, I recently had the opportunity to tour the Darlington nuclear facility—I believe you were there as well, Speaker—and we were looking at the refurbishment. I remember, when we were in that particular facility, that there was a significant area devoted to worker health and safety. All of the sheets were posted, everything was laid out, and there was particular emphasis on the role of safety in this facility, which we would all expect. So I think it's that type of standardization and clarity that is needed in our workplaces to ensure that we keep our workers as safe as possible when they are handling chemicals. Safety is number one, as we know, and we want to make sure that, as we make these adjustments to this act, to Bill 85, we keep that top of mind.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to address this bill. I will now hand it off to the member from Beaches—East York.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now recognize the member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'll be sharing what remaining time we may have with the Associate Minister of Health.

This is one of those pieces of legislation which I find really interesting because it's a piece of legislation that didn't survive in the previous session of this House. The legislation dropped off the order paper as a result of the election that was called for June 12. As a result, in a weird way, it kind of ties me back to a previous session when I wasn't here. I didn't have the pleasure of debating it at the time it was before the House before, but it's here now, and I'm delighted to have it here.

What's interesting is that it went from its old iteration, which was Bill 151, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act, to the current Bill 85. We had an opportunity in the intervening years to make requests of the ministries to see, "What else, then, would you like to come forward with?" So there are a number of new provisions—

Interjection.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you, sir. I'm getting heckled by my own party once again. It's a fascinating process.

Mr. Robert Bailey: You don't deserve decorum.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thank you. I appreciate that. It's good to have enemies on all sides of the House.

Some of these new provisions are actually extremely important in making sure that this piece of legislation assists the courts and assists processes within the government so that we can move forward and be more efficient.

There are 15 pieces of legislation which are being amended here. So much of it, we see, is in the Courts of Justice Act. I remember listening quite carefully to the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton as he spoke at length about the things that were not in the bill and as he was explaining that these are things that should also be in the bill. Maybe those things will come into the next iteration of the bill. We might call it the Strengthening and Improving Government bill 2, or "son of," or something to that effect. Those are interesting amendments that he was proposing that, of course, wouldn't be accepted at committee because they don't form part of the current bill. Notwithstanding, there are a number of very important issues here.

Many of you know that my father was a Supreme Court of Ontario judge.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Joe Potts.

Mr. Arthur Potts: That's absolutely the fact.

Interjection.

Mr. Arthur Potts: Thanks; I appreciate that.

He used to come home so often frustrated, and I'd listen to him. He'd complain and say, "I know exactly what I want to do here but the law is getting in my way." He would have suggestions. He would have suggestions to the Chief Justice that he'd hope would filter back to the Attorney General about subtle changes and additions and deletions in certain statutes so that he could effect what he saw as natural justice when the act in itself was getting in his way. This was extremely important.

We've had that opportunity, through consultations with all the various stakeholders in the courts system, to ensure that there could be significant changes to a number of the Ministry of the Attorney General bills. New changes to the Courts of Justice Act will remove the requirement of the Attorney General's approval of the appointment of case managers after the age of 65. It will clarify timelines that will apply to deputy judges to complete their decisions.

One of my dad's great friends, Bob Sutherland, who was on the court with him at the same time, had a terrible habit of reserving judgments ad nauseam. Dad was really good because he wanted to make sure that good justice would be swift justice. He tended to give oral decisions on all his cases; that made them less likely to be appealed because you didn't have exhaustive reasons where smart lawyers could find picayune details that they would try to overturn your judgments with. But more importantly, he saw it in the interest of justice that he would get the court decision in front of people so they could move on with their lives.

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Our good friend Bob Sutherland was far more erudite, and he would spend endless weeks and months in trying to get the decision so he was absolutely certain that he had the law precisely as it was spelled out. It was a

different approach in how you administer justice in the province. I believe that some of these amendments will give judges more authority to move more quickly in their decision-making. It directs clarified timelines for deputy judges to come forward with their decisions. That would be extremely important.

In the few minutes remaining to me, I think I will turn this over to a great colleague, the Associate Minister of Health, who I'm sure has some very interesting aspects to bring to this bill as well.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I'm absolutely delighted to follow the debate of my colleagues, the Associate Minister of Finance and the MPP for Beaches–East York.

I'm really looking forward, in the short time that I have, to speaking to this bill, which is the Strengthening and Improving Government Act. As the name suggests, Mr. Speaker, it really is about doing all the little things we need to do to make life easier for Ontarians, a bit like housekeeping.

The importance of this is underscored by something that happened in my riding yesterday, which was that I held a town hall, and it was a very successful town hall. I had Minister Oraziatti come. The discussion there was updating the Condominium Act. I had 150 people there. You could tell how important it was for those Ontarians, for my constituents, to see us updating legislation.

This really is in that spirit. Just as we have updated and modernized the Condominium Act, which was last updated in 1998; since then, 20 years later, we've had to update that. I saw with my own eyes yesterday—we had 150 people there—the enthusiasm and the hunger there was for this modernization. It's the same thing with this, when we go forward and strengthen and improve the government.

Mr. Mike Colle: Where in Mississauga did you have it?

Hon. Dipika Damerla: I had the meeting at the Living Arts Centre, right in the heart of Mississauga East–Cooksville, the beautiful Living Arts Centre. If you haven't been to it, I really think you should go. I'm sure that Minister Oraziatti would give rave reviews.

There is another thing that Minister Oraziatti learned yesterday about my riding, and that is the fact that I actually have a lot of condos. When people think about Mississauga, they think it's suburbia, and yesterday he was, like, "Now I know why you have been asking me to modernize the legislation." This is in the same spirit of modernizing and strengthening the government. What it's going to do is strengthening and improving in such a way that includes a number of small but important measures that will improve the efficiency and responsiveness of government.

We're looking at many, many aspects of government, and I know that my colleague spoke at length to some of those specific issues. All I'm trying to do here today is speak to the importance: why we need to do it. It's a bit like spring cleaning; well, in this case more like fall

cleaning. But we all need to clean our closets, update them. This is what it is. It's a good housekeeping bill. It's going to make our lives—Ontarians' lives—better, and I look forward to all-party support for it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Harris: You know what? I'll chime in for a few minutes on this one. It was interesting how the member across the way talked about a little housekeeping. I know that one item in the bill pertains to the Highway Traffic Act, and I couldn't help but bring it up. Obviously, Bill 31 is an important bill, but in committee we tried to strengthen that bill by putting forward a series of amendments that stakeholders had brought forward. There was an amendment brought forward by my colleague from Thornhill on road incident management when an accident occurs. I know it's in committee now, and we look forward of getting it out of committee.

