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Wednesday 4 November 2015

Mercredi 4 novembre 2015

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 4 November 2015

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 4 novembre 2015

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MENTAL HEALTH STATUTE LAW
AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
RELATIVES À LA SANTÉ MENTALE

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

Bill 122, An Act to amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996 / Projet de loi 122, Loi visant à modifier la Loi sur la santé mentale et la Loi de 1996 sur le consentement aux soins de santé.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: Good morning, Speaker. Thank you very much. I'm pleased to be able to rise today to speak on the debate of Bill 122, which will amend the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act. It has been almost a year—December 23, 2014—since the Court of Appeal for Ontario ruled that some existing provisions of the Mental Health Act violate section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which states, "Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice."

The Mental Health Act, as it currently stands, does not do the job of protecting these section 7 rights of approximately 330 long-term, involuntarily committed mental health patients in Ontario. That is, those people who were put in psychiatric institutions for six months or longer and who did not commit themselves to be there.

According to statistics from 2009-10, approximately 34% of patients involuntarily committed in Ontario were in hospital for less than a week, 80% were in hospital for less than a month and 98% were in hospital for less than six months. That leaves 2% of patients who were involuntarily committed for longer than six months. These are the 330 people that the amendment, this Bill 122, pertains to.

The decision by the Court of Appeal was unanimously ruled by five justices. They recognized that a gap in the existing Mental Health Act means that people can be detained indefinitely even though the Consent and Capacity

Board does not have full powers to rule on the treatment, or the lack of it, that a patient is receiving. These long-term patients, therefore, are being deprived of their right to liberty without procedures in place that protect fundamental justice.

The effect of the ruling is to limit the length of involuntary committals to approximately six months. The court recognized the need to balance public safety concerns with the need to properly protect the rights of patients, so they suspended the ruling for 12 months to afford the Legislature, where we are today, the opportunity to consider how best to deal with the issues of long-term involuntary committals and the power of the Consent and Capacity Board. That is why we have Bill 122 before us today.

But we have a major problem here, because the 12 months is almost upon us and we have yet to be concerned about our ability to give such an important matter the consideration it deserves in the time we have available. The government opposite has known for 10 and a half months that this needed to be done, and yet here we are doing it now, almost to the day. It took them nine months from the court ruling before they introduced this bill. Whatever would have prolonged the thought of making sure we were getting this bill forward quicker is beyond me; I don't understand the logistics behind the government. But I will go on. Now we're racing against the clock to get it done.

Mental health is very complex. It has a history of failing to respect the rights of patients. Yes, times have changed a lot in the past 30 or 40 years. We don't hear the same language we heard back then; we see greater levels of empathy and understanding. But we still have a long, long way to go to treat mental illness the same way we treat other illnesses. Many people have worked very hard over the years to reduce the stigma, but it's still there. So we need to make sure that we listen, not just to the legal experts, but also to the advocacy groups and the individuals and families with their experience in mental health. The timeline that the government has imposed on us with this bill makes it very hard to do.

On Monday evening, Speaker, I attended a fundraiser for the Good Shepherd in our hometown of Hamilton. It's a wonderful organization that works to serve a wide variety of clients—women needing shelter from abuse, which is the fundraiser I was there for. It was a wonderful reception and fundraiser for Mary's Place, Speaker, which is a women's shelter in our hometown. They do emergency food, clothing programs and assisted living for seniors, just to name a few.

As the NDP critic for children and youth services, I have a particular interest in their youth service programs, where they're committed to helping youth who are struggling with poverty, family conflict, homelessness, abuse, neglect and mental health issues. They do absolutely fantastic, terrific work. A year or so ago, I spent an entire week travelling through all of the children's services they provide in Hamilton.

Just to give you a flavour of how difficult their job is, in a city the size of Hamilton they have funding for 1.6 mental health clinicians to serve all the youth in greater Hamilton. For any youth within any programming in Hamilton who needs mental health services, there are only 1.6 clinicians to do all of that work. It's pretty much impossible. Without adequate funding, too many kids descend into a darker place. When the opportunity for early intervention is missed, they can become dangerous to themselves and dangerous to others.

I was told at this dinner on Monday night about the sad passing of two youths in the last two weeks, both from crystal meth. Both had been in programs within the Good Shepherd and both had mental health illness. Because of the lack of funding and because of the lack of early intervention, these children found themselves, first of all, addicted to crystal meth, which is everything under the kitchen sink, to death. So I think we need to do better.

0910

According to the Ministry of Health, approximately 30% of Ontarians will experience a mental health or substance abuse challenge during their lifetime; one out of 40 people will face a serious mental health illness. The rights of all Ontarians must be protected, and unfortunately those with a serious mental illness will run the risk of their rights being violated. In 2009, the Ontario Human Rights Commission had this to say in relation to the Ministry of Health discussion paper on a 10-year mental health and addiction strategy:

"The rights of people living with mental illness to: health; dignity; bodily integrity and security of the person, and equal treatment in employment, services (including health care), and housing are all fundamental human rights. Acknowledging these is integral to the re-development of the mental health system and can inform a culture shift towards equality for people with mental illnesses and addictions."

In *It Doesn't Work: Unpacking Mental Health Policy and Legislation*, the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario said, "The Charter of Rights and Freedoms is the supreme law in Canada and all other federal and provincial statutes related to the provision of care to people with mental illnesses in Ontario ... must conform to the rights and freedoms guaranteed in the charter."

Then they went on to say, "Provincial mental health legislation, therefore, must comply with the charter through a balance of the autonomy and liberty of the individual with the safety and security of the public." So not only was the government faced with a court ruling almost a year ago, but they had plenty of advance warning before that time that changes needed to be made to the

Mental Health Act to ensure compliance with the Charter of Rights. But again, they still left it until the last minute.

So I welcome the Court of Appeal ruling, and now it's our job to make sure that the charter rights of patients are respected and their voices are heard. We need to help protect the safety of patients and the public. We need to listen to the countless families, organizations, experts and individuals who have important insights to the broader change that needs to be made to our mental health legislation.

My colleague the member from Nickel Belt, in her one-hour lead on this debate, read a letter from Arthur Gallant, who had been asked to become a member of the Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council. At the age of just 25, Mr. Gallant had extensive experience with mental health. His mother suffered from a long-term mental illness and he himself was diagnosed with a mental illness at the age of 13. Ever since then, he has become a mental health advocate. He is a remarkable young man, and it is clear from his eloquent words that he deserved his place on that council, along with the other health executives that occupied the other seats around the table. I should mention that there was one other person on the council with lived experience, so that makes two people with lived experience on the council of 20.

Sadly, as expected, Mr. Gallant's experience, as recounted in his letter, suggests the exact opposite of what we need to see when it comes to patient involvement. He spoke of being shut out from the very start; nobody asked for his advice. When he did speak out, he was interrupted and shut down. He tried to get more involved, but he got nowhere. When he asked for explanations, none were given. His emails were ignored. That's how this government does consultation: ignore the people that it affects the most. That, Speaker, is not the way that we should be moving forward. We need to listen. We need to listen to people whose lives are affected.

So what, in fact, does this bill do? Under the proposed amendments, the Consent and Capacity Board will gain new powers to make orders concerning the manner of detention for involuntary patients, particularly those who have been in hospital for more than six months. Currently, the CCB, which is the Consent and Capacity Board, only has the authority to rule that an involuntary detention is valid or invalid, or in order to transfer to a different psychiatric facility. They cannot make any order concerning the treatment that that patient receives and the manner in which they are detained. They have no authority to impose conditions on the patient's detention and treatment. It is this lack of authority that violates the rights of these patients to procedural fairness.

This was the central point of the court case that led to the ruling. The individual, P.S., in *P.S. v. Ontario*, has been held in indefinite detention, without any mechanisms to ensure he gets the treatment and services he needs in the appropriate type of facility.

The amendments would allow the Consent and Capacity Board to transfer patients to another facility if the patient does not object. They would be allowed to place

the patient on leave of absence from the hospital on the advice of a physician, including prescribed terms and conditions.

They will be able to direct that the patient be provided with a different security level or different privileges, either inside or outside the facility. They will be able to direct access to the community and determine whether that should be supervised or unsupervised access.

The amendments will also allow the Consent and Capacity Board to direct that the patient be given vocational, interpretation or rehabilitation services, and they will be able to order an independent assessment of the patient.

It looks like the Consent and Capacity Board will be very busy, but that's not a bad thing. It's a good thing that they will have this new authority that brings the Mental Health Act in line with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

But it does bring with it the costs associated with exercising this new authority, and that does not appear to be reflected in the government's plans. At the same time as the government plans to expand the authority of the Consent and Capacity Board, it is also reducing the funding. Go figure, Speaker. It seems to happen often. Pay more, get less. Interim actual reports for 2014-15 show expenditures for the CCB of \$6.2 million, but for 2015-16, funding is reportedly being cut to \$4.8 million.

We have been talking about mental health in this House since I've been here, and I know it's been long back—we've had select committees on mental health. We're doing it all. We're doing a great job of talking about it. But we're—they're cutting funding. I'm not even going to say "we're." They're cutting funding, again, to the most important aspects of our society. If we can't get mental health right, what in this society are we going to get right? Because everything is just going to snowball around it.

Work more, and less money to do it with—that is a big concern, and I worry about what it means for mental health patients.

Speaker, the clock's ticking. That's good. I'm close; I'm almost done. Twenty minutes goes pretty quick here in this House sometimes.

As I understand it, if we fail to meet the December deadline, the offending sections of the act will become unconstitutional and invalid. We have until December 23 to get this bill through. It's now November 4. The House rises on December 10, and next week the House is not sitting, as we have a constituency week. The time is ticking quicker than the government is allotting for, I think.

We're going to have to again push legislation through this House, with no concerns of getting it right or wrong. It doesn't really matter. Let's just shove it through, and the people of Ontario will suffer from it. That's what happens.

Interjection.

Miss Monique Taylor: But they also had years of advance warning—I know the member opposite likes to talk—years of warning to the House, years of warning, that these changes were needed, warnings from the On-

tario Human Rights Commission and from the Schizophrenia Society of Ontario. They've had plenty of time to prepare for this, but they have badly mismanaged this file.

0920

As a result, we find ourselves in this situation of again pushing legislation through this House as fast as we can get it. Bill after bill comes through this House. It's jammed through. It's time-allocated. People are shut down. There is no discussion. There is no community involvement. We don't even want to hear from the community, because community members who actually make it onto the board—and who are excited that they're going to be there and possibly make a change—are shut down. Nobody speaks to them. Nobody answers their emails. They speak over them when they ask questions. They don't want the involvement. They're tokens, a token population.

We see this time and time again with this government. They're selling off their hydro system. Public consultation? Absolutely not. Any polls that you do, 80%-plus of Ontarians are totally against it, but what does this government do? Push, push, push and ram it through as fast as they can. Ram it through, just like everything else.

Again, this important piece of legislation, Bill 122, that has been asked for, that we knew a year back had to be done—at the last minute, here comes the Liberal government, running through, seeing how fast we can push another piece of legislation through, with no public consultation, without making sure we get it right, without the dollars to back up the plan.

Let's talk about those numbers again, Speaker. How much is being cut? Just for the member opposite, because he looks a little concerned over there: In 2014-15, there was \$6.2 million in the CCB. Now that we've given them so much more work, guess how much we have now? It's \$4.8 million. More work, less money.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I hope I didn't sound that negative when I was in opposition, though I suspect, if I went back in the records, that may have been the case. So I can't chastise anybody, having sat in opposition and, perhaps, being more negative than I should've been at that period of time.

This particular issue is one which has bedevilled government after government after government. Each one of us, as a representative in our constituencies, has received calls from distraught parents and family members who have people within the family who are suffering from mental illness. I must say, something positive is that we're now recognizing and talking about mental illness more and more in a very public way, because for years it got pushed to the back burner. Advocates were reluctant to talk about it. But all of us have had people come to us just distraught over what to do about a patient who is suffering from mental illness.

The court has ruled, and governments have to adjust to the courts. In this particular case, they gave the govern-

ment of Ontario a year, up until the date mentioned in December, to pass legislation which would deal with the concerns the court had expressed. Therefore, we are in a position of having to do that. I won't say this is relatively simple. It is not overly complex, but it does address specifically what the courts have told us. It may not be what many of us in the House would agree with—we don't always agree with the decisions of the court—but in this case, we must comply with it.

The minister, I know, and the Ministry of Health have wrestled with this problem for some time, trying to find the appropriate balance between the rights of the patients and the concerns that society has, including members of family, over the appropriate treatment of mental health patients.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Todd Smith: I'd like to commend the member for Hamilton Mountain. She always speaks with passion representing her community, and she spoke for 20 minutes this morning on this issue that's obviously having an impact in the Hamilton area, as it is in Prince Edward-Hastings. There just simply aren't enough people on the ground to deal with the mental health cases that are piling up.

We talk about our police officers. Our police officers are dealing so often with mental health cases because there are not enough mental health workers out there.

We have a great advocate in our community, Sandie Sidsworth of the Canadian Mental Health Association for Hastings and Prince Edward. She's the executive director. She's done a magnificent job over the last couple of years of really bringing these issues to light. But what the government hasn't been able to do is provide the funding increases so that we can provide those counsellors on the ground to help deal with these situations as they arise. Police officers shouldn't be doing it; it should be trained counsellors dealing with these issues. Unfortunately, so many of our police officers out there are tied up with these mental health cases when it should be a trained professional. So I commend the people who are on the ground who are doing the work, but this is a direct result of a government that either can't, is incapable or won't manage its own fiscal house.

The Auditor General warned us several times that when you don't get your own fiscal house in order—speaking to this government—it starts to crowd out the services that you should be providing in your community; it limits the ability for governments to provide the types of services that need to be provided. We all know in this House that mental health is the biggest issue facing our health care system in Ontario because we're not treating it properly. And part of the reason that we're not is because we don't have our financial house in order; we can't provide the funding and the resources that are necessary to keep our most vulnerable people healthy. That's what it comes down to, in my opinion.

I congratulate, again, the member from Hamilton Mountain on her speech this morning.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'm glad I'm here in the House today to add comments to this debate. I think we all agree that mental health needs to be destigmatized and talked about just like any health care issue that anyone experiences—it's a health care issue.

When we're talking about the bill today, there are concerns about the timing when this has occurred. I understand the member for St. Catharines—I agree; it's a very complicated, delicate matter. But there is a disappointment in the fact that this government has kind of—it feels like it's being pushed.

I checked with the Clerk, because I wanted to make sure of the process, that there was no little order in our standing orders that we must go to committee, or can it be overridden? Definitely. When we have a debate, you have your introduction of the bill. Then we have second reading and there is a debate, which we're in right now. Then, usually, when second reading is over with—members can debate the bill as long as they wish, unless the government time-allocates it, and I speculate that this will probably be time-allocated—at that point, we usually vote for it to go to committee. But there is no requirement in the standing orders that any bill has to go to committee for people to present deputations and comments and make amendments. If that doesn't happen, if we don't send it to committee, the government can call it for third reading right away. It doesn't have to have debate on third reading either; it can just be agreed upon for royal assent.

So in the timing, this might be the plan the government has, because it is December 23 that the court decision has said that we have to make new legislation in order to accommodate the human rights factor in this issue.

That's just my question and speculation on the debate on this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: I would like to say thank you very much to the member for Hamilton Mountain for her wonderful approach to this bill in the sense that—it's interesting that sometimes we're criticized for rushing things through or being late. I was part of the health care system for over 17 years before I had the great pleasure of representing the people of Ottawa-Orléans. As a former social worker, I would say that mental health, as acknowledged by some of our colleagues here, is one of the most complex and difficult issues that our youth, adults and also seniors are facing.