To everyone's astonishment, the government members voted out a section of their own bill, as it pertains to Bill 31. What they've done with this omnibus bill is actually include that clause back into the bill. So "housekeeping" is perhaps one word to explain it. It's just a bill they've corrected their mistakes with. I mean, where can we go with that?

But, you know, over the last 12 years—I know they're coming up to an anniversary. We'll be reminded of a lot of different pieces of legislation that come before the House, of course this one being omnibus in nature.

I couldn't help but speak to the fact that in committee for Bill 31, not one of our amendments actually passed, everything from "slow down and move over" for highway vehicles clearing snow—we hear about left-lane hogs. BC has moved forward with that. We put that forward as an amendment, something that they turned down as well. My colleague from Thornhill put something forward. John Yakabuski from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke put forward a bill about snow on the top of a vehicle coming off.

So this omnibus bill is basically correcting their mistakes, in essence.

Thank you, Speaker, for my two minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always an honour and a privilege to stand here on behalf of the good people of Algoma–Manitoulin. I'm looking forward to heading back home to my riding at the end of today's session, around 6 o'clock, but in the meantime, we have this wonderful opportunity to talk about Bill 85, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act.

I was looking at the act and I was looking at all of the various schedules that are in there, thinking that most of this is just general housecleaning. I'm not sure why we have to do this extensive debate about a title that really isn't doing what it's supposed to do.

You're seeing a perfect example of speed debate that is coming from my colleagues across the way. Everybody has got to chime in for that two or three minutes under

this bill—in all due fairness, not being really effective and talking about the contents of the bill.

I have a new title for the bill: the “Let’s change the drapes so we can talk about housecleaning to Ontarians act.” That’s what we could be calling it as well, because we’re really just doing some housecleaning that could be done instead of wasting our time talking about this.

There is one schedule that I do want to talk about. There is schedule 1, which will require some extensive discussions on it, and I look forward to this going into committee and having a discussion, and schedules 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6.

The one that concerns me is schedule 7. It’s a question that we have, actually, for this government in regards to an answer that has not yet been provided: Who ultimately will be responsible for ensuring that the stretcher transportation services are safe and provide quality transportation for vulnerable Ontarians? We have not heard that answer yet. We have not heard any debate from across the way in regards to what is happening. We have not received any details. There is no complaint mechanism that would be there for the patients.

If we’re going to talk about something, let’s focus on those discussions so we can actually get some material while we’re discussing this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Coteau: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak today on this great piece of legislation.

I just want to take my two minutes to talk a bit about the piece of legislation that will update the way in which the College of Trades works here in the province of Ontario. I think it’s important to have good legislation that allows the different colleges and different organizations that work to help our different sectors within the province of Ontario—in particular, I think it’s important to recognize the work that the trades do here in Ontario.

I know that we have a lot of young people who decide to go into trades as a career choice. These types of decisions are great because they pay well and provide young people with a lot of experience. I’ve been told in the past that there has always been a challenge keeping up with the numbers, the demands that are out there in Ontario for people to work in the trades.

I remember meeting some young people who were getting into the trades, going through apprenticeship programs like the Hammer Heads. I remember down at the athletes’ village, during its construction, getting to meet a lot of young people who worked on those projects. I remember this young man telling me that he was able to save some money and get a down payment for a house. He was in his early twenties. He thanked the trades because of that.

I think it’s important to have the type of legislation that’s out there that allows the different colleges and, again, different sector-based organizations to have the type of structure needed to be successful so young people

and those who decide to go into the trades continue to have those opportunities here in this great province.

1650

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I’m just going to use my two minutes, because I’m going to be giving some more comments afterwards. As the rookie of this corner of the House, it’s interesting to me—not just sometimes what we’re debating and what we’re focusing on, but the whole protocol and how things get done. I would have thought that it would be much more practical for the government to find a way—maybe that could be something that could be implemented in a future private member’s bill, so that if it is just housekeeping and it is just modernizing previous regulations, we don’t have to do it this way.

Maybe there is a better way. Maybe we can all read through it and just have our written comments. Maybe there are electronic debating systems, much like the way Elizabeth May participated in the debate on Twitter. Maybe we can have discussions electronically by writing in, and then it’s on the record.

But I think that there are much more important things that we could be debating in the House. It is a little bit comical, in a way, to hear the members from the government side of the House speaking as if somehow we’re saving the province.

The Fraser Institute is coming out very harshly against this government in terms of Ontario moving further into being a have-not province, with high unemployment. We used to have the lowest unemployment, with salaries higher than the rest of Canada in many sectors, and we’re just not seeing that kind of level of growth, improvement, investment and excitement.

We need to see excitement in the business sector the way we’re seeing it now with the Blue Jays, that people are just so happy to hear about all the businesses that are coming to the province and being developed, and all the innovations and improvements and people being hired and trained. That, I think, is what we should be focusing on, not just having all these discussions—which I’m going to be sharing some more comments on—on house-keeping bills.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the government side. The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Arthur Potts: It gives me great pleasure to respond to the comments from the members from Kitchener–Conestoga, Algoma–Manitoulin and Thornhill, and, of course, our own Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

I get the sense that on the other side of the House they want to have it both ways: “It’s a big omnibus bill” and “Oh, it’s just a bunch of housecleaning items. There must be a better process.” I have more respect for the bill-making democratic process than I’m hearing from the member from Thornhill. This is what this House is for.

I think that’s what the member from Manitoulin, in his own frivolous comment that this changing the drapes—I

hope that when he goes home tonight—I know he's looking forward to being back in Manitoulin, and I envy him, because I was up in Manitoulin; it's an incredible place to be. But I hope that when he goes back, he'll help out around the house and do some of the necessary housecleaning.

Yes, it's absolutely true that this piece of legislation does correct some of the oversights, or the experience that we've gained over time with pieces of legislation like Bill 14, so it is important that we do make the government better by getting the housecleaning items right and correcting areas where we have seen that there has been change.

The Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport spoke at great length about the trades, and he's absolutely right about how important the College of Trades is to regulating and making sure that young people have an opportunity to get back. There will be opportunities within this act which will make that operation run a lot smoother.

What I am hearing from the other side is that there is pretty much a unanimous agreement that we need to move forward. These are useful changes, and what I am hearing is pretty widespread support for fast-tracking this thing, getting it out of this House at this level of the debate so that we do get it to committee, and if there are some additional tweaks that we can make—some of the amendments that we are proposing—then we can have that fulsome conversation there, hear from the people of Ontario and make this a better bill to make this a better province to live in.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate.

Mrs. Gila Martow: I'm happy to rise to speak on Bill 85, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act, An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various Acts.

We've heard a lot. We've heard it called an omnibus bill because it is so in-depth. The acts that are affected include the Courts of Justice Act, Family Law Act, Provincial Offences Act, Vital Statistics Act, Commitment to the Future of Medicare Act—that one scares me a bit—Employment Standards Act, Occupational Health and Safety Act, Registered Human Resources Professionals Act, City of Brantford Act, City of Hamilton Act, City of Toronto Act, Municipal Act, Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, and, of course, the Highway Traffic Act.

We do have to do housekeeping every now and then, and I understand that. I'm not questioning the protocol or how things work. I'm still learning how the bills proceed through all the different levels of committee and debate. But once we're doing a bill like this, which really is, in a way, an all-encompassing, omnibus type of bill, why wouldn't we do more?

For example, we're seeing so many cuts to health care. Why aren't we streamlining the health care process? We're seeing cuts to the front-line services of health care while demand is rising, the population is rising, the

percentage of seniors in the province is rising. As well, something that we don't really think about often is, the number of treatments that we can provide and the prolongation of people's lives also add to the cost of health care. Ontario is lagging behind in terms of approving new medications that it will cover.

So once we're having an omnibus bill, why can't we address so many of the problems that this side of the House is often bringing to the attention of the government?

We just heard from my colleague that we have proposed amendments to make our roads safer and those amendments weren't put in the Highway Traffic Act. Now we're reopening it and making some changes to the Highway Traffic Act. Why aren't these changes being made? He mentioned "look first and move over," snow piling on the roofs of cars and, of course, my private member's bill, which is saying that we need to address better incident management on our highways.

So it's not just about modernizing our legislation, it's not just about strengthening, it's not just about housekeeping; it's about making life better for everybody in Ontario, ensuring that, as much as possible, people are comfortable, people are safe and people are getting a good education, a good quality of life, value for their taxes. I think that's where we're lagging here in Ontario. I think that we are collecting higher and higher revenue every year—and I certainly hear the frustration. All you have to do is go on social media today and do #carenocuts. The doctors are very concerned. It isn't just about the delivery of health care services for people who are just going to see the doctor for perhaps an annual checkup and usually get good news; it's about people who are having an emergency—and we're seeing longer wait times, again, in emergency rooms across the province. We're seeing hospitals being built when there isn't a budget to maintain the hospital, when there isn't a budget to staff the hospital and when there isn't a budget to equip the hospital. So I think it's a little frustrating. And I apologize if I sound a bit frustrated, but I think that we can certainly do more to make things better in this province.

I want to talk a little bit about what we heard earlier today about a family. Two parents were here whose son went missing and couldn't be found. The reality is that we can't always do everything for everybody. It's just not feasible. We have limited funds in the province. But more can be done, and certainly more can be done when we consider the technology that we have now. Most people have smart phones with them, and there are tracking devices that can be used. Cars have GPS systems. Too often, after the fact, we're very slow to make the changes that are necessary. There's the Amber Alert system for a missing child, but perhaps we need to do more for missing adults, missing special-needs people, who perhaps are suffering from dementia or having mental health challenges.

1700

We live in Canada, where it's a cold climate. It's a serious problem if somebody goes missing in the winter.

I think that we can certainly look at that technology and say to ourselves, if something like Uber can be developed, where we can see how far away an Uber car is from us if we have the app, perhaps if we have people with special-needs concerns, they could have some kind of bracelet, some kind of tracking device—maybe it's something they wouldn't even know about, but that's a discussion for privacy—a chip in an earring or something like that. There are things that we could be doing as legislators to look at that technology. What could we be doing to make things safer?

We go travelling, many of us, and I'm sure that we have noticed that other countries are investing in things like smart traffic signals, where they're able to absolutely assess the traffic demands in different directions and adjust the lights accordingly. This makes things much safer. Some of them even have flashing lights to tell you, when the light turns green, how fast you should go so that right when you get to the next intersection, the light is just turning green. It means people aren't going to speed, we're going to have less pollution, we're going to have fewer accidents, and it would just be safer for everybody.

Even on the Gardiner Expressway, it's very narrow and not well-lit, and we live in a city that is often very foggy. The Don Valley Parkway can be very foggy. We're not investing in things like better lighting, on the guardrails. We have money for the Pan Am Games. We have money for all kinds of celebrations in this province. I think that what we are lacking is in prioritizing and ensuring that things are safer.

We have to have those adult discussions, and when we're doing these kinds of changes to acts, it's unfortunate that politics oftentimes get in the way. We do often work well together when there are children in need, seniors in need, when there's a health care crisis; we are able to sit down, have those discussions and see what can be done to improve the lives of everybody in this province. So I'm really hopeful that going forward, when we're doing this type of an omnibus bill, we can have maybe more input from all the different critics, from everybody in the House, more of, "Well, we're doing an omnibus bill. Let's put everything of what we can make improvements to on the table."

It really is unfortunate that when we go through committee, we go through the amendment stage and amendments are proposed where stakeholders—even for my private member's bill, every stakeholder that came to the committee and gave a deputation was in support. Yet we don't see that bill being brought into the House. We don't see amendments where there's stakeholder support. We don't see those amendments being put into the final piece of legislation, and that's not what the public is paying us for—because that's who's paying us.

Some of us actually may have heard this: Jim Richards on CFRB interviewed a teacher yesterday. This teacher was unable to accept that the taxpayers are paying her salary. Maybe that's something that we have to all remind ourselves of in here: that the taxpayers aren't just

paying our salaries; the taxpayers are giving us their money to make the province healthier and stronger.