It's interesting when I hear the members saying that we do not consult. In this particular instance, because of the complexity of everything we had to do, we needed to consult with our stakeholders. My colleague here made reference to the fact that this is not an issue where you just make a decision. So, yes, there was a court ruling, and we had to look as a government and reach out to the people who are most affected, the people who are actual-

ly experiencing this issue, and see how we can best follow through the court system, but also protect the family members and give the right to our society to feel protected.

We also hear about the fact that we haven't invested in mental health. Well, I have to say, I am proud to say that, since 2003, our mental health and addiction funding has increased by over \$506 million, for a total of \$1 billion. Now our phase 2 is approaching.

0930

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Hamilton Mountain has two minutes.

Miss Monique Taylor: I have to say that I really enjoyed being able to delve into the work of this bill and what this means to people in Ontario and to the 330 people who are being held and could quite possibly just be let on the street as of December 23. The fact that the government has really just waited until the last minute—the member from St. Catharines talked about, whether we agree with the court ruling or not, it's got to be done. I welcome the court ruling. I welcome the government being forced into doing the right thing under human rights.

Thanks to the member from Prince Edward–Hastings. He's absolutely right: Our police officers are overwhelmed with mental health. We have to make sure we have a real plan to not only protect our police officers, but protect the people that they're serving or that they're coming upon that day.

Thanks to the member from London–Fanshawe. She talked about timelines. It's not a new story with this government. It has pushed things through—get it done—the lack of consultation. It will be interesting to see how the government makes this happen with the timelines that are left before us. Since we do have next week off for constituency week and Remembrance Day, there isn't much time left.

Thank you to the member from Ottawa–Orléans for her comments in talking about the complex issues. She is right; money has been put into mental health, but when we are talking about this section of mental health and the CCB, there has been a cut. There has been a cut to this, millions of dollars being cut. Do more, get less.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

The Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to stand and support the amendments to the Mental Health Act.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): We have a problem.

Interjection: Houston.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Houston, we have a problem.

So the minister without portfolio is speaking to this?

Mr. John Yakabuski: She's already been talking.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Well, I guess the Minister of Education beat you to it.

Interjections.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I will be sharing my time with—actually, I just got a note that says I should go first, okay?

Hon. James J. Bradley: That was for me.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Okay. Anyway, the note says I should go first, and it also says, which I already knew, that I'll be sharing my time.

Oh my goodness, we have all sorts of people we are sharing time with: the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change and the member from Halton and, I believe it should say, the—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order.

Hon. Liz Sandals: We will sort this out.

I am sharing my time with the Chair of Cabinet, and he will figure out who else we should share time with.

But can we get serious here? Because this is a really serious topic, when we are talking about that group of patients who have mental illness that is so severe—typically some form of psychosis which is so severe—that their behaviour may lead either to harm to themselves or harm to others. This is the group of people that we are dealing with here. The issue which has been contentious for many, many years and many, many decades, in fact, probably: How do you balance the right of the patient to have some control over their own treatment and the rights of the community to be safe?

Quite frankly, what those of us who have been working in constituency offices for many years, and those of us who served on the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions, of which I am one—which is the legitimate concern of families that, in many cases, psychosis is so severe that getting treatment would actually assist the patient in getting to a place where they cease to be a threat to themselves. The conundrum is that the patient's wishes, absent treatment, may actually turn out to be different from the patient's wishes if only they could access treatment. So there's even a conundrum there about how you best determine the well-being of the patient. This is a very, very complicated area.

The court has found that the current provisions of the Mental Health Act do not sufficiently respect the right of the patient to intervene and request that they be able to cease being involuntarily detained. It's given a certain time frame by which we must amend the act, or we will be in the situation where we could be required to release any involuntary patients that have been held for more than six months. Quite frankly, Speaker, that's problematic, because we know that many of those patients who have been held for more than six months are a real threat to others in the community. Because of their psychosis, they may respond in extreme and violent ways. So we need to come to some solution.

Now, unlike what the member opposite has suggested, which is that there is some affront to the Legislature in bringing the bill at this point, what has actually been going on has been a very robust consultation with the various organizations that are involved in the discussion. The Ministry of Health, in fact, has spent a lot of time talking about this Court of Appeal decision with the Con-

sent and Capacity Board, the people whose rules we are actually changing; the Ontario Review Board, which would review those rulings; the Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office, the person who is legally charged with being the advocate for people who are being held involuntarily—the psychiatric patient advocate has been very much involved in the discussion, advocating on behalf of the patients; and, in addition to that, the Mental Health and Addictions Leadership Advisory Council, which has been responsible for our whole transformation.

I just wanted to add a little bit, because there's been some discussion around cuts. If we look at it from a children and youth mental health perspective, which is, of course, where the education system comes in, more than 55,000 additional children and youth are now receiving care. We have invested over \$11 million to place 144 mental health nurses in schools. More than 770 mental health workers are serving communities, schools and courts, and more than 1,000 additional psychiatric consultations are being held with children with mental health challenges each year through the Tele-Mental Health Service, because there are so many communities where there just simply aren't child psychologists. So it is true that we are investing in the prevention end of this, but we still have to sort out this particular problem.

I turn it over to my colleague the Chair of Cabinet.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister without portfolio.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm awaiting the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change to join the member for Halton.

In my years in this Legislature, one of the most difficult problems to deal with has been that of dealing with mental health patients. It's unusual for the patients themselves to contact us, but for the members of the family, they are beside themselves when they see great difficulty being experienced by the mental health patients themselves and the impact it has on the family. When they come to you and you ultimately say, "There is really nothing I can do for you because of the existing law," they are very, very disappointed, and understandably so.

0940

We're not supposed to get into, I guess, with the confidentiality of cabinet, dealing with the deliberations of cabinet, but I can tell you that, going through cabinet committees and cabinet as a whole, there was a robust discussion of this with different points of view being presented.

This is not a bill I would bring forward if I were changing the Mental Health Act. This is, instead, a response to a court ruling, which meant that the government had to tailor its policy to that particular court ruling.

I find that I am very much influenced by those who have members of the family who are doing harm to themselves or harm to others. It is just so disappointing to them, and they are so distraught over the fact that they have members of the family that apparently can't be helped by the system.

It is not simply funding. Our members have mentioned that the funding is going to be up to \$1 billion now, and \$220 million in addition to that. I don't want to get into funding, because there is considerable funding, but I want to get into that issue itself of how difficult it is. On the one hand, you have the advocates for patients themselves who say they have their rights, and on the other hand you have the family members, close friends, very often members of police services and others who say that you simply have to have laws which allow us to take more interventionist action to be able to assist these people. Many people come to our office and say, "Ultimately, I can tell you that my son"—or daughter—"will be dead within two or three years." What you hate to see is when that prediction comes true.

As I say, if I were constructing this—and I can tell you, there were many different points of view that were presented while this was being discussed within cabinet committees, because of that frustration that people have had over the years in dealing with these problems.

This bill will address a court ruling. Somewhere along the line, in the years to come, perhaps there will be other legislation that will pass the court's scrutiny and will deliver even better services and accommodate the needs of members of the family who have people in that family who have been hit with mental illness.

As I say, I've been in this Legislature for 38 years, and I have watched different governments wrestle with this. It is a very, very difficult and challenging problem to deal with.

I now yield the floor to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: As my friend the member for St. Catharines said, this is in response to a court ruling, but I think it opens up a larger issue and one I would like to talk to. I know some of my colleagues will go into more detail.

I spent about 12 years of my life working on the streets. I started work around 9 o'clock at night, and I would finish around 3 or 4 in the morning. My son whom I fostered and adopted was one of these street-involved kids. The way a lot of young people are dealt with in mental health situations is that they're left, really, to nothing.

This was in another province. This was in Winnipeg, in a province that's not as wealthy as Ontario and doesn't have the mental health services or capacity that we have. We often talk in Ontario about how we have, somehow, inadequate services, and in some cases you can almost never really have enough services, given the complexity of the challenges we're facing. But in other parts of Canada that don't have the industrial, banking or mining base or wealth that Ontario has, those services sometimes are scarce and, quite frankly, often paid for by Ontarians and others in transfer payments.

I was always amazed: The kids I worked with had schizophrenia, were bipolar; they were, like my son, fetal alcohol syndrome, which means that you're born, basically, as chemically dependent into this world, which is

one of the cruelest things to see done to a child. I always admire him. He now has his own company, seven employees. He is married, which is something we never thought. It was a huge amount of intervention, but it was at the very core of this, because for my relationship with Michael, it was always his civil liberties.

He was HIV-positive and could be very aggressive because his mental illness would sometimes lead him to be violent—and parenting and getting the supports. I always said that if he was institutionalized he had all the mental health supports, but if he was with me in a family where dad would show up at high school, coach his hockey team and do all the things that he needed that I did for him—it was very hard to do that and do the mental health piece because you didn't get mental health support.

So we started a group with seven friends of mine; we called it the “extreme parenting group.” We all had children whom we were fostering or adopted who had fetal alcohol syndrome, who were bipolar or who had schizophrenia. Some of them had developed autism and some of them had constructs around genetic issues that were hard to deal with.

It was amazing to me, the number of children who end up solving their pain by illegally using prescription drugs or getting heroin. My son would shoot up, as much as 30 times a day, Talwin and Ritalin, which is a speedball. We have a vast amount of legal and illegal drugs out there that kids use to self-medicate their pain.

The other thing that they do is that they tend to be involved in prostitution and they tend to be involved in robbing themselves. They tend not to hurt other people; they commit crimes against themselves which are disruptive to their sense of self-esteem.

I agree with some of the other members and the member from St. Catharines in that this is a difficult issue. In my case, I remember coming home in February; it was 40 below and Michael had broken every window in my home. That cost me about \$17,000. He stole the television, stole my car, stole the VCR and stole the stamp collection. I always say to parents, “If you want to parent kids like that, your personal items cannot be more valuable to you than your children.” I have no regrets about that. I lost all of those things.

That's a high level. So how do we take care of these kids? It can't be just about mental health services. Every child should have the right to a parent who loves them. I learned not to be a very materialistic person because nothing in my life, living with Michael, allowed me to keep anything material. Many of my friends and many of the other kids whom I fostered for shorter periods of time had that serious thing. We often talk about, “It takes a village to raise a child,” that it takes us collectively. We live in a very materialistic society, where sometimes we're not prepared to make the sacrifices we need to. It's hard. No one ever thought Michael would make it to 18. I wish he wasn't representative.

We often hear in this society that we're taught to be afraid of strangers. The people who abused Michael were

previous parents of his who broke his leg, who gave him alcohol at age six, who drank before birth and left Michael with all kinds of disabilities that injured him. When he was sexually and physically assaulted, as were most of the kids, it was done by their parents or people they knew.

A lot of the politics is somehow, “People who abuse children are horrible strangers whom we need to protect people from.” It's usually the people whom they're most vulnerable to, because it's an uncle, it's a hockey coach or it's a parent—that's 80% or 90%. Almost all the kids whom I saw on the street were abused by someone who was in a position of care to protect them. That's what often triggered a lot of the mental health issues or compounded mental health issues that were in place.

I've just exceeded my time a bit, and I want to leave some time for the member for Halton. I think this a good thing, and I hope we as members will come together to take stronger action in the future beyond this legal issue of civil liberties versus treatment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Halton.

Ms. Indira Naidoo-Harris: I'm pleased to rise today to speak on Bill 122, the Mental Health Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015. I want to make sure that I address and acknowledge the remarks by the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change for being so honest with some of the comments he was making. It was very touching to hear some of that.

These amendments, if passed, would help ensure that patients who are detained in a psychiatric facility for longer than six months have their rights and freedoms protected while at the same time ensuring that health care providers can continue to provide excellent care to these patients.

Mr. Speaker, as you've heard already, this is a complex and serious issue. It's about respecting a person's rights and freedoms and balancing that with their family's concerns for their own safety. And as government, we have to be sure that we are concerned about the safety of society at large.

The provincial Mental Health Act provides for the involuntary detention of patients in psychiatric facilities where patients present a risk of harm to themselves or others. Let me give you a little bit of context, Mr. Speaker, about what we're talking about here. Mental health is a complex and important issue in Ontario's health care system. We know that one in five Ontarians will experience a mental health illness in their lifetime, and almost every person in Canada—every person—will be affected by someone with mental illness. Think about it. Those numbers are staggering.

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The Canadian Mental Health Association estimates that 10% to 20% of Canadian youth are affected by mental illness. That's why our government has created a comprehensive mental health and addictions strategy, to make sure that we're addressing care on all levels and making sure that we're doing the right thing when it

comes to these families and individuals facing challenges in their lives.

The Court of Appeal addressed the involuntary admission and detention of patients under the Mental Health Act, and the court said that part of the act was inconsistent with section 7 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Court of Appeal gave us until December 22 of this year to make these amendments to the Mental Health Act and make sure that we comply with the court's decision. That date is crucial. We need to get these things in place and we need to make sure that these individuals in society are protected. That's why we're moving as efficiently as we can to get the job done. It is about doing the right thing when it comes to the people of this province.

Specifically, the court struck down the provision of the act that allows a person to be detained in a psychiatric facility for longer than six months. For example, what this does is it ensures that, from the Court of Appeal, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, in partnership with the Ministry of the Attorney General, has reviewed the act and consulted with stakeholders on some of these proposed amendments. These proposed amendments, if passed, ensure that the Mental Health Act aligns with the Canadian Charter of Rights and at the same time enhances the rights of involuntary, long-term patients who have been committed to psychiatric facilities.

The amendments that are being debated today would enhance the ability of the Consent and Capacity Board to make certain guidelines for patients who have been in a psychiatric facility as an involuntary patient for longer than six months. What this does is it makes sure the board takes into account, for example:

- the safety of the public;
- the ability of the psychiatric facility to manage and provide care;
- the mental condition of the patient;
- the reintegration of that patient into society; and
- other needs of the patient.

Also, it takes into account limitations that we will be placing—and could be placing—on a patient's freedoms.

These are tough decisions. Too many Ontarians are touched by mental health each year. The objectives of the Mental Health Act are ensuring community safety and helping patients, making sure that they get the help they need. Our government is committed to making the most appropriate care for those who need it most within the system.

I support these amendments. They are key to ensuring that we have a safe society for all involved. I think it's the right thing to do, and I am pleased to be standing up today and speaking to this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions or comment?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It is an honour, actually, to stand in this House today and reference the act that has been brought forward, amending the Mental Health Act and the Health Care Consent Act, 1996.

Speaker, we talk about mental health. First of all, we, as a caucus, recognize the devastating effects that mental illness has and, of course, the stigma attached to it.

We've heard statistics: one in five. One in five Canadians—or I saw another article that said one in five students—have mental health issues. How do you define it? How do you define mental health? I'm sure that for many of us, even here in the Legislature, over the course of our lifetimes, we've experienced a moment or two when we feel and believe—"How do I cope with this situation?"

I'm very pleased to say that in Chatham-Kent, they're promoting mental health. One of the things that the Chatham-Kent Public Health Unit is doing is working with community partners to promote mental health by fostering the development of mental health wellness, supporting individual resilience, creating supportive environments and addressing the influence of the broader detriments of mental health.

We face unexpected problems every day, but it ties into one's ability to deal effectively with those problems. That, to me, is an indicator of good mental health or perhaps none.

There's so much more that I could say, but I think one of the things we need to realize is that we need to ensure that we have the proper resources in place so that these people can, in fact, get the help that they need.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I appreciate the comments made by members from the government benches. I know that Bill 122 seeks to protect the rights of long-term involuntary mental health patients in accordance with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

As New Democrats, we firmly believe that the rights of all Ontarians need to be protected and that all mental health legislation has to reflect the fundamental rights set out in the charter.

We agree it's time to amend the Mental Health Act to comply with the Court of Appeal ruling which found that portions of the act violate patients' rights under the charter.

On December 23, 2014, the Court of Appeal gave this Legislature one year to amend the Mental Health Act to better protect the rights of patients. The clock has been ticking, and the deadline of December 23, 2015, is fast approaching.

We're concerned that the Liberal government waited nine months after the court's ruling to introduce this bill. As a result of the government's long and unnecessary delay, the Legislature is now racing to meet the court-imposed deadline of December 23, at which point existing sections of the act will become invalid because they're in conflict with the charter.

The Liberals' long delay now leaves MPPs with just weeks to debate, hold hearings, amend and vote on this bill. The House rises on December 10, and this bill has to be completed by that date.

By taking nine months to simply introduce Bill 122 and another month to call this bill for second reading

debate, the government effectively reduced the time that the Legislature has to consider these amendments from 12 months to now less than two months.

This impedes the ability of MPPs to do our job, and may mean that the issues at hand don't get proper consideration.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport.

Hon. Michael Coteau: It's a pleasure to speak on this amendment to the Mental Health Act here today.

I know that the member from St. Catharines has addressed this as an issue that's in response to a court ruling, but I think we all agree here that this issue is much larger. Mental health is a very serious issue that I would say every single person who represents a riding in Ontario has had people come into their office to talk about.

I know that in my riding, I often speak to people about issues in relation to loved ones, or personal issues, around mental health. I know it's something that has even affected my family.

I think it's important for us to make these changes because the protection of a person's rights is obviously something that's very important to Ontarians. They represent Canadian values. I hope we can all come together to move this along, to address the issues that were outlined in the court ruling to make sure that we get this right. I believe we can work within this timeline to address these issues.

It was interesting. I had the opportunity this week to go visit the Magna Carta, the document that was produced in 1215. It talked a lot about rights. The entire exhibit at Fort York talked about the rights of people. There was a history of rights in Ontario and Toronto.

It's important that we do get this right, because the rights of the individual are an important piece. I think we can all work together, all three parties, to ensure that we do what's best for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm happy to rise today to comment on the mental health issues.

I don't think anybody in this House doesn't have numerous appointments with parents who have issues with loved ones who are being affected with mental health.

This bill, yes, missed this deadline—but it's important to get it right. It will be interesting to see how we can get this through before the end of December. As I said, it has been here a month and we haven't debated it.

Even our own family members have issues, and we see long wait times. It's time this government treats mental health as a health issue, because it really is a problem that affects not only families but communities.

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We're looking forward to seeing this bill passed. We have to weigh the rights of the patient versus the rights of the family. I know that friends of mine come to see us, looking for courts to take action, because they can't control the things that are happening within their own home.

It's a sad case. There's no easy answer, and I don't know what the answer is.

Hopefully, we'll be able to work through this and be able to put a system in place that allows our people who are working in the health care industry to look after the patients to the best of their ability and the best that we can in this great country of ours.

We shouldn't have many of the things that are going on actually going on. We should be able to provide help, provide respite and still look after the needs and the rights of the patient.

I look forward to further debate on this bill and seeing it through. It may be a little late, but at least it does the right thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The minister without portfolio has two minutes.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you for the very thoughtful interventions that were made by each of the members of the Legislature.

Understandably, the opposition, particularly, are going to be critical of the fact that the legislation wasn't brought back earlier. I can tell you that there are a couple of reasons for that. One was the very extensive consultation that went on. Every time the government came forward with a new suggestion, that had to be canvassed with a variety of people as well to get their reaction. It did take a while to go through cabinet committees, longer than many items might. So that was the reason. There was not general agreement. There were a lot of different views that were expressed and, ultimately, this is what came forward. It's still understandable that the opposition would say—because they want to have the opportunity, as do all members, to be able to deal with this in the House.

Particularly those of us who serve here in Toronto—the Legislature is here in Toronto—we look at the streets of Toronto and see many people who are living on the streets who obviously have mental problems. Part of that was the closing of psychiatric hospitals, which everybody agreed was good. But the challenge was, are you prepared to put those services in the community? Those services wouldn't be cheaper, but they would be more effective, and that is the best we can have.

All these things require more resources. Again, if I were sitting in the opposition benches, I would say, "Well, why doesn't the government spend its money more wisely" and so on. That's the mantra that the opposition has, and it's understandable. But for a lot of the things that we're asking people to do in our society, it's going to require more revenue, and that's something nobody ever wants to talk about. There are a lot of challenges out there, and those challenges have to be met by government, and some by private agencies.

But very thoughtful remarks from those who have intervened after the initial speeches.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: It is indeed a privilege to stand here today to speak on Bill 122, the Mental Health Statute Law Amendment Act.

I think it's important to speak about mental illness. We cannot shy away from it. Mental illness is just as important as physical health, in terms of working with it and improving mental health. Just like we work out to improve our physical being, we have to indeed make sure that every pillar of the foundation is secure in building up and perpetuating good mental health.

Despite the growing understanding in our province, through programs and campaigns such as Bell Let's Talk, I think we need to keep pushing. When we hear the statistics from organizations like the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, saying that only 50% of Canadians would tell a friend or co-worker that they have a family member with a mental illness, that tells me that we need to continue to work to counteract the negative stigma associated with mental illness.

Again, I can't stress it enough: Mental health is just as important as physical health.

When I hear from stakeholders about how members in their organization are afraid to admit to needing help with a mental health issue, for fear of losing their job or the stigma around mental health issues, that tells me we have to work harder. We all know people who have suffered and we can all attest to the support that's needed from family, but it has to extend beyond family and friends and co-workers. We here in this House can do more as well.

Last week, in fact, I had a very informative meeting with some of the folks from the Police Association of Ontario. They told me some shocking stats about the number of officers who have committed suicide across the country this year alone. I believe the number they gave me was 57, and that number is past what is acceptable—57 suicides in one year are 57 too many, and that's just in one sector alone. Our service men and women should not be ignored or forced to feel ashamed that they need help, when they put their lives on the line every day to keep us safe.

In 2009, the PAO had called for the government to develop presumptive legislation that would offer assistance to officers in dealing with possible and manifested cases of PTSD. To my knowledge, nothing has been achieved on this front, since I heard this exact call again last week in my office.

After this meeting, I went back and looked through then-Ontario Ombudsman André Marin's October 2012 report *In the Line of Duty*, and it shocked me. Many of the problems he identified three years ago, sadly to say, I was just hearing about again last week. The fact that the lack of help available to law enforcement professionals persists today tells me that we have to do better. We have to take their concerns seriously, and we cannot get mired in talking the talk, so to speak. We have to walk the walk as well.

Perhaps if we treated mental illness like we do a broken arm or a physical ailment, people would no longer fear getting treatment. People might no longer allow their symptoms to progress to a point where they cannot

control them, or fail to recognize any longer when they are suffering.

That brings us to why we're here today. This bill is before the House in response to an Ontario Court of Appeal decision issued in December of last year to strike down a part of the Mental Health Act that violates Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms. I think we can all agree here that no person, no matter what the circumstances, ever deserves to have their rights subverted.

To that end, I'm pleased to speak today towards Bill 122 and lend my voice in service to those who may not be able to speak for themselves.

Under the current format, a patient being held involuntarily for psychiatric care can apply for a hearing when issued their certificate of continuation, which happens after roughly six and a half months, and it must be renewed every three months thereafter. What the bill does address in this instance is the ability of a patient to apply or automatically have their involuntary status reviewed every 12 months, and that's a good step.

We in the PC Party believe that the bill is a good first step forward in addressing many of the current shortcomings in the Mental Health Act. We believe strongly that a patient should have access to advice on what rights they have to request orders regarding their detention.

I want to talk about access to advice. Locally, we have an initiative in Walkerton that is second to none. It's a wonderful legacy that the Cameron family has established to recognize and celebrate their son, who took his life through suicide. This initiative is called *Wes for Youth*. That legacy is an online help service for everyone throughout southwestern Ontario, especially geared toward teenagers and young adults who need advice on next steps. *Wes for Youth* is an example of a community caring for their young people. I think we here in this House are demonstrating that we too care, and that Bill 122, as I said, is a good first step forward.

Specifically, we believe that a patient involuntarily detained for mental health treatment, under the recommendation of medical professionals, should be able to transfer facilities; be given a leave of absence for a designated period of time; receive different security privileges in or outside the facility; be afforded the opportunity to have access, whether supervised or unsupervised, to the community; and have access to vocational, interpretive or rehabilitative services, should they wish. But—and I want to stress this point—this must be done only in the event that a licensed, trained psychiatrist gives their professional medical opinion that it is reasonable and logical to do so.

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I firmly believe—and this is something that I have said time and again—that we must follow science. We must always look to the professionals and the experts on what is the best course of action. Sadly, I've seen all too often in my time here at Queen's Park that this current government ignores the facts that they are presented with, or they shun the organizations that have presented data that fails to support the government's opinion.

To that end, Speaker, we must trust the Consent and Capacity Board, the CCB, to make the decisions and exercise the authority that they have been entrusted with. A body charged with determining the mental stability of a person and the level of freedom they can enjoy while residing in a mental health care facility will not fail to factor in conditions such as the safety of the public, the ability of the psychiatric facility to manage and provide care for the patients and others, the overall mental condition of the patient and any needs they may have, or the possibility of reintegrating the patient into society. In fact, they may take into consideration conditions that we may not have previously considered at all. We have to trust the experts.

We want to ensure that the people who need help are getting it, not because we want to remove them from society but because we want to engage them in it and make them productive, included members of our communities.

We here on this side as the PC Party, the opposition, agree with some of these changes as long as they are working for the benefit of the people whom this act is designed to serve and allow them access to society on some level, if medically recommended.

This government had a year to address the justice's decision, and instead, they didn't introduce any sort of legislation until September 23. Mr. Speaker, the judge ordered a deadline of December 23, and, given the parliamentary calendar, we have just nine weeks to debate this legislation—four weeks if you only consider what little time we have left. That's hardly enough time to conduct consultations with the relevant stakeholders or consider all of the implications that these amendments might have. This government truly has to get back on track with their consultations.

I have said numerous times that this government has a bad habit of excluding relevant stakeholders from sitting at the consultation table. They have done it time and time again. My colleague in the PC caucus, our health critic, Jeff Yurek, has been in touch with numerous psychiatrists who have expressed their frustration at not being asked for their input on the subject. They have every right to be upset. They bring serious issues to the table that this government should not and cannot ignore.

The changes fail to address the current limitations of the CCB as an expert tribunal on mental health by not allowing treatment to begin once the CCB has rendered a decision. The CCB is a panel of medical professionals, lawyers and public members who are experienced "in interpreting and applying legislation with specific knowledge of the Mental Health Act, Health Care Consent Act, 1996, Substitute Decisions Act, Personal Health Information Protection Act, Mandatory Blood Testing Act and Statutory Powers Procedure Act."

By failing to consider the concerns of these psychiatrists and specialists who are involved with mental health patients on the ground, this government has told them that the professional opinion they've been hired to render and the opinion of the CCB are worthless and that they know better; the government knows better. This is un-

acceptable. Again, we have to bring the right people to the table, we have to let the experts lead by their experience and we have to work with them, not exclude them.

In fact, the very recommendation that I just spoke about was brought forth when the Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions held depositions in April 2010. I believe there were a number of recommendations brought forth between 2009 and 2010 when the committee met, but we are just getting to this now with four weeks to go, when we're responsible for ensuring that 339 patients continue to receive the care that their medical professionals deem necessary.

We talked about having a year since the judge ordered this amendment, but the truth is that this government had five—almost six—years to work out the details and engage advocacy groups on the matter. Yet they chose instead to do it in the eleventh hour, when they could claim that they had no time to talk to anyone about it, and that's just not acceptable. While they've been dragging their feet, Ontarians continue to struggle to get the help they need. Each year, roughly one in five Canadians experiences a mental health issue, working out to roughly 175,000 full-time workers absent from work due to mental illness. This translates into a—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I have to interrupt the member. It's 10:15. We'll continue later; we'll start with you again.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1015 to 1030.

REPORT, FINANCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table a report from the Financial Accountability Officer of Ontario entitled An Assessment of Ontario's Medium-term Economic and Fiscal Outlook.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to recognize Jacob McCreery, who is in the gallery with us today. Jacob got a very early start this morning driving in with me from the great riding of Oxford. He's here for Take Our Kids to Work Day. Incidentally, I want to say, Mr. Speaker, my own children didn't want to come with me anymore, so I brought one of my constituents. I want to welcome Jacob to Queen's Park.

I also wanted to recognize the family of page Abby Moreside, whose parents Kathy and Dave Moreside are here in the gallery again today and are joined by Abby's aunt Theresa Moreside. Thank you again for coming to Queen's Park. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. You can also bring your nephew.

Mr. Michael Mantha: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good morning to you.

It's with great pride and honour that I introduce a good friend, Chief Reg Niganobe from the Mississauga First Nation in my riding of Algoma–Manitoulin.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome, Chief.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I would like to welcome Sarah Porter and Emma Stoyles to question period today. They are here in the program Take Our Kids to Work Day. Welcome to Queen's Park.

M. Steve Clark: Nous avons des délégués de la communauté franco-ontarienne avec nous aujourd'hui, et ils sont assis dans la galerie des membres. Je souhaite la bienvenue à Peter Hominuk, directeur général de l'Assemblée de la francophonie de l'Ontario; Alain Dupuis, directeur général du Regroupement étudiant franco-ontarien; Geneviève Borris; Rym Ben Berrah; Lucas Egan; Éric Desrochers; Jérémie Spadafora; Geneviève Latour; et Sylvain Bérubé. Ils sont tous ici pour promouvoir une université francophone. Bienvenue à Queen's Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I am delighted to welcome Daryl Frimer, who is a constituent from the wonderful riding of Parkdale–High Park.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would like to introduce Chris May, the director of government relations for the Chartered Professional Accountants of Ontario, who has brought his son Daniel May to the Legislature today. They are sitting in the members' gallery on the east side.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce today Valerie Inglis from Petrolia, Ontario, in my riding of Sarnia–Lambton. She is sitting in the east members' gallery and is taking part in Diabetes Day at Queen's Park. November is National Diabetes Awareness Month.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Today is Take Our Kids to Work Day, and I'm pleased that in the members' gallery, shadowing me today, is Georgia Iordanov from Earl Haig Secondary School in North York. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jim McDonnell: Today I want to introduce Karine Benzacar, the mother of page Nicole Haim from Thornhill. Welcome to the Legislature.

Ms. Catherine Fife: I would like to welcome my daughter Claire here. It's Take Our Kids to Work Day. Today should be inspiring for her, I hope.

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I would like to introduce Michael Psychogios, the son of a good friend of mine who is here today as well for Take Our Kids to Work Day. Welcome, Michael.

Mr. John Yakabuski: A unique take on Take Our Kids to Work Day: I'd like to welcome Ashley Paisiovich here today. She is accompanied by her father, George, on a unique Take Our Kids to Work Day. George worked here years ago, and he's going to give Ashley a great perspective on what goes on here at Queen's Park and how people interact with members.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'd like to introduce today's page captain, Kyle Preuss, who is small in stature but is

certainly big on service to this Legislature. He will be joined by his father, Brian Preuss, here this afternoon.

Ms. Daiene Vernile: I would like to recognize Audrey Musselman and Sue McEwen, who are two retired teachers from the great riding of Kitchener Centre. They won a "lunch with your legislator" raffle. Thank you very much.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'd like to introduce my executive assistant from the constituency office in North Bay, Andrea Stoppa.