We're not seeing a healthier and stronger province. It's been 12 years of this government, and instead of seeing less debt, we're seeing more debt. Instead of seeing lower unemployment, we're still seeing high unemployment. Instead of seeing a better health care system, we are hearing from everybody who has to access the health care system, including everybody who works in the health care system, that the health care system is worse than it was. We have an education system where a teacher goes on the radio and doesn't know who's paying her salary. We have an education system with some of the lower math scores. We're having constant strife with the teachers. We have, I think, some of the best-paid teachers in the world, and instead of being happy, they're still not happy because of their treatment by this government. How is that possible, that we have such a fantastic province in such a wonderful country, and yet our teachers are unhappy?

We're hearing from many of the trades that they're not happy with many of the new rules and regulations, and they feel that they have to have licensing fees. Even if they're a hairdresser, all of a sudden they're being told to have licensing fees—or a gardener or a landscaper has to have licensing fees. They feel like they are literally being taxed to death and they're paying taxes on their taxes.

I think that maybe we could take some time and remind ourselves that we are not here to spend our money; we are here to spend the public's money. We have to spend it wisely, we have to spend it carefully and we have to prioritize, and we have to think, on every single dollar that we spend, could it be better used somewhere else? Obviously we're seeing the revenues go up, and yet the quality of life goes down, so I think that we have to think more like a business. If a business has to stay competitive and wants to stay in business in this world, they have to constantly be improving.

Yes, this is an omnibus bill, and it's to improve many previous pieces of legislation. That's great, but it can't just stop there. We have to continue and we have to look at everything about the way governments are run and the way decisions are made.

We heard earlier today discussions about people whose salaries went up 10 times once they got a nice plum government appointment. You have to wonder—not whether a CEO should be paid \$1 million, \$2 million, \$3 million or \$4 million; we had differing opinions on that. But the question should be, what value we are getting for that salary? What is this person providing the province of Ontario and the taxpayers of Ontario to warrant that kind of salary?

There are neurosurgeons operating on motor vehicle accidents, where they're called in in the dead of night to rush into the hospital. My husband is an eye surgeon, and luckily we don't see too many emergencies in the middle of the night, but there are always a few every year. Imagine being woken up from your sleep at 2 o'clock in the morning, getting into your car, driving to the hospital and having to operate on somebody.

These doctors have to pay their overhead and their staff. They are treated like government employees when it suits the government, and they are treated as small business owners when it suits the government as well. I think that we have to really have that adult discussion, and we have to say, "These are the people who are there for us when we need help." The firefighters, the first responders, police officers, RCMP officers, doctors, health care workers, nurse practitioners—they are there when we need them, and we have to make them feel valued.

I think that that's really the problem here. The teachers, even though we have probably the highest-paid teachers in North America, or possibly the world, don't feel valued. Our doctors aren't feeling valued. And the taxpayers of the province aren't feeling valued; they feel they're being ripped off. They feel that their expenses are going up. They're paying higher electricity costs, they're paying gas tax at the pump and they see that their infrastructure is still crumbling. They're being told, "It's because you're not paying enough," and they wonder where their gas tax is going to. They're going to the hospital emergency room and waiting for hours longer than they expected, and they're being told, "Yes, this present government brought in a health tax." Where did that money go?

We have a system now where we're beyond paper. We're really beyond paper, and now we're seeing some of my colleagues trying out new technology—tablets instead of paper. I think that's where we're all going to be moving here in the Legislature. Well, that technology is out there, and there's no reason why the public, with their money that they pay in taxes, can't see where the money is going.

Even on the flip side, it would be of benefit to the government if people could see the money that is being spent on them. I think I'm not alone here in hearing from constituents, "Well, I paid my taxes and I deserve." I think we've all heard that plenty in—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: On a point of order, Speaker: I would like to mention that we don't have quorum right now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would the Clerk please check that we have quorum?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. Trevor Day): A quorum is present, Speaker.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Carry on.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker.

As I was mentioning, some of the members in the House are now trying out tablets instead of all the paper. That would be much more environmental and of a lot of benefit to many of us here. I think that with all the new technologies it's possible that the taxpayers could also see what value they're getting for their taxes. There's no

reason why they shouldn't be able to look online and put in their health card number and see for each year what they have been—I wouldn't say costing their health care system, but what value they got for the taxes they paid. Because too often people feel, "Well, I pay \$20,000 a year in taxes, so I deserve back." Well, that calculation could be easily made, Mr. Speaker. If you start working at the age of 20 and you pay taxes until you're 65 or 67, and you live to be 100—or these days we're seeing past 100—it's very simple arithmetic. It's not limitless.

We want to provide fantastic state-of-the-art health care for everybody in the province from the day they're born until the day they pass on, but it costs. I think that people will think twice before they're pushing for some kind of new project in their neighbourhood. A lot of people thought we should put in a bid for the Olympics right after we did the Pan Am Games, and that was a lot of money. I think that people will think twice before they're pushing for these kinds of projects, if they really genuinely understand where the money is all going. The problem is that they don't. And the reason they don't is because we don't. We can't tell them if we don't ourselves know. If the money is just going from the gas station into general coffers, then they're not able to really understand and really see and really feel that they're getting value. So, Mr. Speaker, I think that it's great that we're doing housekeeping. We're hearing from all parties in the House. There are no issues with anything very specific in terms of amending and improving.

One of the things that's up for discussion is having the transit systems be able to be more integrated by the different regions, because the city of Toronto isn't just the city of Toronto anymore; it's the GTA and Hamilton. There have been discussions for years about having more of a conglomerate of transit systems, and it's really time that we do that, that we create a one-fare system. It doesn't mean it's one fare, because I don't think that you can go from Newmarket to downtown Toronto for the same fare that you go from Lawrence to Bloor, but maybe we have to look at what's being done elsewhere. Too often this government is trying to reinvent the wheel, and all they have to do is look at what other cities are doing. They have different zone systems, and if you're going through different zones, then you just pay a bit extra. But right now, where I am in York region, if people have to travel by public transit, they have to pay two fares: They pay a York region fare and they pay a Toronto fare. They figure it's cheaper to drive a car, and too often that's the case.

We saw this government try to implement an electronic health care system. They spent over a billion dollars and achieved absolutely nothing. They claimed for years that they had a diabetes registry, but they didn't even have the diabetes registry. I implemented health care systems in a medical practice, and all I can say is that I asked other doctors what system they put in and how it was, and that's how I made my decision. Alberta was one of the top in the country in terms of electronic health care systems. Why this government didn't just go

to our neighbours down the road and ask them in Alberta how much it would cost us to purchase their system and pay them to implement their system in Ontario and train us in Ontario—and I can assure you that I would be very surprised if it would have been more than 10% of the billion dollars we spent on electronic health care.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's a pleasure to be here tonight and listen to the debate from the member from Thornhill. But what I kind of observed was that she talked a lot about things that really weren't in the bill. But they were very interesting. Probably she's feeling the same challenge as we are, that this bill really should be changed under regulations as opposed to being debated in the House.

She made some good points about the state of Ontario and how we aren't spending taxpayers' dollars wisely. We see a lot of waste from this government. We see a lot of scandal from this government. She talked about that.

She talked about that we need to make sure that when we're bringing legislation to this House, it is something that we can actually change here. The schedules that are in this bill—there are seven schedules. Over the seven schedules, it touches five ministries, and many members have spoken up and said that this is not the place where we really need to be taking time and debating an omnibus bill that could have been put in the budget. There was an opportunity to do that. The government chose not to do that, and now they're bringing it forward.

Though I have to say it is an omnibus bill and things could be done by regulation, I'm always encouraged and eager to debate any issue in this House, whichever member has put forward, so that we can talk it out and offer suggestions. I'll be doing that in my next two-minute hits because, Speaker, the Ombudsman did a wonderful report on a portion of this bill, on schedule 7, which they describe as stretcher transportation services—very impressive. It feels like an Auditor General report, actually, what he touched on. More and more, we're seeing the Auditor General do analyses and audits on the ministries, and coming up with inefficiencies and inadequacies that are happening that we can improve upon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thanks very much. The member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I appreciate this opportunity to have two minutes to make some comments on the speech or the presentation from the member from Thornhill. I listened very carefully to what she had to say, and of course she made many good points about things that need to be taken care of by this government.

This government has been in power here since 2003. When you look at things—the improvements since then and now—we've increased or improved health care significantly. Wait times are down in all sorts of surgeries: cataract surgeries and so on. The education system has improved in so many ways. We're not calling nurses “hula hoops.” We are having issues and challenges with the education system, but we are working things out. There are less and less strikes happening.

The health care system: I hear it from doctors, I hear it from specialists and I hear it from people in my riding of Scarborough Southwest that the health care system has gotten so much better. You don't have to wait so long to get cataract surgery. These are some of the things that I want to mention. There's so much more to say about what our government has done.

But pertaining to this bill, basically it's called An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various Acts. What we're doing is, we're amending and repealing acts so that we can modernize things.

Ten years ago, 15 years ago, we didn't have Google, we didn't have Yahoo, we didn't have Facebook, we didn't have—

Interjection.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Five years ago, we didn't have Twitter.

People nowadays are using electronic devices, and in parts of this bill we're allowing for people to file documents electronically and so on. There's so much to talk about, but in my two minutes I just wanted to move those points forward, and I hope that through this debate we'll hear some more.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It's a pleasure to stand and respond to the member from Thornhill. I've listened to a lot of debate this afternoon. My head's kind of swimming with all—

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes. The minister or the deputy House leader's going to see if he can get me a question for next week, so we're going to work on that together. Maybe I'll ask a question from your side of the House if I can't get one over here.

Anyway, the member touched on a number of different issues. I looked through Bill 85 and there are at least seven different ministries that are affected by this bill, if it goes through, which it probably will. I'm very interested in all the different comments on it.

One member over there talked about that we didn't have Google, we didn't have Twitter and we didn't have all the social media. I'm thinking that maybe that wasn't such a bad thing when we didn't have all this different Twitter and social media. I find myself on it more than I should be. I think maybe we all spend too much time on it. Probably we could do a lot more one-on-one if we didn't have all of this social media.

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Certainly, there are a number of areas that do need to be strengthened, do need to be improved in legislation as time goes on and things change. So I look forward to the rest of the debate and we'll see where this bill takes us. I'm sure there are lots of other comments that people want to make here in the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's always an honour to be able to stand in this House, even on a Thursday afternoon.

I'd like to make a few comments on the member from Thornhill and her speech. I was listening in the back room, on the TV. I think, to condense, what I got from her speech is that this bill is kind of like a book with a great cover, but one of those books that, when you read through it, you wonder where they got the title: An Act to strengthen and improve government by amending or repealing various Acts.

Strengthening government: You're expecting something with a bit more meat. That's not to say—there are lots of things in here that should be done, could be done, but there are lots of things that we could talk about, about strengthening and improving government, that would be a more worthwhile debate.

Having said that, there are a few things in here, and one I'd like to touch on is the part about non-emergency patient transport. It's something that should be better regulated, but I'd like to make mention that in large parts of the province it doesn't exist. In my part of the province, ambulances do the non-emergency transport, so people who need to be moved from a hospital to a nursing home often have to wait hours and hours, and hours and hours, and I think that's something that has also got to be addressed.

We had a pilot project in our region, and the pilot project is no longer there and there is no more non-emergency transport. So while it's great to regulate it, and we fully approve, it would be a big improvement if it was actually available to the vast—hopefully to all Ontarians, because it's a needed service.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Thornhill. You have two minutes for a response.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Thank you to the members from London–Fanshawe, Scarborough Southwest, Sarnia–Lambton and Timiskaming–Cochrane for their comments.

The last speaker just mentioned non-emergency transportation. Well, you know what? A lot of times it's not just about salaries, as we see with health care workers and with teachers. A lot of times there are things that the government can offer in terms of changing the rules and regulations that would make them just as happy as or maybe even happier than if we increased their salary, and then that makes the taxpayers and the voters happier because we're not spending more of their money.

One of the things, including non-emergency transfer of patients, is that so often doctors are at one hospital waiting for a patient who is at another hospital to come and see them at the hospital where they're working, because it's so specialized now, medical care, and that patient is not arriving. Why aren't they arriving? Well, they have no way to get there. They are waiting for their brother-in-law to come pick them up.