Mr. Steve Clark: Today is Take Our Kids to Work Day, and I'd like to welcome Kaman Tomé. He's a grade 9 student from Humberside Collegiate. His aunt Dianne has brought him to work in my office today. Welcome to Queen's Park, Kaman.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait extrêmement plaisir de vous présenter le président du RÉFO, M. Alain Dupuis; le président de l'AFO, M. Denis Vaillancourt; des représentants de la FESFO, Jérémie Spadafora et Rym Ben Berrah; ainsi que plusieurs francophones qui sont ici pour parler université francophone. Bienvenue.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I would like members to welcome Tyler Vis. He is participating in the Take Our Kids to Work Day. He is a former page with the Legislative Assembly and has joined us today. Please welcome him.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As a generic welcome, just so that members know, there are plenty of students here today, watching their parents who work here at the Legislature. We welcome them as well.

It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Mr. Patrick Brown: My question is for the Minister of Finance. The Financial Accountability Officer released another damning report this week, this time about your government's promise to balance the budget by 2017-18. His conclusion was this: If revenue and spending continue as they have been for the past four years, your government will run a deficit of \$3.5 billion.

Mr. Speaker, they've backed themselves into a corner. They have no way out, other than to raise taxes or cut services. Will the Minister of Finance tell us exactly what taxes he's going to raise and what services he is going to cut?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'd like to first acknowledge and thank the Financial Accountability Officer for his report. We have a strong working relationship, recognizing that we want full transparency and integrity in the work that we're doing. That is being recognized and acknowledged by the FAO. He further says the following: "The province would appear to be on track to beat its 2015-16 deficit target." That is what he says. He says that in the last three years following the recession, Ontario

has been able to achieve “steady improvements in its fiscal position.”

We are exceeding our targets. We have for the past six years running. We’ll continue to do what’s necessary in light of the challenges that face us, as we have every year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Minister of Finance: Really? You’re thanking the Financial Accountability Officer for saying that your numbers don’t add up?

What is more remarkable is what this government calls the plan for Ontario. Health funding has grown by 3% on average in the past, but the government will now have to cut that in half. How? The Financial Accountability Officer says through “measures to reduce physician fees.”

Education funding is projected to be cut in half as well. How? The FAO says “through measures to consolidate school space.”

Other programs are supposed to decline by 6.1%. How? The Financial Accountability Officer says through the elimination of Ontario’s Clean Energy Benefit.

Mr. Speaker, they want to cut funding to doctors, close needed schools and raise hydro rates, all because of their incompetence. Is this acceptable?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite, if I recall, comes from the Harper holdovers. This is a man who did not respect the parliamentary officers’ reports and their work. We do.

He further goes on to talk about all the work that’s necessary to recalibrate our spending, things that we have achieved and are continuing to do. We’re being targeted and we’re being strategic. What they offered in the past was across-the-board cuts, harmed our recovery—

Interjections.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If it’s any more than this, I’ll move as quickly as I can to an area I don’t like to but that I will use.

Please finish.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I understand he doesn’t like to talk about the past, because the past doesn’t suit his needs. But the fact of the matter is, when he was in the federal government, they had tremendous surpluses that were left over. They squandered it. They went through multiple deficits, doubled their debt, and we still today are looking for that—

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

Mr. Patrick Brown: Again to the Minister of Finance: dodge, deny, deflect, blame everyone else. Defend your own ideas. If you believe in your plan, defend it. Don’t blame and attack others.

The FAO says that the government won’t meet their revenue projections this year, and they’ll come up short on revenue every year until 2017-18. Even if you continue to gut health and education, you won’t achieve balance. Even if you continue to raise hydro rates to record heights, you won’t achieve balance.

Mr. Speaker, when you think about it—\$1.1 billion wasted on the gas plants, \$2 billion on smart meters, \$1.1 billion on eHealth and another billion on Ornge. If you combine all the scandals, that’s over \$4 billion. That’s your deficit right there. Is this acceptable? Admit to the House that we’re in this situation—

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

Interjections.

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

I just want to remind the member: third person to the Chair. And I will remind all members that the debate is better controlled and has more substance when you use third person—tested and true—to the Chair, both answer and question.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The mess that was left was a \$5.6-billion hidden deficit when we took over. The member opposite—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Again, I’ll remind you that you don’t know when I’m going to decide to talk to somebody. I also want to say that it’s not helpful when all sides yell back and forth. It’s not productive,

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And the gesture doesn’t work.

Finish, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The FAO goes on to say that he expects that we will meet our deficit targets, that we are exceeding our balance year over year, that we have achieved tremendous results in the face of challenging times—

Mr. John Yakabuski: I think it’s time for the FBI.

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: —and that requires determination and a balanced approach in achieving those results. That’s exactly what we have been doing, contrary to what they’ve done in the past.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the finance minister. This morning, the Financial Accountability Officer confirmed what the Ontario PC caucus has been saying for nearly two years: You have a multi-billion-dollar hole in your budget. The FAO expects a \$3.5-billion deficit in 2017-18, the year you told Ontarians that you’d balance. In fact, he said that it could be \$7.4 billion, if the numbers are even more wrong than current. He also affirmed that “economic growth in 2015 is expected to be significantly slower than projected” and will result in up to \$1 billion less in revenue than expected this year.

So, Speaker, is the minister raising taxes, or can we expect more cuts to health care?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: There’s a hole in your budget, dear Sousa.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Nepean–Carleton.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite wants to know if the Financial Accountability Office—so allow me to do so.

It says on page 2, “The government’s history of managing program spending below budget projections should more than offset the impact of lower revenue....” He further says that it appears that the province is on track to beat its deficit target. He also says, “In the three years following the recession, Ontario was able to achieve steady improvements in its fiscal position, reducing the deficit....” He goes on to explain that there are times that are challenging.

We recognize that. We’ve been saying that all along. As a result, we have had to redo and recalibrate our spending. That is why we have a line-by-line program review of all that we do—in a strategic way, not across-the-board cuts as proposed by the opposition, but ensuring that we stimulate the economy, ensuring that we protect those programs, and ensuring that we balance the books by 2017-18, as we are doing, and we’re on target to do just that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, I don’t know what book the minister read, but in the book that we were given, his numbers are wrong.

The FAO expects a \$3.5-billion deficit. We’ve been telling them they’re wrong, and today the FAO confirmed that. In order to balance, he said, you have to reduce the deficit at “a rate of improvement nearly four times greater than the pace of the past four years.”

It’s clear that this repeated pattern of scandal and mismanagement is now coming home to roost for the people of Ontario. Ontario is at real risk of being stuck in a perpetual deficit under their watch.

Speaker, will the fall economic statement recognize the fiscal risks pointed out by the officer this morning and provide realistic numbers, unlike the fluffy projections we have been getting for the past two years?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Conference Board of Canada has consistently, year over year, reaffirmed that Ontario’s representation and integrity of our numbers outpaced the rest of Canada.

We have been very open. We have, in all economic statements and in our budgets, been very clear about what those challenges are, what it is that we must do in order to achieve our balance. We have also been clear that we must invest in those initiatives that make us competitive, long term.

The member opposite would rather we fill in those very holes, that Eglinton Crosstown—the Minister of Transportation only today recognized the importance of making those investments, under budget, for the benefit of the people of Ontario. They didn’t want to do that. They don’t want to invest. They don’t want to provide for economic stimulus. They would rather we go back in time and, Mr. Speaker, we’re not going to do that.

We are looking forward to promoting more growth in the province of Ontario and balancing our books at the same time.

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

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Back to the minister: Last week, the officer told us that the Hydro One sale will make Ontario’s books look better this year and then fall off the cliff in the years ahead. He has basically now reconfirmed that in his forecast today. This is important, because he stated Ontario’s revenue would be reduced by \$2 billion in 2016-17 and reduced by a further \$2.8 billion in 2017-18.

We know that their own law puts the asset proceeds into general revenues, not directly into the Trillium Trust. Now we know that they’re going to pay for this fiscal mismanagement with the Hydro sale, instead of infrastructure.

So I ask the minister to come clean. Isn’t the Hydro One sale really just a way to get one-time cash to cover over your record of waste, scandal and mismanagement before the next election?

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. Charles Sousa: It’s obvious that the critic for finance hasn’t really read the report. He’s making assumptions on Hydro One’s asset, which is not even baked into these conditions. He references—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Barrie, come to order. Thank you.

Carry on, please.

Hon. Charles Sousa: We have been very clear that, dollar for dollar, all of those proceeds are being reinvested into infrastructure, and that has been stated and reaffirmed by the Financial Accountability Officer in his first report, no less.

What the member opposite fails to see, or wishes not to, is in fact that we have taken steps necessary to control our spending. We have become the lowest-cost government anywhere in Canada as a result of those initiatives that we have taken. The FAO report has also affirmed that to be so.

We must do more to promote revenue, and we must do more to control our spending. We are doing all of that, and we will continue to do so.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. Today, Ontario’s Financial Accountability Officer showed that the only way the Liberals can keep their promise to balance the budget is with more cuts.

The 2015 budget froze hospital budgets. We have seen what that looks like: firing nurses, closed beds and hospitals in gridlock. The FAO says that the only way the government can meet its targets is to cut even more. So how many more doctors and nurses will the Liberals be firing? How many more hospital beds will they close?

1050

Hon. Charles Sousa: Actually, the FAO report noted that, in fact, controlled spending has occurred in this province. He has indicated that we have had to do some tough decisions—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Renfrew, second time; member from Leeds–Grenville, first.

Please finish.

Hon. Charles Sousa: And he further noted that we have increased funding for health care, education and social programs that are so critical in our society. But we're doing it in a very controlled manner and we're ensuring that we don't compromise the services that are important to Ontarians, while ensuring we also balance the books and take the necessary steps to be financially viable for the long term.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Liberals' 2015 budget froze education spending, and we've seen the chaos that this has created. But the FAO says that to keep the promise to balance the books, the government will have to further slash education funding and close even more schools. We've already seen education workers fired and schools closed in communities across this province.

How much more chaos will children and families have to endure as this government continues to fire education workers and close schools?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The leader of the third party—it seems her favourite word of all time is “can't.” She says we can't balance, she says we can't maximize value of public assets, and she says we can't make investment in public transit, in her own community no less. It's obvious that she's so negative that she can't even keep her team happy, and I can't blame them either.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just a—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: Are you serious, Gilles?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I am. Let's make sure the tone stays the way it should be in this place.

Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In the last budget, the government planned to slash over \$3 billion in services over the next three years. Now the FAO says that the Liberals will have to cut even deeper in order to keep their promise. We've already seen nurses fired, education workers fired, hospital beds closed, schools closed. What other services are families in Ontario going to be losing with this government?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The FAO said the following, “In the three years following the recession, Ontario was

able to achieve steady improvements in its fiscal position”—that was on page 8. He said that health care spending increased by 1.8%, well below the previous average pace of 3%, however, it's increasing as opposed to decreasing; and education spending is projected to grow by 1.3%, nearly half the pace of previous years, but increasing still.

Spending in other programs is declining as necessary to ensure that we provide the appropriate services while still balancing the books, and we are doing just that. We are increasing and providing support where it's necessary, ensuring that we provide the services the people of Ontario depend upon. We'll continue to do that.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Acting Premier. When the Premier first announced her scheme to sell off Hydro One, Ed Clark said it was worth \$15 billion. But the FAO showed that as of October, it's only worth \$11.9 billion. That's a gap that will have to be filled if the Premier is going to keep her promise to build transit.

Will this government be slashing from other areas, putting another revenue-generating public asset on the auction block, or will they be breaking their promise to build transit and infrastructure? Will this Acting Premier tell us exactly how the Liberals are going to make up the difference?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The market has priced the deal and it's at the high end, so the gap that you speak of isn't the case. But, notwithstanding, what's important to note is the tremendous amount of capital infusion into the Trillium Trust is being dedicated dollar for dollar for public transit and for the projects of priority in our municipalities to ensure that's reinvested so we can get greater returns.

The Conference Board of Canada estimates that every dollar we invest in infrastructure and in these programs produces about \$1.43 back. That's much more than the current rate of return on Hydro One. At the same time, we own Hydro One, and we'll get the benefit of that appreciation of values as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, when the Premier announced the plan to sell off Hydro One, she claimed that it would reduce the provincial debt. In fact, the sell-off will increase the debt. People won't pay less for electricity; they're going to be paying more. In the long term, it will mean less money, not more, for services that Ontarians rely on, like health care and education. It barely scratches the surface of what this province needs to invest in infrastructure and transit.

Will the Acting Premier and the Liberal government admit that Ontarians and the independent watchdogs are right, the government is wrong, and stop the sell-off of Hydro One?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the FAO even this morning reaffirmed the fact that while he was evaluating Hydro One, he did so on a stand-alone basis. He didn't

look at the merits, and he said specifically that he wasn't going to.

But others have. Independent writers from the *Globe and Mail*, the *Post* and others have noted that the returns that will accrue to the province are much greater. The net benefit will be better for the province after we do this transaction.

He says the following: "This report does not seek to assess the merits of the decision" of Hydro One. He fully states, "The results of this analysis are sensitive to the timing of subsequent" activity, recognizing that there is more to be done in replacement of that forgone revenue. He says the "forecasts are subject to change in the financial performance of Hydro One," which is obvious because we know Hydro One can do better. The impact on the balanced budget would depend on marketing conditions and policy decisions around the repayment of the sector and debt.

I can assure everyone in this House that the transaction that's going to follow in the next few days—\$1 billion of that goes to—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Financial Accountability Officer said the Hydro One sell-off won't raise the money that the Premier promised. It won't lower debt like the Premier promised. Every time we learn something new about the Hydro One sell-off, the deal gets worse and worse for Ontarians.

How bad does this deal have to get for the people of Ontario before this Liberal government does the right thing, steps up to the plate and pulls the plug on this terrible deal?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, in the *Post* today it talks about Hydro One and the upside of the sale. Maybe I can refer the member opposite to review and look at what other experts are saying with regard to this transaction. She's only harping on the forgone revenue, which we acknowledged would be the case, as we provide in our prospectus and the report. But it is being mitigated and replaced by greater revenue and greater returns to the province on the other side.

The transaction pays down substantive debt, lowers costs, lowers interest and lowers risk to the government. It retains ownership of Hydro One to benefit us from the appreciation in value and possible dividends.

We're also the government that will tax the system on an ongoing basis in the future. All of that is being retained, being protected, and the people and the ratepayers will still have the benefit of the OEB to control any exposure to the consumers.

TAXATION

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Speaker, it's clear the

minister intends to amend the Municipal Act to allow all municipalities to create a land transfer tax. This will double the amount of land taxes due at closing on the average home in Ontario to over \$10,000.

For many Ontarians, this will crush their dreams of owning their own home. That's why yesterday I tabled my motion calling on this House to take a stand against any new municipal land transfer taxes.

Is the minister so out of touch with the struggles of Ontario families that he thinks they have an extra \$10,000 under the mattress to pay his double-dipping land tax?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, I take no advice from the party that downloaded billions of dollars in services to the property tax base.

The member opposite knows very well that we are currently reviewing the Municipal Act and listening to input—

Interjections.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Again, I comment on the conversation that seems to be deteriorating and against what I've asked for in terms of names. It's highly inappropriate, guys.

Let's finish, please.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: What this is about, and what I'm asking myself and asking Ontarians to think about, is this: Do our municipalities have the tools they need to provide for the services their citizens want, and what options can municipalities have to get the job done?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Stormont, second time.

Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing: Ontarians are sick and tired that the answer to every single question facing this government is to invent a new tax—a carbon tax, commuter tax, beer tax, pension tax. It all adds up to tax increases of \$30.8 billion on their watch.

Now they want to tax the dream of home ownership. My motion says that enough is enough. Just because the minister has no plan to manage the issues raised by municipalities, that doesn't give him the right to unload the burden onto the backs of hard-working young families. Either the minister believes they should have the same ability as their parents and grandparents to save for their own home, or he doesn't. Will he prove it, if he does, by supporting my motion on December 3?

Interjections.

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

Please finish.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: We haven't made any decisions yet. We're listening carefully. But at the end of the day, it's municipalities that need to decide what works best for their communities. That's their job as responsible leaders.

I think it's time that my friend came clean about his real motives here. His party has always stood for downloading more and more responsibilities to municipalities without any thought about how they're supposed to deliver those services. As a former mayor of a small municipality, I am keenly aware of the damage caused by the previous PC government, which burdened Ontario's 444 municipalities when they downloaded—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds—Grenville, second time.

Wrap up, please.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Yes. The way his party treated municipalities when they were in power—they didn't have a ministry of municipal affairs; they had a ministry of downloads—

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

New question.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Today's FAO report shows that this government plans to balance its books by deeply cutting and slashing program spending because this minister's revenue projections were way off. The 2015 budget showed Ontarians that the government is cutting program spending in real terms by 5.5% in other programs.

Now we have learned from the FAO that programs that are extremely important to the people of this province—Ontario families—like health and education are going to be cut even further. Yesterday, we learned that there are 16,000 children who have autism who are on a wait-list.

Minister, can you shed some light for Ontarians and tell them what program cuts are in store for them?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question from the member opposite and, again, I appreciate the work done by the FAO in recognizing that there are challenges that the province faces, as does Canada, for that matter, as do other parts and other economies around the world.

Ontario, notwithstanding—the FAO has reaffirmed this—has exceeded its targets. In fact, our ability to gain greater employment was at a faster pace than the United States. Our ability to control spending also outpaced the rest of Canada, but he noted that we are supporting health care and education and social programs.

When it comes to autism, we all recognize the great need that exists in our communities. The province of Ontario has invested over \$140 million in supporting autism. We'll continue to do that. That is not being sacrificed as we proceed to balance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Minister, you will not balance your books by 2017-18 because your revenue projections—for some reason, you built them into the economic forecasting using the wrong GDP levels. The only way

that you're going to balance your budget in 2017-18 is by hurting the people of this province.

Mr. Speaker, since this Liberal government took power, Ontarians have seen hospital budgets frozen, nurses fired, heartbreaking wait-lists growing for services like autism therapy, all of which have had a significant impact on the people of this province.

With today's FAO report showing significant risk in this government's fiscal plan, I have to ask the minister: What cuts are coming? Will more nurses be fired? Will more schools be closed? Will poverty funding be cut again? The people of this province have a right to know what's in store for them.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the comments made are just untrue.

Interjections.

Hon. Charles Sousa: No. The fact is, we have based our assumptions and our forecasts on economists from across Canada. We've taken their projections and we pared them down by an additional point. We did so every year. In fact, last year, revenues were down by \$2.2 billion and still we exceeded our targets because of what we had to do to recalibrate and control our spending. We'll continue to do that even now.

Contrary to what the member just said, the FAO very clearly stated that we're on track, that we're able to meet our targets notwithstanding some of the challenges before us.

Furthermore, it is questionable how it is—and it's why it's so difficult—that the member opposite only sees it from one point of view. We must take a balanced point, Mr. Speaker, and that's to ensure that we look at the benefits and the work that's necessary to support the people of the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before we move on, let's make something clear: On the edge, there are always insinuations, whether they are—that we can't say it if we say it right out, and if you try to say it in another way. I'm just going to ask all members, including the minister, that it's pretty obvious that there could be an insinuation in what was just said. I'm going to caution all members to stop trying to find words that you think you can say.

Interjection: Ask him to withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If you don't mind, I'd like to rule.

I'm asking the minister to withdraw, under the premise that I did think that it was an inappropriate comment.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm using this as a moment for all moments to make an attempt to try to elevate the debate. No matter what, that should be your first focus.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Mr. Yvan Baker: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Something that I have heard consistently from my constituents in Etobicoke Centre is how important it

is that we manage taxpayer dollars wisely and that we balance the budget so that we can continue to invest in the services that the people of Ontario need and rely on. That's why I'm so proud to work with the President of the Treasury Board, the Minister of Finance and other members of caucus to make sure we do just that. I'm someone who's a management consultant, someone who has taught at York University in the business school, and I share the view of my constituents that this is truly important.

On that note, Minister, I understand that this morning the Financial Accountability Officer released a report titled *An Assessment of Ontario's Medium-term Economic and Fiscal Outlook*. Providing independent analysis on the state of Ontario's economy is a key component of Mr. LeClair's mandate. I know that our government first established this office in 2013 to further our commitment to fiscal transparency and accountability. I believe that Ontario is the only province in Canada to appoint such an officer.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister, could you please provide my constituents and the people of Ontario with your update on the report released this morning by the Financial Accountability Officer?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I thank the member for the question. I first want to thank Stephen LeClair, Ontario's Financial Accountability Officer, for his report. The FAO serves an important public service in providing independent analysis to the assembly about the state of the province's finances. I enjoy a positive working relationship with Mr. LeClair and I welcome and value his independent analysis of our province's finances.

The FAO's report released today affirms our 2015-16 deficit target. This is the lowest deficit projection in Ontario since the onset of the global recession. Mr. LeClair further acknowledges in his analysis that eliminating the deficit by 2017-18 is achievable, and highlights that the province will be on track to beat this deficit target yet again.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Yvan Baker: Back to the Minister of Finance: I'm pleased to hear that our government has established a good working relationship with Mr. LeClair's office and I'm glad that Mr. LeClair has affirmed a few things. One is our ability to balance the budget in one of his scenarios—agree that we'll meet our deficit target of \$8.5 billion for 2015-16 and acknowledge that we have managed program spending below budget projections.

1110

However, I'm sure, Minister, that the people I represent in Etobicoke Centre would like to hear a little bit more about the specifics of the report. I understand that Mr. LeClair's report focuses on Ontario's fiscal and economic situation, taking into account projections in our 2015 budget. The report also examines certain economic trends over the past 15 years to provide historical context for the province's fiscal outlook.

Minister, could you please comment on Ontario's progress, both on an economic and on a fiscal basis?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you again to the member for the question. Ontario's economy continues to grow at a modest pace, despite a challenging and changing global landscape.

In his report, the FAO points at several external factors over the last decade that have had an impact on Ontario's economy. However, the FAO states that following the recession, "employment rebounded relatively quickly" in Ontario. He also pointed out that "the pace of Ontario's job recovery following the global recession was much quicker than in the US or other G7 countries."

From a fiscal perspective, the FAO also applauds our ability to manage program spending. In his report, he points out, on page 12, that "in 2013-14 and 2014-15, program spending was \$1.2 billion lower each year than the original budget plan projection.... As a result, it is reasonable to expect the government will continue to be able to manage program spending for 2015-16 below the original budget plan...."

Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the FAO once again for his hard work, and I look forward to continuing our positive relationship.

PESTICIDES

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: My question is to the Minister of the Environment and Climate Change. Yesterday, we heard from Ontario's Acting Environmental Commissioner that this Liberal government has been ignoring the small things that matter. Speaker, we all know why: They're so busy being preoccupied managing their blunders, like the sell-off of Hydro One, and scandals, like the Sudbury by-election, rather than being busy with the environment.

In her report, the commissioner highlighted several areas that the government is failing our environment, one being that "the many gaps in knowledge that still exist on this subject [of neonicotinoids] need to be addressed promptly." She goes on to state, "The ECO encourages the Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change to fund independent research examining neonicotinoids, and their effects on food chains and ecosystems from an Ontario perspective."

My question for the minister should have a straightforward answer. Does he agree with the Environmental Commissioner and that there needs to be more Ontario-focused, science-based research conducted with regard to neonics?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker, and to the member opposite. It's a peculiar question, since the Environmental Commissioner's report last year demanded that the government take action to reduce neonicotinoids, based on the large volume of evidence globally.

In the intervening year, from Harvard University, the University of Minnesota, the University of Sussex and the University of Toronto, there is a larger body of re-

search on neonicotinoids. As a matter of fact, we're doing research on our water systems, and Quebec is in the middle of major research, where they found systemic neurotoxic pesticides in all 20 of their rivers.

We have said that we're applying the precautionary principle. We continue to monitor, support and work with the best research centres in the world. The evidence is on the side of the prudent action we are taking, which is to start to reduce, annually, the amount of this very dangerous toxin.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Clearly, Speaker, the minister's puffed-up rhetoric is showing that he is continuing to ignore the Environmental Commissioner. She has specifically asked the minister to conduct Ontario-based, science-based research, and you know what, Speaker? We need to see this minister focusing in on the policies regarding neonicotinoids here in Ontario. But this Liberal government is moving ahead, without the facts, and they're banning them in the agricultural sector.

My question to the minister is this: Will he heed the advice and the recommendation from the Environmental Commissioner, and will he agree to halt the ban on neonicotinoids until Ontario-based research is completed? That is what the commissioner is asking for. Will he do it?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I don't know where the member opposite has been. There have been several studies published on Ontario, including by Purdue University. The member should read some of the things I sent her, because of the 19 studies done by Purdue University, one of the leading agricultural universities, five of them were done in Ontario. Sussex university—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member knows better than to do that, and I would like to hear the answer.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: —Sussex university, Guelph university, the University of Minnesota—Dr. Marla Spivak, one of the world's leading experts.

Mr. Speaker, we're not banning them. That is completely not true. I have visited about three dozen farms; I've talked to farmers. There are many farmers that are using it. What the opposition is proposing is that we should use pesticides prophylactically where there are not wireworms and there are not grubs.

Could the member explain why we should use pesticides where the very pests that they're supposed to address are not even present? Because that's the position of her party.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Acting Premier. Let's take a trip down memory lane on this government's record of wait-lists for autism services. In 2004, the Deputy Premier said, "The waiting lists are simply too long and there are too many kids who aren't getting what they need." Five years later, the Deputy

Premier said that "clearly the wait-list is not acceptable." Yesterday, the same Deputy Premier suggested that 16,000 kids on a wait-list for autism services was government progress.

The government cannot plead ignorance. They have known for years about the devastating impact of these wait-lists. Will the Acting Premier admit that this government has failed kids with autism and their families?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I sincerely appreciate the question and the concerns that we all share in this House.

I understand that families caring for young people with autism indeed face unique challenges. We recognize that wait-lists for services remain a concern. In recent years, the prevalence of autism has increased from one in 100 to one in 68 children. We're working hard to address this issue because we know that we need to make further progress for these children, especially for their families.

Our government has introduced a range of programs, as the member knows, to help children and youth with autism, to build system capacity, to improve supports in schools, and support families. This year, we're investing over \$190 million in autism services, an increase of over \$100 million since 2004.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Miss Monique Taylor: Back to the Acting Premier: Yesterday, the Minister of Children and Youth Services said that she didn't think there was a decrease in the number of spots available for ABA and IBI services, but the estimates show that the number of spaces has decreased for ABA services.

Families have made plea after plea to this minister to deal with the wait-list, to ensure that kids are getting the supports they need. Parents and kids have had enough. They've had enough excuses; they've had enough talk; they've had enough studies; they've had enough panels. Now is the time for action.

Will the Acting Premier instruct the minister to immediately end wait-lists for children with autism?

Hon. Charles Sousa: To the Minister of Education.

Hon. Liz Sandals: I think one of the things we need to recognize is that there's a variety of ways in which children with autism are supported. One of the things that we have done is we've actually invested in ABA specialists in each school board. Those ABA specialists at each school board are able to work with the teachers, the EAs and the spec ed consultants to make sure that can be incorporated into the programs, into the specialized support that each student has.

There is more than one way to support the needs of a child with autism. They actually have quite different needs. That's how the school system deals with the school-age kids: to look at the needs of the individual child and provide appropriate—

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

IMMIGRATION FRANCOPHONE

M. Grant Crack: Ma question est pour la meilleure ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones.

Cette semaine, partout en Ontario et au Canada, les communautés francophones célèbrent la troisième Semaine nationale de l'immigration francophone. C'est l'occasion de mettre en avant les réalisations de notre gouvernement.

Est-ce que la ministre peut nous mettre à jour sur les contributions du gouvernement en ce qui a trait à l'immigration francophone en Ontario?

1120

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Premièrement, je voudrais remercier le bon député de Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, qui est un fier défenseur des droits des francophones. Je voudrais aussi prendre l'occasion de féliciter le nouveau ministre de la Citoyenneté et de l'Immigration, John McCallum, qui vient d'être nommé ministre.

Notre gouvernement travaille très fort sur le dossier de l'immigration francophone. En Ontario, nous recevons le plus d'immigrants francophones hors Québec. Nous accueillons en fait 16 fois plus d'immigrants francophones que le Nouveau-Brunswick et neuf fois plus que le Manitoba.

Les choses avancent de bon pas. En juin 2015, nous avons établi un groupe d'experts francophones pour faire des recommandations à notre gouvernement. Nous comptons d'ailleurs sur le gouvernement fédéral et M. le ministre McCallum pour qu'ils nous aident à atteindre notre cible de 5 %. En retour, nous l'aiderons à atteindre sa cible d'immigration francophone hors Québec de 4,4 %.

Le Président (L'hon. Dave Levac): Merci. Question?

M. Grant Crack: Merci encore à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones pour sa réponse. La question de l'immigration est, comme vous le savez, une question importante pour l'ensemble de la communauté francophone. Au printemps dernier, nous avons annoncé un objectif de 5 % d'immigration francophone en Ontario.

Monsieur le Président, je souhaiterais que la ministre nous explique comment nous allons atteindre cet objectif.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Oui, en fait, nous avons cette cible de 5 % et nous travaillons en étroite collaboration avec le ministère des Affaires civiques, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international.

Entre autres, nous avons développé une stratégie de promotion et de recrutement international francophone en Europe et en Afrique. Nous travaillons avec Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada et leur nouveau système électronique, appelé Entrée express, pour gérer des demandes d'immigration économique, et nous finançons un portail Internet qui met en valeur 19 communautés à travers l'Ontario pour y favoriser l'immigration francophone. Je vous assure que le travail est acharné et que notre gouvernement poursuit ce travail-là.

J'étais tout récemment en France aussi pour inviter les gens, les Français, parce qu'on ne sait pas qu'il y a une communauté francophone et qu'on peut travailler ici en Ontario en français. Alors, je les invitais à venir soit

ouvrir une « business » ici ou à immigrer, tout simplement. Merci.

PROBATION SERVICES

Ms. Laurie Scott: My question is for the Attorney General. There's a quote that I'd like to read: "Ontario communities must ... remain safe. Because every child in this province should be able to walk home without fear, and no parent should face an unthinkable loss." That was a promise that the Premier made in the throne speech in 2013.

Anastasia Kuzyk, Nathalie Warmerdam and Carol Culleton had families—families that have suffered an unthinkable loss. Despite this promise, the fact is crown attorneys aren't even notified when convicted offenders refuse to sign their probation orders.

Mr. Speaker, can the Attorney General explain why crown attorneys are not being told when offenders refuse to sign their probation orders?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all—and I'll say this again—this is a real tragedy. Our thoughts continue to be with the families.

As this matter is before the courts, you will understand that I cannot comment on it.