As somebody who is in a health care type of family, I can tell you there have been all kinds of bizarre circumstances where a patient walks out of, say, Southlake

Regional and they need to go to Mackenzie Health and it's a half-hour drive and the doctor is waiting two hours, not getting paid, because doctors only get paid fee-for-service. In those types of circumstances, they are not. They're on call and they are waiting for a patient to come and expecting them to come in half an hour. They drive to the hospital, they're waiting for that patient to come, and if that patient decides, because somebody has to be dropped off at home, which is an hour away, on the way to the hospital, because that family only has one car, or they have to pick up a kid from daycare—the doctor is left waiting, and that's not a good use of doctors' time.

So I think that more can be done to streamline and to consider the difficulties that our health care professionals face.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Here we are on Thursday, 25 after 5, and, you know, we have this privileged position to speak to legislation in this House. We have Bill 85, the Strengthening and Improving Government Act, 2015, before us, which builds on the former piece of legislation under—I think it was Bill 151, the first iteration. You have to say, for the love of humanity, really? If this bill did strengthen and improve government, I would be very happy. I would be almost ecstatic. However, in the interests of speaking to some substantive issues that are affecting people in this province, I will be focusing most of my comments on schedule 7 of Bill 85, which is stretcher transportation services.

I think it is worth noting, Mr. Speaker, that these are largely housekeeping measures, necessary because of certain events, like tribunal rulings and so on, which render existing legislation obsolete. It's really interesting because we've seen this tendency in the way that the Liberal government crafts legislation, that it's over-arching and has broad strokes about it, and then leaves a lot of the legislation up to the regulation side, which they can adapt and change as they see fit—which they could do with a number of issues and with a number of schedules that are contained within Bill 85. They could do most of what's contained within this bill through regulation. In fact, they should have done it a long time ago, especially on schedule 7, which is the stretcher transportation services. So this is not a substantive piece of legislation, but it does have a really good title. I mean, full marks for the title. But it's obviously compelled through regulatory changes and could be accomplished largely through regulation, as I've already pointed out.

If you're thinking about what people care about, and if people are actually paying attention to what we're doing here in this House and if they are concerned about non-emergency transport services for medically stable patients, which schedule 7 largely deals with, then they may be interested to know that we've always believed that stretcher transportation services must be regulated and should be regulated to protect patients and their families. It's a little bit of the Wild West out there with some of these transportation services. While people may

be medically stable, they might not be so stable at the end of their drive to the hospital. There are a lot of people who rely on these services, and so regulation actually is very important to ensure patient safety. The regulation piece is completely and utterly long overdue.

I think people would generally be surprised to find out that the transport of medically stable patients to a medical institution, to a doctor's office or to a clinic for a transfusion or for treatment around diabetes—that right now in the province of Ontario those transportation services are currently unregulated. There are no safety and quality regulations and no accountability on this front. That leaves patients and their families with no certainty that they will get the proper care they need, no quality assurance and no limit on the costs, and no complaints mechanism.

Why are we here, on the first day of October 2015, four years after the promise that this issue would be dealt with? That's a rational question to be asking. Patients and their families obviously deserve better from this government, and there's a track record here in the health portfolio which actually is not a very good track record. When you look at the Ornge ambulance scandal that we have not fully recovered from—and I think there's still an investigation going on—patients and their families deserve better from this government. Unfortunately, these regulations have not been enacted. But they could be, right now.

In June 2011, more than four years ago, the government first announced its intention to set quality and safety standards for stretcher transportation services. I wasn't here in 2011, but it seems to me that that was pretty much in the heat of the Ornge air ambulance issue. At the time, the government said, "At the earliest opportunity, the government plans to introduce legislation that would, if passed, regulate the industry by setting core standards and requirements on transporting passengers between health care facilities in non-emergency situations."

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Here we are, four years later, and those standards still do not exist. We have to ask, what is going on? This is something that can be done right now. The Minister of Health is a new Minister of Health in that portfolio, but the past Minister of Health could have taken action on this issue. There's no excuse.

Interjection.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's not worth heckling for. It's inexcusable. These are obviously people who are vulnerable, regardless of whether they're in the north or the south or the east, or right here in a major urban centre.

It actually reminds me: When I was thinking about the whole issue of transporting patients, when I think back around Ornge—do you remember, Mr. Speaker, that there was the issue that the air ambulances were designed in such a way that the paramedics didn't have enough room to perform CPR? This was one of the issues that

came out. The Auditor General and the Ombudsman at the time highlighted this as a serious issue.

There's a need for regulation. That's my point: There's a need for regulation. The people who are calling on these unregulated transportation services need to have some assurance that the person who is picking them up is a qualified driver, is not someone who would be taking advantage of those people—because obviously, some sort of a reference check, you would assume, would have taken place—and that those people are reliable.

Note also that there are no restrictions around costs. There's no benchmark for what that transportation should cost. I'm just speaking the truth here. It doesn't exist right now. There's no benchmark for the cost. There's no costing out. There's no accountability on this kind of a service. So you have to wonder, how could this happen?

Schedule 7 obviously falls far short of setting real standards for stretcher transportation services. This is part of the Highway Traffic Act; part of that actually is repealed. This part currently allows municipalities to pass bylaws and set standards for the operation of medical transportation services, as defined by the minister of the day.

Clearly, where we are right now with this service, having no standards, as pointed out, is not sufficient. They're not the clear and transparent regulations that are needed to protect patients. This is simply a legal mechanism to allow the government to regulate medical transportation services as commercial motor vehicles.

Why would this not actually have taken place four years ago? This is a well-known issue. I know that I deal with this issue in my riding. I know that the northern members' constituents will reach out to their MPP's office looking for assistance, looking for guidance and often asking very tough questions. I think it's safe to say that there are some outstanding issues in this regard. I don't understand how the government could not say—they can actually do it right now. They don't need this legislation.

As I said, families and patients deserve far better than a convoluted, unclear, unaccountable and vague promise to make sure that hospitals follow guidelines, and to regulate stretcher transportation services as commercial vehicles. To us on this side of the House, the need for transparency is very clear: to protect vulnerable patients who need non-urgent transportation to get to hospital, to get to medical appointments and then, also, to get back home again. That's what Ontarians expect, and quite honestly, I think that's what they deserve. Four years after the government first promised the act, the measures of this bill fall far short; they do. Obviously, there are also no details in this bill about the regulations and guidelines being imposed on stretcher transportation services, providers, hospitals and LHINs.