Domestic violence is of concern to all the communities. It is a serious issue that crosses every social boundary and will not be tolerated in Ontario. Our government is committed to continuing to work with violence-against-women organizations and the professional health, education and justice sectors to find ways to prevent domestic violence, to support victims and to address the justice system response.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Back to the Attorney General: Ontarians do deserve a criminal justice system that is robust, a system that is far more vigilant and responsive in monitoring dangerous offenders. After what happened in Renfrew county, Ontarians are left with unanswered questions.

The truth is that there were so many things that this government could have done to prevent the tragedy in Renfrew county. The government is adamant that probation orders are enforceable, but Mr. Borutski thumbed his nose at our criminal justice system, and he refused to sign the order. You have an opportunity to make the system better.

My question only needs a simple yes or no: Will the Attorney General issue a directive to the crown attorneys to bring offenders to court when they refuse to sign their probation orders?

Interjections.

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

Attorney General.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: This is a great question. Again, yesterday, the three ministries involved had a meeting to address exactly this question. The signature of the condition to release someone on probation is not a

condition to keep someone or not release them on probation.

The probation is the decision of the court, and there is the condition—also some are prescribed, some are not prescribed and are added by the judge. Again, the signature of this condition is not a condition to release someone or not.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Today, we're visited in the Legislature by Mr. Daryl Frimer, a resident from the constituency of Parkdale–High Park, who owns a home near the UP Express tracks. During the construction of the UPX, significant damage—\$27,000—was done to his home.

This homeowner, like many others living near the rail line, did his due diligence in attaining three quotes from contractors to assess how much repairs would cost. He submitted those quotes to his claim with Metrolinx. However, like in other similar cases, Metrolinx is pressuring Mr. Frimer to accept a settlement that is half of what the quotes said the repair will cost.

Why is Metrolinx refusing to pay people what its own process has determined they are owed?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I do thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for raising this particular question and I respect the fact that the constituent from Parkdale–High Park is here today.

While I personally don't know the specific details of this individual case, I do understand that there has been correspondence that has gone back and forth between the member and Metrolinx regarding this particular case. I think it's also important—every member in this Legislature would recognize the importance—while provincial agencies are responsive to these kinds of requests—that we ensure, for the sake of protecting taxpayers, that the scope of work that's required as a result of something that might have occurred is, in fact, accurate.

My understanding is that this is a process that is still ongoing, but I do appreciate the member standing up for her community and for asking this question today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Mr. Frimer is a taxpayer, by the way, and has submitted over 100 emails to Metrolinx at this point.

Metrolinx has also known that the construction of the UP Express would damage nearby homes, yet has refused to take responsibility and adequately compensate all homeowners living near the line. What we've consistently seen since the first piledriving started along the line is that any claim put forward by a homeowner ends up being an absolute nightmare. The homeowner is not only expected to prove that the damage happened as a result of the construction and arrange for three independent quotes from contractors to assess what the damage would cost to fix, but then, whatever that amount ends up being, Metrolinx consistently offers a fraction of that price. This is absolutely unacceptable.

When will Metrolinx start adequately compensating homeowners like Mr. Frimer for damage caused by the construction of the UP Express, which, by the way, runs empty?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: In my follow-up answer to the member from Parkdale my answer essentially remains the same: What I believe in this case is the most important—along with making sure that all provincial agencies, including Metrolinx, are responsive to these kinds of matters that get raised, and very respectful of the challenges that some homeowners in your community and perhaps others are facing—is that we get it right. This, from my perspective, would also mean that the scope of work that's required as a result of something that Metrolinx might have done is actually reflective of the damage itself. There needs to be a very direct correlation between the two.

I respect the fact that some constituents from Parkdale–High Park have provided quotes. My understanding is that Metrolinx continues to work itself through the process. I don't know of the other cases that you're raising in this particular case.

To the member's final point about the UP Express: Let's just remember that's an infrastructure project delivered on time and on budget by this government.

1130

AGRI-FOOD INDUSTRY

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: My question this morning is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. The agri-food industry is an important contributor to our economy and continues to be a priority of our government. Through our government's targeted investments in the agri-food sector, we've been able to foster growth and help companies boost productivity, expand capacity and grow market access for processed goods.

In a fiercely competitive economy, it's important that producers in Ontario have a dynamic and innovative business climate in which they can afford to invest and grow their operations. We know from our stakeholders that one key to expanding production in the province is through processing capacity. Ontario is already one of North America's leading agri-food processing regions.

Mr. Speaker, my question to the minister: What is our government doing to support the food and beverage processing sector in Ontario?

Hon. Jeff Leal: First of all, I want to give my sincerest congratulations to the new federal member of Parliament for Peterborough. Maryam Monsef has been named to Prime Minister Trudeau's cabinet.

The hard-working member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore asks a very important question in Ontario today. The agri-food sector contributes \$34 billion to Ontario's GDP. Every morning that people get up in Ontario, 780,000 Ontarians are employed in this very important sector. The agri-food processing sector represents 23% of Ontario's manufacturing capacity. The Premier has given this sec-

tor a great challenge: to create 120,000 new jobs by 2020. We're on target to make that happen.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: I want to thank the minister for his excellent answer and for the excellent work that he and his ministry are doing.

It's clear that this government believes in partnering with business to create jobs. I understand that in the last year alone, our government has been able to leverage nearly \$330 million of investment in the province's food processing industry. Through those partnerships, we've also been able to create and retain some 2,200 jobs.

With investments like the Food and Beverage Growth Fund in place for the industry, food processors are even better poised to make a greater contribution to the economy.

Etobicoke is one of the largest clusters of agri-food production in North America and, recently, the minister made an announcement at Lassonde Industries in Etobicoke.

Could the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs tell this House what the government is doing to support companies like Lassonde?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to thank the member from Etobicoke-Lakeshore for the supplementary. Indeed, people should know that the greater Toronto and Hamilton area is the second-largest food distribution hub in North America.

Recently, I had the opportunity to be in the wonderful part of Toronto—Etobicoke—to announce an investment of \$1.5 million from the Food and Beverage Growth Fund to Lassonde Industries. They'll be using those investment dollars to create a new high-speed packaging line for Tetra Pak packaging. This will allow them to fill an amazing 24,000 juice packages per hour—that's 18,000 more than what they're currently doing. This investment will help to create 15 new jobs and retain 114 jobs.

Mr. Speaker, did I talk about the impact on the apple growers in Ontario? My good friend Charlie Stevens, who operates Wilmot Orchards in Clarington, Ontario, will be able to sell his apples to Lassonde, a very important initiative.

BRIDGE REPLACEMENT

Mr. Toby Barrett: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs: A year ago today, work stopped on the provincial Highway 3 bridge in Cayuga due to a protest from the confederacy chiefs and their Haudenosaunee Development Institute. Traffic from a main provincial highway is being rerouted on a temporary bridge.

We know this government has a history of throwing money at problems. A couple of questions: How much money has been sanctioned by the Ontario government; how much has been paid to the Haudenosaunee Development Institute to allow construction projects to continue in Haldimand county; and why have protesters shut down

this bridge? Do they have an expectation of payment or further payment from this government? Is the minister planning on paying them to get this bridge finished?

Hon. David Zimmer: Thank you for that question. It's an important issue. It's an important safety issue for all the residents using Highway 3 where the Cayuga bridge spans the Grand River. We are in negotiations and exercising our consultation process efforts with the Six Nations, with the Haudenosaunee, with the contractor involved and, indeed, with the local citizens. We are working very hard to find a solution to this problem.

In the meantime, the bridge does remain open. It is monitored by the contractor involved, Dufferin Construction. There are no immediate safety issues because the bridge is being closely monitored by the contractor. In the meantime, we are continuing our efforts to resolve this issue with all of the interested parties.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: The minister knows that over the past year, I have formally asked for updates six times on construction. We haven't seen the solution yet, obviously.

Also in Haldimand county, work on another bridge, the Caledonia bridge, is planned for next year. Haldimand county council wants the province to postpone work on the Caledonia bridge before it gets started as they fear a repeat of what is presently happening down in Cayuga.

If the Haldimand county councillors see a potential conflict, can the minister tell this House how he thinks there won't be conflict when construction starts on the Caledonia bridge? What is he doing to prevent protesters from blocking construction in Caledonia? Again, will he be arranging payment to the protesters to allow construction of this other bridge, the Caledonia bridge?

Hon. David Zimmer: The Minister of Transportation.

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I thank the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs for his first answer and also to the member opposite for this question. I know that this question was asked here in the chamber I believe it was a couple of weeks ago by the same member. As I said at that time, just to echo what the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs did say, this government, the Ministry of Transportation and all of us on this side of the House take our responsibilities with respect to the duty to consult with First Nations extremely seriously.

At the same time, of course, we do understand the importance of making sure that these connections, these bridges—not only Cayuga but also the other one that the member opposite referenced—remain in good working condition and that we can continue to do work to make sure that we're providing the residents of that part of Ontario with safe transportation routes. We'll continue to do the work that's required with respect to our duty to consult. We'll continue to make sure that these structures remain safe and, as I said a couple of weeks ago, we're happy to provide an update once we are in a position to do so.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Ms. Jennifer K. French: My question is to the Acting Premier. Waypoint Centre for Mental Health Care is the province's new cutting-edge psychiatric correctional facility, built using the government's favoured model of public-private partnerships, or P3s. Unfortunately, when I say "cutting-edge," I'm also referring to the recent story of a man brandishing a sword he crafted using materials found in his cell. Since opening in 2014, Waypoint has experienced the same cost overruns, crumbling infrastructure and dangerous work environments that have plagued other P3 correctional facilities such as the Toronto South Detention Centre.

We know from the Auditor General's report last December that public-private partnerships have cost Ontarians more than \$8 billion, and, as we are discovering, new problems arise every day. Who will have to pay for that? Will the Acting Premier please explain why this government thinks that projects that cost more, fall apart and put employees at risk are a good investment for Ontarians?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question. I appreciate the notion of looking at alternate financing and procurement practices to promote very critical investments into our community, like mental health, like our health care system, like our transportation system, like our education, in order to provide those capital structures to enable us to have greater services. We have, I believe, over 44 out of 45 projects already completed—under budget—and enabling us to have those very necessary investments to support mental health, which is something we want to continue to do.

Mr. Speaker, we'll continue to look at other forms, besides just borrowing. That's what the member opposite is suggesting we should do. We want to find the long-term benefit that has the greatest positive impact for our economy and for our services. We'll proceed to do just that.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on a point of order.

Hon. Dipika Damerla: Speaker, I just want to take the opportunity to welcome the Canadian Diabetes Association advocates who are joining us from across Ontario. They're having a reception in the legislative dining room, and I ask everybody to please join us.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I just wanted to introduce Robin Dhillon. He's here for Take Our Kids to Work Day for the MPP for Brampton West, Vic Dhillon. Welcome, Robin.

Hon. Bill Mauro: For me as well, with the Canadian Diabetes Association, an old family friend, a great friend of my father's, is here today in the members' east gallery, Jimmy Colosimo. Jimmy, great to see you.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd like to wish a happy birthday a few days early to my colleague Mr. Steve Clark of Leeds–Grenville. I won't divulge his age. It is on Saturday and he is going to the nation's capital this evening to attend an event, so on behalf of all members, happy birthday, Steve.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Well, she did it with somebody else.

There are no deferred votes. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m.

The House recessed from 1141 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to recognize Matt Hiraishi from the Insurance Bureau of Canada, who is in the gallery today for the statements on Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week. I want to thank him for coming to Queen's Park and for their support for the awareness campaign of the need for carbon monoxide detectors in Ontario.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

SUNRIPE

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'm pleased to rise today to congratulate a local business in Sarnia–Lambton on its receipt of a very special award. Sunripe Markets, which was founded in Sarnia–Lambton some 33 years ago, has grown to become one of the premier grocery destinations in southwestern Ontario, with three locations serving Sarnia and London.

On September 29, at the 53rd Annual Canadian Independent Grocer of the Year Awards in Toronto, Sunripe, which is owned by Will and Ingrid Willemsen, was honoured with induction into the great Canadian Federation of Independent Grocers Hall of Fame.

Despite all of the success that Sunripe has experienced over the last three decades, the business model today remains the same as it was 33 years ago: Employ a great staff and provide customers the choice of the freshest produce and finest signature products anywhere.

Owner Will Willemsen can still be found several mornings each week at the Ontario Food Terminal in Toronto. Often, he is the first to arrive at 3 a.m. It is because of that passion for quality that Will ensures he brings home the very best produce for Sunripe customers.

As the MPP for Sarnia–Lambton, I would like to congratulate Will, Ingrid and all of the staff of Sunripe on their induction into the Independent Grocers Hall of Fame.

PUBLIC HOUSING

Mr. Paul Miller: Like many communities in Ontario, the city of Hamilton is suffering from a housing crisis.

Nearly 6,000 families are waiting for subsidized housing. One in five renter households spend more than half their income on rent. That's a lot of people, because almost a third of the households in my riding rent their homes.

Now, on top of our broader housing crisis, we have a pest infestation crisis. There has been a 600% increase in reported bedbug infestations since 2006, and there are especially serious problems in the city's social housing complexes.

Community groups in east Hamilton have recorded numerous problems with bedbugs, cockroaches, ants and mice. The city's social housing agency is now spending more than one eighth of its annual maintenance budget on pest control. The city's board of health has responded by creating a \$1-million pilot project to curtail bedbugs across the city.

I hope that the provincial government will look favourably on any requests the city may make for assistance. Decades of underinvestment in housing have resulted in a chronic state of disrepair in the province's public housing stock. The lack of funding for maintenance is a major contributor to public health problems like pest infestation.

I hope that the Ministers of Municipal Affairs and Housing and of Health and Long-Term Care recognize the long-term health and fiscal benefits to improving living conditions in our public housing stock.

MINUTE MAID BREAKFAST DAY IN CANADA

Ms. Harinder Malhi: While many of us consider breakfast to be a normal start to our day, over 1.15 million Canadian students are at risk of starting their day with an empty stomach. That's one in seven children. Newcomer families and aboriginal children are at even greater risk.

Last month, the Breakfast Club of Canada and Minute Maid teamed up to launch the first-ever Minute Maid Breakfast Day in Canada. This new national initiative will raise awareness about the importance of a balanced breakfast and how it plays a role in student success.

All students should start the day well-nourished and ready to learn. That is why, on October 6, hundreds of Coca-Cola Canada employees launched the Minute Maid Breakfast Day in Canada by volunteering at Breakfast Club of Canada locations in 25 cities across the country. In Ontario, nine schools in seven cities took part in the launch. They included schools in Barrie, Brampton, Hamilton, Kingston, Ottawa, Toronto and Peterborough.

Paul Brennan, the general manager of the Coca-Cola facility in my riding of Brampton–Springdale, and five volunteer employees from Coca-Cola helped out at an event that took place at Massey Street Public School in Brampton.

Breakfast Club of Canada and Minute Maid, which is a wholly owned subsidiary of Coca-Cola Ltd., have been partners for 15 years. Minute Maid donates the juice free of charge, which they serve according to Canada's Food

Guide. Together, they support 1,455 Breakfast Club school programs, serving 25 million free breakfasts annually across the country.

Breakfast Day in Canada is an opportunity to highlight this important work and inspire others to get involved and make a difference.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a resolution from the village of Burk's Falls that I want to get on the record.

"Whereas the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU) announced in May that it is ending the Ontario Self-Employment Benefit (OSEB) program; and

"Whereas the OSEB program was designed to provide unemployed individuals who are or recently have been eligible for employment insurance with income and entrepreneurial support while learning to operate a small business; and

"Whereas the program has a 94% completion rate in Muskoka over the past five years and 76% of the businesses launched five years ago remain open, well above Industry Canada's reported five-year survival rate for small businesses; and

"Whereas the 110 new businesses launched by OSEB graduates in Muskoka in the past five years sustain 142 jobs, demonstrating it is successful in giving participants a pathway to self-employment and is also an important rural economic development tool; and

"Whereas OSEB programs from rural regions across Ontario have reported similar statistics; and

"Whereas MTCU's position that entrepreneurial support is available from other service providers overlooks the fact it has not replaced the essential income-support component;

"Now therefore be it resolved that the village of Burk's Falls recognizes the value of the Ontario Self-Employment Benefit program to rural communities and requests the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities immediately reinstate the program until a formal evaluation—which must include input from delivery agencies and participants—is completed; and further that the ministry ensure any changes to the OSEB program retain both the entrepreneurial and income-support components that have made it successful."

Mr. Speaker, many municipalities in Parry Sound–Muskoka have passed this resolution.

ANNIVERSARY OF SIKH MASSACRE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Today, the first week of November, marks 31 years since the Sikh genocide occurred across India. Though this genocide occurred halfway across the world, many of the survivors fled India and settled in this beautiful country of Canada. In fact, many of those survivors settled in my riding.

These are their lived experiences. These are their actual stories of what they went through and what they survived.

The reality is, the story and the experiences of these individuals would seem almost unbelievable if it was placed in a Canadian context. I want to paint the picture for you.

Imagine elected officials in the outskirts of a capital city hiring goons, arming them with weapons, providing them with kerosene—which is very expensive and which most common folks wouldn't have access to—using city buses to transport these individuals to the areas and neighbourhoods where Sikhs reside, and then using elector voter lists to identify which homes are Sikh residents and which homes are not, and then instructing these goons to go out and target and kill these innocent people simply for their religious affiliation. Imagine that an independent government inquiry confirmed that this heinous act could not have happened but for the organization and planning of elected officials.

This is not imagination. This is the reality of what people suffered. We must always remember this injustice, lest this injustice occur again.

FIRST RESPONDERS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I would like to acknowledge the skill, dedication and collaboration exhibited by first responders in my community of Cambridge and North Dumfries on Tuesday, October 20. While responding to a fire at a rural residence, a Cambridge fire truck and a Waterloo region police vehicle were involved in a collision that resulted in both leaving the road.

While responding to each scene simultaneously stressed available resources, two Cambridge fire trucks stayed behind to assist at the scene of the crash, while another two arrived to battle the blaze. Despite being in pain themselves from the collision, firefighters from the truck involved in the collision worked with their colleagues to remove the police officer from the vehicle. Due to the critical nature of the accident, the region of Waterloo paramedic service and Ornge air ambulance were called in to respond. Police Chief Bryan Larkin confirmed that that officer is now recovering at home.

1510

At the scene of the fire, Cambridge firefighters were successful in limiting fire damage to the residence and later received assistance from the Hamilton and North Dumfries fire services, which provided more water and staff.

Firefighters, police and paramedics provide invaluable service to the citizens of Cambridge and North Dumfries, and indeed all other Ontarians. This incident shows that first responder service is not without risk and sacrifice, as they work to ensure the safety of citizens and still come home at the end of the day. We should all be thankful for their work.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I rise today to share a resolution by the township of Melancthon that was endorsed by

Dufferin county regarding opposing the sell-off of Hydro One. The resolution states:

“Whereas the public electricity system in Ontario is a critical asset to the economy and vital to the living standard and well-being of all Ontarians; and

“Whereas it is essential that Ontarians maintain public control and public decision-making with respect to electricity; and

“Whereas experience in other jurisdictions shows that privatization typically means consumers pay more...; and

“Whereas a privatized Hydro One will no longer be subject to scrutiny by the Auditor General, the Ombudsman, the Financial Accountability Officer, or the Integrity Commissioner, and will no longer be required to provide information or services to citizens under the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, or the French Language Services Act; and

“Whereas our public electricity system currently generates hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue for the provincial government every year to help pay for public services we all depend on; and

“Whereas the sale of shares in Hydro One will provide a short-term financial gain for the province in exchange for a much larger long-term financial loss; and

“Whereas the provincial government has no mandate from voters to sell any part of Hydro One...;

“Therefore be it resolved that the township of Melancthon call on the provincial government to:

“—Halt the sale of any part of Hydro One, and maintain Hydro One as a public asset for the benefit of all Ontarians;

“—Strengthen Hydro One by investing in the next generation of workers and upgrading our electricity transmission infrastructure...”

Speaker, the Financial Accountability Officer has also noted that the sale is a bad deal—

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

LA CITÉ

Mrs. Marie-France Lalonde: Last Saturday, we celebrated a milestone for the francophone community of Ottawa. I had the pleasure of attending le Bal Vert et Blanc, where more than 400 persons gathered to celebrate the 25th anniversary of La Cité, the largest French-language college in Ontario.

We have to be proud that in 2015, le collège La Cité has been the home of 30,000 graduates since their opening in 1990. As you're well aware, monsieur le Président, French education has always been a priority for our government, and that achievement of La Cité makes us very proud.

J'aimerais remercier et féliciter la présidente de cette grande institution collégiale, M^{me} Lise Bourgeois, pour son leadership et son engagement à l'éducation en français. La soirée fut le moment de célébrer en grand les 25 ans de réussite pour l'éducation postsecondaire en

français et de féliciter les 30 000 diplômés de La Cité depuis son ouverture.

Nous devons être fiers comme Ontariennes et Ontariens de dire haut et fort que La Cité est un collège solide, moderne, ouvert sur le monde et engagé dans la société.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Joe Dickson: I appreciate the opportunity to reference climate change. Ontario's action on climate change and how we are working towards a cleaner, brighter future is imperative to the future of generations to come.

So important is climate change that Pope Francis has written a groundbreaking environmental encyclical, *Laudato Si*. Translated, that means "Praise be to you," which is a line from the Canticle of the Sun, the religious song composed by Saint Francis of Assisi. Overall, it proposes "a moral framework and a new way of thinking about our relationship with nature."

The encyclical is the first encyclical devoted to environmentalism. Second, it is addressed to everyone on Earth, not just the bishops of the church. Third, while there are elements of Catholic teaching, it is not the focus of church doctrine. The papal encyclical calls on every person on the planet to make safeguarding the environment and battling climate change an urgent priority in the 21st century.

I'm proud of our government's leadership. Our Premier, Kathleen Wynne, and our Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Glen Murray, are tackling climate change head-on. The low-carbon economy is well under way in Ontario with coal-free electricity, transit electrification, electric and hybrid vehicles, and emission-free renewable energy.

Finally, Ontario has set long- and short-term goals for fighting climate change, and seeks to be a leader in climate change by building a strong carbon-neutral economy, communities, infrastructure and energy. I'm proud that Ontario is working toward that end.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Ms. DiNovo from the Standing Committee on Estimates presents the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 61(a), the following estimates, 2015-16, are reported back to the House, as they were not previously selected by the committee for consideration and are deemed to be passed by the committee: Office of the Assembly, \$167,940,500—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Agreed. Dispense.

Pursuant to standing order 61(b), the report of the committee is deemed to be received, and the estimates of the offices named therein as not being selected for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

Report deemed received.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mrs. Kathryn McGarry: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Mr. William Short): Mrs. McGarry from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills presents the committee's report as follows and moves its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr29, An Act to revive 563523 Ontario Ltd.;

Bill Pr30, An Act to revive 1064514 Ontario Inc.;

Bill Pr31, An Act to revive Precision Pipe Manufacturing Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed. Carried.

Report adopted.

MOTIONS

ESTIMATES

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Speaker, I believe you will find— unanimous consent, without notice, on a motion relating to the Standing Committee on Estimates.

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 63 and the order of the House dated September 4, 2015, should the Standing Committee on Estimates fail to complete its consideration of the 2015-16 estimates of the Ministry of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure and the Ministry of Research and Innovation prior to November 26, 2015, the committee is authorized to meet during its regularly scheduled meeting times during the week of November 30, 2015, for the purpose of considering the estimates of these ministries, and that in such case, the committee shall present one report to the House on December 3, 2015, with respect to all estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 60 and 62, and that, in the event that the committee fails to report the said estimates on December 3, 2015, the estimates and supplementaries shall be deemed to be passed

by the committee and be deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Naqvi moves that, notwithstanding—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Dispense.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Dispense? Agreed. Do we agree? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CARBON MONOXIDE AWARENESS WEEK

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to mark the second annual Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week in the province of Ontario. This week, which runs from November 1 to 7, is all about raising awareness about a silent killer, to help keep families and loved ones safe.

Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week is the result of this Legislature unanimously passing Bill 77, the Hawkins Gignac Act, in 2013. I would not be standing here without the advocacy of Mr. John Gignac. Mr. Gignac was a firefighter for 34 years, but is now on a new mission to end preventable tragedies like the one experienced by his family.

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A terrible tragedy motivated him to take action and to relentlessly campaign to raise awareness of the dangers of carbon monoxide. John Gignac's niece, Laurie Hawkins; her husband, Richard; and their two children, Cassandra and Jordan, all died from carbon monoxide poisoning in December 2008. To honour their memory, Mr. Gignac created a charitable foundation to promote carbon monoxide education and to raise funds to purchase alarms for at-risk families by fire services nationwide.

We take this opportunity to thank him for the lives that his dedication to carbon monoxide awareness has surely saved. I am also proud that the Ontario Legislature unanimously passed Bill 77, the Hawkins Gignac Act, in memory of Laurie and her family, to help save others. In particular, Speaker, I wanted to acknowledge your work in your capacity as the member for Brant in the passage of the bill and in advocacy for safety around carbon monoxide awareness and, of course, I want to acknowledge the commitment of the member from Oxford to this issue and the safety of Ontarians. I want to thank both of you honourable members for your work raising awareness around the absolute necessity for carbon monoxide detectors in people's homes.

The risks of carbon monoxide exposure are all too real. Carbon monoxide is known as the silent killer because you cannot see it, you cannot smell it and you can't hear it. It still claims too many lives. In fact, it kills

more than 50 Canadians every year, including an average of 11 people in Ontario. Last year, Ontario firefighters responded to nearly 3,700 calls involving carbon monoxide, most of them in homes or apartments. The fact is that the vast majority of the deaths and injuries from carbon monoxide poisoning are preventable. Installing a carbon monoxide alarm is one of the simplest things we can do to save lives. Carbon monoxide alarms are already mandatory in all new homes built since 2001.

Last year, we took the next step and updated Ontario's fire code to make carbon monoxide alarms mandatory in all residential homes in the province of Ontario. Homes with a fuel-burning appliance, a fireplace or an attached garage must now have a working carbon monoxide alarm installed adjacent to each sleeping area of the home. The regulation introduced requirements for homeowners to make sure that their carbon monoxide alarms are maintained in good working order, including changing the batteries when needed.

These changes reinforce Ontario's role in the country as a public safety leader, as one of the first provinces to make carbon monoxide alarms mandatory in all residential homes and buildings.

Speaker, our work does not end with bringing in a new regulation. We must continue to work every day to ensure that every Ontarian knows about the importance of having a working carbon monoxide alarm in their home. It is our shared responsibility to do everything we can to stop these preventable and needless tragedies. That is why I'm proud to mark the second annual Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week in our province's history.

We already know that having a working smoke alarm increases the chances of surviving a fire in your residence by up to 50%. Like smoke alarms, installing a carbon monoxide alarm is one of those small, simple actions that can have a huge impact. These alarms are easy to install, easy to use, are affordable and, most importantly, can save lives. I encourage every Ontarian to install a carbon monoxide alarm today.

If you already have one, make sure it is working and test it whenever you test your smoke alarm. Speak to your family, friends and neighbours and reinforce this very important message. If they need help, ask if you could test their alarms for them. We need to take this week and every single day as an opportunity to spread the word about the dangers of carbon monoxide and the necessity of a detector in our homes. It could truly save the life of someone you love.

FINANCIAL LITERACY MONTH

Hon. Charles Sousa: I'm proud to rise in the House today to recognize November as Financial Literacy Month. Together, our government is working to build Ontario up. We are working hard to deliver the best economic future for the province and for all Ontarians.

Financial literacy education plays an important role in this fiscal work. It empowers individuals to build greater security. We live in a time of economic challenges. We

also live in a time of overwhelming choice. With so many financial options available, the need for this education is growing.

We know that personal finances can sometimes seem intimidating and high-stakes. Numerous reports show that money is the number-one source of stress in North America. Ontarians deserve the comfort of knowledge to make good decisions.

Improving financial literacy in the province enables us to positively impact our shared future as we build Ontario up. A better understanding of financial basics is good for economic growth. It means increasing our investments. It means increasing consumer participation responsibly. It means increasing retirement security.

Financially-literate Ontarians understand how best to balance their personal spending choices with appropriate savings for the future. Informed choices lead to better choices. Financially-literate Ontarians are better positioned to make stronger investments. Financially-literate consumers protect themselves by asking the right questions. We want Ontarians to be equipped to avoid exploitation. It's their money; we want them to have more of it and make more of it.

Financial literacy enables students to make the right choices to further their education without compromising their future with excessive obligations. Financial literacy also enables families to make the most of their time together. And it gives our young people a better platform for success. That's why strong financial management skills start in the home.

In Ontario, learning financial basics is supplemented at school. I was pleased in September 2009 to table and pass a motion in this House that undertook that the Ministry of Education include financial literacy in our elementary and secondary school curriculum.

Financial literacy also enables people to understand the need to save for retirement early in their working career. They understand the importance of saving now to finance their post-retirement lifestyle. They know better what they need today and how they get there for tomorrow.

Finally, financial literacy plays an important role in reducing poverty. During the implementation of payday loans legislation in 2008, it was evident that there were high levels of rollovers at excessive costs, affecting those most vulnerable. Enhancing financial awareness can only help, especially those struggling with their personal finances, a fact we have heard in poverty reduction round tables.

Better knowledge of financial basics can go a long way toward helping people improve their circumstances. Reducing the number of people in financial difficulty reduces demands on our social services. With greater understanding of the resources available to them, Ontarians can take a more active role in protecting their futures.

This is not a one-time lesson. Financial literacy education must be ongoing. This month, the Ministry of Finance and partner ministries will celebrate financial literacy by providing more tips. Our hope is to enhance

Ontarians' understanding by sharing more information to improve financial awareness. This is only the beginning. Our priority is to help Ontarians increase their overall financial literacy and enable long-term benefits for all.

Mr. Speaker, I invite our colleagues to partner across our government to further financial literacy initiatives and celebrate Financial Literacy Month.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's now time for responses.

CARBON MONOXIDE AWARENESS WEEK

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise and join the Minister of Community Safety to recognize the second annual Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week.

In 2008, the Hawkins family in my riding was tragically killed by carbon monoxide poisoning when the vent on their fireplace was blocked. Since then, the Legislature has passed my private member's bill, the Hawkins Gignac Act, which made it a requirement to have a carbon monoxide detector in all homes with a fuel-burning appliance or an attached garage, and created Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week. That was with your help, Mr. Speaker; that was originally your bill.

It's time to make sure that your family is protected from carbon monoxide. This poisonous gas has no colour, no smell and no taste, so the only way to know if it is in your home is by installing and maintaining—and, when it expires, replacing—a carbon monoxide detector.

1530

I want to remind people that detectors have a limited lifespan and that those which were manufactured before 2008 should now be replaced. You can also help stop carbon monoxide from getting into your home by making sure your vents and chimneys aren't blocked, having a fuel-burning appliance serviced regularly, and not using outdoor appliances such as barbecues inside.

This week, fire departments across Ontario are delivering these messages through events, public service announcements and going door to door. I want to commend them for their efforts and work every day to raise awareness, provide education and save lives.