I think the Auditor General's report that came out last week, Mr. Speaker—on page 15 of that report, I think you'll remember that it was astounding for us to see it in black and white. We always suspected this, but there has never been any thorough value-for-money assessment

around funding that goes into the CCAC system and its impact on patient results. That's astounding, Mr. Speaker. Quite honestly, it's shocking for people in this House, but as we rolled out some of that information, we found that people out there in the community who have actually had to try to navigate one of the most complex and layered health care systems anywhere in Canada were astounded to know that when money was being directed towards CCACs, there was very little accountability on how that money was spent. The figure that the Auditor General quoted was that only 61% of that funding was going to direct care. The question remains: What's happening with the rest of the money? Second, how are we going to find out that that 61% actually making it to patient care is, in fact, positively impacting the lives of patients?

You can't discount the Auditor General. She's non-partisan. She's an independent officer of this Legislature. That review was five years coming. We were waiting five years for that report.

We've heard anecdotally across the province—all of us have—about this issue. There's a great disparity in the level of services. I will say publicly that those CCACs across the province are not created equally. Some CCACs actually had been doing a very good job of doing some internal reviews. But when you're just looking at your own world and not comparing it to the evidence that exists out there on how to positively impact and get what I would describe as probably the best bang for the buck, if you will, around prevention and early intervention and all of those issues that actually would ensure that those dollars are being spent responsibly, with the patient first in mind—we hear a lot about “patient first.” For the Auditor General to come out and say that this kind of assessment and analysis has never been done was shocking for us.

I look forward to seeing what's going to happen with that report. It's not all critique on this side. We now have the Auditor General's report, and now you have a responsibility to do something with it.

Interjections.

Ms. Catherine Fife: You do. You do have a responsibility to do something with it.

Back to ambulatory care—and of course this issue did come up at AMO. This was a very interesting year at AMO. The municipalities, I think, are getting to that tipping point of frustration around the relationship between the province and the municipalities. I think that they are looking for some clear guidelines. At least tell them the rules of engagement on everything, really, from transportation to housing—and then the fallout around health care, because health care affects everything. Then you backtrack all the way back to finance. When you follow the money in this place, you find out the real priorities. I think that's the way it works, and people generally do understand that.

The critiques, though, around this bill I've already outlined, around stretcher transportation services not

having those benchmarks, not having those standards. Why has it taken so long? Those are all valid questions, I think. But there are no details in this bill about those regulations and guidelines being imposed on stretcher transportation service providers. Basically, you've brought a piece of legislation to the floor of the Legislature and you've said that all of these things need to happen, but you haven't necessarily said how or why they should, which I think is an important piece of the conversation.

Not having a complaint mechanism for patients and families: I think this is really important. This came out in the spring, when we were looking for Ombudsman overview of the MUSH sector. You remember this: the MUSH sector. Municipalities now have an ombudsman, universities now have an ombudsman and school boards now have an ombudsman, but the hospital sector doesn't. There's no complete mechanism for patients and families around this issue, but the Ombudsman still does not have overview over the health care system, and that is a \$52-billion budget item. It's a huge responsibility to have that—not just the patient end of it, but the fiscal end of the responsibility spectrum.

There's no mention of accountability mechanisms for how the ministry would deal with contraventions by stretcher transportation service providers. There have been complaints. People need a clear avenue to complain, because if you don't have standards and you don't have a review of who's actually performing the service and if you don't have costing control, then you're going to have complaints. There is some rationale behind this.

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The final piece for me is that there's no assurance that contracts between hospitals and stretcher transportation services would be made public, and there's no accountability for the public dollars that hospitals spend on stretcher transportation services. The ministry could not even confirm for us, when we did go through a briefing on this—to our health critic, during her briefing—whether these contracts would or would not be made public. They did not know the answer. That's obviously a concern because this government does not have the best track record on writing up contracts. You have to admit: The contracting out and the privatization agenda of this government is astounding to us, and the people of this province are paying the price for that.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: You're so easily confounded, so easily confused.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I shouldn't be shocked anymore, actually; you're quite right. I shouldn't be shocked anymore. For instance, the IT contract that went around calculating the used car sales tax last May. This government puts out a contract to develop an IT database around ensuring that these sales taxes are calculated correctly when a consumer, a citizen of the province, buys a used car. Last May, that program failed miserably and the government failed to collect \$2.4 million. That goes back to a quality assurance control issue around developing

those contracts, around ensuring that the government is going to get value for dollar as they contract out these services.

What happens? The minister for consumer affairs and the Minister of Finance get up and say, “Oh, no, this is a one-off.” Didn’t they say it was a one-off? It wasn’t a glitch or a little small mistake like the SAMS thing was, because we know that that was not a glitch. That was a serious mess-up on the part of the IT company, which was once again contracted by this government without any quality assurance controls to ensure that the people of this province were going to get what they deserved, and that is a system that makes sure that the most vulnerable people in our province actually get the appropriate amount of money as they need it, because they are vulnerable. So what did we see with SAMS? We saw huge amounts of money going out to some people, and then other families, single mothers with three kids in my riding, got nothing. When you’re already living on the margins, an IT mess-up like that has a great consequence. It really does.

We obviously have some concerns with the way that this legislation comes before us. These are regulations that they could actually just deal with themselves. It just begs the question before us: If you’re going to call it the Strengthening and Improving Government Act when it doesn’t do that, are you being straight up with the people of this province? This is a housekeeping bill. This piece of legislation will not strengthen or improve the government. You have a lot more work to do on that side of the House, particularly around fiscal, particularly with the way contracts are awarded. When the Auditor General finds that you are awarding winter maintenance road contracts to companies that don’t have the equipment to do the work, that’s an issue. I would rather us talk about how we can ensure that this government, when they look internally at their systems around how they procure services, is actually getting quality services. In the end, it’s the people who pay the price.

I see that I have rapt attention over there. I look forward to the comments from that side of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I guess yellow is the new orange. It’s cowardice and lemon-sucking. This is—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask you to withdraw.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I withdraw, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Yes, just think Big Bird.

This is the absurdity of this: just how low—I’ve been listening to the conversation about the health care system. I used to be director of a community health centre. Almost all 13 million Ontarians now have electronic health records. We have a number of doctors and nurses on our side of the House who ran emergency wards, public health, general physicians, who will all tell you that Ontario’s electronic records are state of the art.

I used to do street outreach and I worked with street health—they talk about how extraordinary it is right now having those records for street-involved people. This is an amazing breakthrough, something the third party never delivered, nor did the opposition.

We built 28 new hospitals. We’ve done enormous things. Just walk down the street here or go to Windsor or Oakville or North Bay. You’ll find brand new hospitals in every one of those communities with state-of-the-art technology.

These are the big ideas that get elected, and why they’re the third party. What do they do? They squelch and they whine and they try to nitpick, and they find the one thing that goes wrong. People confuse them for the Conservatives because they’re more whiny and nitpicky and negative about public services than any other folks. It is truly astonishing to me that we have to put up with this simple-minded, endless negativity.

You look at Kitchener-Waterloo with new hospitals, with the Perimeter Institute, with Communitech, with ION. That community has seen billions of dollars of unprecedented investment, and all we do is get whining from the member.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Gila Martow: I find it interesting that somebody who I actually find is one of the more sensitive people here in the House—and I actually understand that, because I think that it’s hard sometimes. We’re all human beings and some of us find it hard to deal with controversy and confrontation, and the member opposite is one of the more sensitive people. I think to use words like “whiny” and insulting people is really uncalled for. I thought the member spoke very well and shared her thoughts, and I think deserves a lot more respect.

As I mentioned before, I’m learning the protocol here slowly but surely. I would guess that if you’re in government, you hold yourself to a little bit of a higher standard in terms of that. There’s a reason why ministers are called “the honourable” and so on and so forth, because if you’re in government, it’s a little bit like the administration at a company. It’s a little bit important to show that protocol.

In terms of health records, all I can tell you is that in the clinics—my husband is a physician, as I’ve said before, and I worked in a medical centre for many years—the doctors pay to put in the health records. They got a bit of support from the taxpayers of this province. That money that the government gave—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Order.

Mrs. Gila Martow: —was not enough to cover the software support, because when you put in software—

Interjections.

Mrs. Gila Martow: Mr. Speaker, please. I hear a lot of whining over there, Mr. Speaker.

As somebody who implemented health records, the support that you have to pay to the software companies was barely covered by what this government offered the

doctors' offices. That funding has now run out. The doctors now have to continue to pay for the support, the upgrades and the hardware in their offices.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: My goodness, it's so much fun being here on a Thursday afternoon.

Mr. Speaker, if you're ever in Elliot Lake—it was a mining community, and when there was a problem over at the mine, you'd hear this horn. It just seems like the previous member just hit that horn right on.

I actually want to have my comments to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo, who talked about a particular emergency program that is going to be put into place and how it is going to be basically the Wild West. That is really key in some of the comments that you brought forward, where there are going to be standards and regulations that are going to be completely missing from this whole process, which we still have not received any answers to. There's going to be a shortfall on standards.

The one key thing that is going to be missing out of this that we still have to look at—because I certainly hear it from my constituents who have had the opportunity and the need to use ambulance services from various communities, whether it's from Wawa into Sault Ste. Marie or from Chapleau leading into Timmins—is, “Who am I going to approach? Where am I going to put that complaint? Who is going to address my concerns? How do I get some satisfactory resolutions from some of my issues that I want to raise?” We haven't heard that answer yet.

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The other thing is, I want to disagree with the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. Mind you, she was very diplomatic in her comments in regard to the frustration that was expressed by some of the municipal leaders. I think she used the words “tipping point.” I think she was very diplomatic in regard to what I've seen over at AMO. There was certainly a greater level of frustration from all the municipal leaders who were there.

The basic message that I heard from my member is that there are a lot of shortfalls here within this bill, and it is a lot of housecleaning. We need to get down to the table, roll up our sleeves and get to work.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I just couldn't resist. I have to start with the member from Kitchener–Waterloo—I'm not sure if I should be insulted or if it's a compliment—describing me as still the new health minister. But then I realized that a party that's been around this province and country for more than 50 years is still calling itself the New Democratic Party, so the fact that I've been the health minister for 15 months is nothing compared to them still being described as new.

It's everything from commenting tangentially on the fact that for our physicians, to assist them in setting up their electronic medical records, we provide them on a physician basis—not on a clinic basis, on a physician

basis—in the order of \$30,000 to set that up, those medical records, plus on an annual basis we pay maintenance fees, ongoing licence fees and measures of the sort.

I want to get back to the CCACs as well, because the member from Kitchener–Waterloo dwelled on that. Obviously it's central to the bill that we've brought forward, which entitles me to respond in kind as well. I have to say, apart from accepting all of the Auditor General's recommendations last week, which I've done, and implementing our own 10-point action plan, I want to say, because she suggested there was no accountability through our CCACs, that I find that deeply offensive to our front-line health care workers, including our many, many thousands of nurses who work through our CCACs, to suggest that somehow their work isn't valuable or their work isn't accountable or they're not doing their best possible effort to actually make a difference in the lives of the 800,000 Ontarians that they support each year.

But then I recalled back to the early 1990s and remembered that, in fact, it was the NDP that delisted home care from OHIP in the first place. They have a history which is a curious one when it comes to home care.

I know we still have work to do. The Auditor General pointed that out to us, and we're working hard. I've committed to implementing all of her recommendations. But it's interesting, some of the comments coming from a party that has that kind of record.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I now return to the member for Kitchener–Waterloo. You have two minutes to reply.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's always interesting, this last two minutes. I think I would call a minister new until they got the job done, and there's a lot of work to be done.

I want to thank the member from Thornhill and I want to thank the member from Algoma–Manitoulin.

I always find it interesting when the Minister of the Environment says he loves Thursdays afternoons. He likes that it's non-partisan; we get a chance to talk. Then he gets up there and he brings the debate down to the lowest benchmark that you possibly could. There's no wonder that we have a climate change crisis here.

Patients in this province deserve standards. And it's not too much for the people of this province to ask for cost controls around the health care budget. It is not too much to ask for standards around patient care. This is not too much to ask for. But you know what? When you have to go back 25 years to get a dig in, it's a sorry state of affairs. Come on—25 years. I think I had just graduated from high school or something.

But here we are, and I understand why the government would want to set the bar so low in this regard: so that they can say, at some point, in some release, at some ribbon-cutting that that bar was so low that they over-achieved. That's what we love to hear from this government: that they overachieve.

The people of this province deserve standards of care. Just get it done, honestly, for the love of humanity.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I don't think we got any gold medals for behaviour.

Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday, October 5, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1755.

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