I also want to commend John Gignac, founder of the Hawkins-Gignac Foundation, and the Insurance Bureau of Canada for their dedication to raising awareness of the need for detectors and their generous efforts to provide them through fire departments to people in need.

All of these efforts are making a difference. We are hearing from fire departments about people who installed detectors because of this law and that some of those detectors have already gone off, alerting home owners to a carbon monoxide leak and likely saving their lives. Those stories make all of these efforts worthwhile. We need to make sure that the families in all homes in Ontario with fuel-burning appliances or an attached garage are protected by having a carbon monoxide detector, and to make sure that this week everyone takes a minute to check that their detectors are working.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nipissing, further responses.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Just on that note, too, the Hawkins and Gignac family are from my riding in North Bay, and I want to thank the Insurance Bureau of Canada as well for coming to North Bay in two weeks to distribute additional detectors.

FINANCIAL LITERACY MONTH

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm pleased to respond to the minister's statement on Financial Literacy Month as designated by our federal Parliament each November. The Ontario PC caucus has been speaking about the importance of financial literacy for a long time.

The Financial Consumer Agency of Canada, the FCAC, defines financial literacy as "providing people with the knowledge, skills and confidence to make responsible decisions that will best suit their situation."

We do have a couple of fundamental disagreements with the government over how it's being integrated in our schools and, in the larger scheme of things, the role of government when it comes to the rights of Ontarians to manage their own personal finances. But we agree that understanding money is the foundation for the entrepreneurship Ontario needs to succeed economically.

We have spoken in the past about financial literacy work already done by groups like the Investment Funds Institute of Canada, the Jr. Economic Club of Canada, the Financial Planning Standards Council and Junior Achievement Canada. We could be looking at ways we can introduce that work in a structured way into our schools, beginning at the earliest levels, so that all of our children will develop the critical life skill of managing their money.

Gail Vaz-Oxlade, the financial guru behind the TV show *Til Debt Do Us Part*, stated in an interview with Global News, "Unless you have a focused, consistent curriculum designed specifically and implemented across the majority of grades ... it's never going to work."

As well, a 2012 study found that only 40% of Ontario high school students felt prepared to manage their finances after graduation, only a quarter said that their schools gave them the financial information they need and 69% said they thought personal finance should be taught in the classroom. So while the ministry claims it has integrated financial literacy into the curriculum, clearly there's a disconnect and the government has work to do.

We hope the government will take steps to put greater and more specific emphasis on financial literacy, so that the next generation can manage money a whole lot better in the future.

CARBON MONOXIDE AWARENESS WEEK

Ms. Jennifer K. French: It is my pleasure to rise in the Legislature today to mark Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week and to thank our dedicated fire services

and firefighters from across the province for the work they do promoting carbon monoxide awareness and keeping our communities safe.

Every year, more than 50 Canadians lose their lives to carbon monoxide poisoning. As we've heard today, it is the silent killer: a colourless, tasteless and odourless gas that is largely undetectable to its victims. In Ontario, an average of 11 carbon monoxide deaths occur every year. So this week is an important opportunity to talk about safety and remind all Ontarians how important it is to install and regularly check the carbon monoxide detectors in their homes and workplaces.

In my riding of Oshawa, Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week has an added layer of significance this year, following an incident that occurred at our Robert McLaughlin art gallery this July that can only be described as a near miss. During a summer art camp, 15 children were sent to the hospital following a carbon monoxide leak, after showing symptoms like headaches, dizziness and nausea.

Thanks to the dedicated work of the Oshawa Fire Services and Lakeridge Health, all of the children were fine, but what could have happened certainly left our community shaken.

Robert McLaughlin Gallery is home to a significant and stunning public art collection. Subsequently, it is also home to a highly sophisticated air monitoring system which measures a number of variables, including humidity. However, as we discovered after this incident, carbon monoxide was not measured.

Following this incident, Oshawa city council adopted a resolution calling for amendments to the Ontario building and fire codes to require carbon monoxide detectors in all public assembly spaces. We applaud Oshawa city council for their leadership on this issue, and we support the spirit of the resolution. Since the incident at the McLaughlin gallery, the city has installed 53 carbon monoxide detectors in Oshawa's public assembly spaces so far, and has taken the necessary steps to avoid any future tragedy.

Speaker, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to this issue today, and recognize the importance of Carbon Monoxide Awareness Week and the work our fire services do to keep us safe. I hope that when we return to our ridings for constituency week, we take the time to remind our constituents to test their carbon monoxide detectors as well.

FINANCIAL LITERACY MONTH

Ms. Catherine Fife: Of course, it's my pleasure to rise today and speak about Financial Literacy Month and the important work being done to ensure that citizens of this province know more about their own finances.

Increasingly, Ontarians are faced with a complex array of financial decisions to make in their everyday lives. It is a sad truth that too many Ontarians lack the skills necessary to make informed decisions related to money and investment. This is why the work being done by the Financial Literacy Month is so significant.

I would actually concur, though, with the Minister of Finance when he said that informed choices lead to better choices, which is why today, when he stood in his place and said, as I quoted the Financial Accountability Officer, that what I was quoting was not true—that is not the best way to absorb and to be respectful of the advice that we're getting from an independent officer of the Legislature.

November is Financial Literacy Month. Organizations from the private, public and non-profit sectors come together each year. Through Financial Literacy Month, organizations across the country use their resources and host workshops, seminars and other events to help Canadians learn how to manage their personal finances successfully.

While these groups who have come together for Financial Literacy Month do incredible work, each one of us can do what we are able to do to help. In my own constituency office, every year I have volunteer accountants come in and help underprivileged residents in our community file their taxes.

The goals of Financial Literacy Month are very noble. As we discussed in this House last May when members were debating the motion by the member from Brampton West about financial literacy, this government, being a majority, has the opportunity to make the necessary changes to our education system that would embed the objectives of the Financial Literacy Month where it needs to be: in our schools. They would do well to start with the findings of the 2010 report of the Working Group on Financial Literacy entitled *A Sound Investment: Financial Literacy Education in Ontario Schools*. Three of the main things that they did suggest, which are worth mentioning: Make financial literacy a compulsory part of the Ontario curriculum; introduce and integrate financial literacy education into the Ontario curriculum as early as possible in a relevant and age-appropriate way; and finally, continue to embed in the curriculum the core content and competencies required for financial literacy.

New Democrats fully support these recommendations. We're willing to work with the government in this regard, and hopefully we can accelerate those recommendations going forward.

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

PETITIONS

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

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

"Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

"Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

"Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means

Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

"Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

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

"That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One."

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

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ÉDUCATION POSTSECONDAIRE EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait plaisir de présenter une pétition qui a été signée par M. Claude Aubin de mon comté au sujet de l'Université de l'Ontario français.

« Entendu que ... le 10 février le RÉFO, l'AFO et la FESFO ont présenté le rapport du Sommet provincial des États généraux sur le postsecondaire en Ontario français;

« Entendu que le rapport a indiqué un besoin et un désir pour une université de langue française;

« Entendu que le 26 mai, 2015 la députée France Gélinas a présenté un projet de loi pour créer cette université; »

Ils pétitionnent l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario « de commencer la création de l'Université de l'Ontario français dès que possible ».

J'appuie cette pétition et je vais demander à Michael de l'amener aux greffiers.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Todd Smith: "Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

"Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

"Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don't have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

"Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

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

"That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario's Hydro One."

I'll sign that and send it to the table with page Shirley.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"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 sign this petition and give it to page Abby to deliver to the table.

LUNG HEALTH

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition here that’s addressed 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 that 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 agree with this petition. I’m going to affix my name to it and give it to page John to bring to the table.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Victor Fedeli: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s growing and aging population is putting an increasing strain on our publicly funded health care system; and

“Whereas since February 2015, the Ontario government has made an almost 7% unilateral cut to physician services expenditures which cover all the care doctors provide to patients; and

“Whereas the decisions Ontario makes today will impact patients’ access to quality care in the years to come and these cuts will threaten access to the quality, patient-focused care Ontarians need and expect;”

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

“The Minister of Health and Long-Term Care return to the table with Ontario’s doctors and work together through mediation-arbitration to reach a fair deal that protects the quality, patient-focused care Ontario’s families deserve.”

I agree with this, I’ll sign my name and give it to page Nicole.

MISSING PERSONS

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

“Whereas Ontario does not have missing persons legislation; and

“Whereas police are not able to conduct a thorough investigation upon receipt of a missing person report where criminal activity is not considered the cause; and

“Whereas this impedes investigators in determining the status and possibly the location of missing persons; and

“Whereas this legislation exists and is effective in other provinces; and

“Whereas negotiating rights to safety that do not violate rights to privacy has been a challenge in establishing missing persons law;

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

“We ask that the Attorney General’s office work with the office of the privacy commissioner to implement missing persons legislation that grants investigators the opportunity to apply for permissions to access information that will assist in determining the safety or whereabouts of missing persons for whom criminal activity is not considered the cause.”

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

WATER FLUORIDATION

Mrs. Cristina Martins: I have a petition here that’s addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I agree with this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the table with page Shirley.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Mr. Rick Nicholls: “Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the provincial government is creating a privatization scheme that will lead to higher hydro rates, lower reliability, and hundreds of millions less for our schools, roads, and hospitals; and

“Whereas the privatization scheme will be particularly harmful to northern and First Nations communities; and

“Whereas the provincial government is creating this privatization scheme under a veil of secrecy that means Ontarians don’t have a say on a change that will affect their lives dramatically; and

“Whereas it is not too late to cancel the scheme;

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

“That the province of Ontario immediately cancel its scheme to privatize Ontario’s Hydro One.”

I agree with this petition, I affix my name to it and give it to page John.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC ASSETS

Ms. Catherine Fife: It’s my pleasure to present 600 signatures from the good people of Waterloo and Kitchener. A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“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;

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“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.”

It is my pleasure to affix my signature and give this to page Faith.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

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

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

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

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

Since I participated in that select committee, I obviously support this petition and give it to page Marco to take to the table.

ONTARIO DISABILITY SUPPORT PROGRAM

Ms. Catherine Fife: “Petition: Save the ODSP Work-Related Benefit.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the \$100 ODSP Work-Related Benefit provides a critically important source of funds to people with disabilities on ODSP who work, giving them the ability to pay for much-needed, ongoing work-related expenses such as transportation, clothing, food, personal care and hygiene items, and child care; and

“Whereas the Ministry of Community and Social Services plans to eliminate the Work-Related Benefit as part of a restructuring of OW and ODSP employment benefits, and has said that ongoing work-related expenses will not be covered by its new restructured Employment-Related Benefit; and

“Whereas eliminating the Work-Related Benefit will take approximately \$36 million annually out of the pockets of people with disabilities on ODSP who work; and

“Whereas a survey conducted by the ODSP Action Coalition between December 2014 and February 2015 shows that 18% of respondents who currently receive the Work-Related Benefit fear having to quit their jobs as a result of the loss of this important source of funds; 12.5% fear having to reduce the amount of money they spend on food, or rely on food banks; and 10% fear losing the ability to travel, due to the cost of transportation; and

“Whereas people receiving ODSP already struggle to get by, and incomes on ODSP provide them with little or no ability to cover these costs from regular benefits; and

“Whereas undermining employment among ODSP recipients would run directly counter to the ministry’s goal of increasing employment and the provincial government’s poverty reduction goal of increasing income security;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the provincial government’s plan to eliminate the ODSP Work-Related Benefit.”

Of course, I support this petition and will affix my signature.

PROTECTION DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT

M^{me} Cristina Martins: J’ai une pétition ici qui est présentée à l’Assemblée législative.

« À l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario :

« Attendu que les microbilles sont de petites particules de plastique de moins de 1 mm de diamètre, qui passent à travers nos systèmes de filtration de l’eau et sont présentes dans nos rivières et dans les Grands Lacs;

« Attendu que la présence de ces microbilles dans les Grands Lacs augmente et qu’elles contribuent à la pollution par le plastique de nos lacs et rivières d’eau douce;

« Attendu que la recherche scientifique et les données recueillies jusqu’à présent révèlent que les microbilles qui sont présentes dans notre système d’alimentation en eau stockent des toxines, que des organismes confondent ces microbilles avec des aliments et que ces microbilles peuvent se retrouver dans notre chaîne alimentaire;

« Nous, les soussignés, présentons une pétition à l’Assemblée législative aux fins suivantes :

« Mandater le gouvernement de l’Ontario pour qu’il interdise la création et l’ajout de microbilles aux produits cosmétiques et à tous les autres produits de santé et de beauté connexes et demander au ministère de l’Environnement d’effectuer une étude annuelle des Grands Lacs pour analyser les eaux et déceler la présence de microbilles. »

Je suis d’accord avec cette pétition, et je l’envoie à la table avec John.

DIABETES

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

“Whereas the Liberal government implemented cuts to the Ontario health insurance program such that Ontario residents suffering from diabetes saw their annual eligibility for blood sugar test strips reduced to 200 per year, less than one a day; and

“Whereas a blood sugar test strip costs approximately 70 cents; and

“Whereas this latest cut to services to Ontario patients is just another misguided measure to nickel-and-dime Ontarians; and

“Whereas a focus on preventing disease and hospitalization is in the long-term interest of patients, their families and the province;

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

“To immediately reinstate full and unlimited eligibility for blood sugar test strips covered by OHIP for all Ontario residents suffering from diabetes.”

I agree with this and will pass it off to page Michael.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The time for petitions is over.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ELECTORAL BOUNDARIES ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 SUR LES LIMITES DES CIRCONSCRIPTIONS ÉLECTORALES

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 27, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 115, An Act to enact the Representation Act, 2015, repeal the Representation Act, 2005 and amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act / Projet de loi 115, Loi édictant la Loi de 2015 sur la représentation électorale, abrogeant la Loi de 2005 sur la représentation électorale et modifiant la Loi électorale, la Loi sur le financement des élections et la Loi sur l’Assemblée législative.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to the order of the House dated November 3, 2015, I’m now required to put the question.

Madame Meilleur has moved second reading of Bill 115, An Act to enact the Representation Act, 2015, repeal the Representation Act, 2005 and amend the Election Act, the Election Finances Act and the Legislative Assembly Act.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

I heard a no.

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “no.”

I believe the noes have it.

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

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I guess we have a deferral. We have a deferral slip, so this will be voted on tomorrow after question period. It’s deferred until tomorrow.

Second reading vote deferred.

EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2015

LOI DE 2015 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L’EMPLOI ET LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 3, 2015, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 109, An Act to amend various statutes with respect to employment and labour / Projet de loi 109, Loi modifiant diverses lois en ce qui concerne l’emploi et les relations de travail.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's my pleasure to rise today and speak to Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act. Schedule 1 affects the Fire Protection and Prevention Act. Schedule 2 affects the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act. Finally, schedule 3 affects the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. As the official opposition critic for community safety and correctional services, I will spend the majority of my time today addressing the changes found within schedule 1.

During debate on this bill, you may hear members of the Legislature refer to the term "double-hatter firefighters." This term refers to those who work as full-time firefighters with a city department and, on their days off, offer their services as part-time firefighters in their home communities.

Why is this a problem? The constitution of the International Association of Fire Fighters—the union that represents firefighters in Ontario—prohibits full-time firefighters from volunteering as firefighters in another municipal jurisdiction.

In the case of Tom Hunse, a firefighter with the city of Toronto who volunteers in Innisfil, the union representing him in Toronto petitioned the city to have him terminated. In their view, double-hatters take jobs away from young people who are trying to get into firefighting.

Currently, Ontario is one of only two jurisdictions in Canada where a firefighter's right to volunteer is not protected by legislation. Over the years, several union charges have been brought against these individuals, and in most cases, they stopped serving their home communities for fear of losing their jobs. These firefighters are forced to choose between protecting their livelihoods that their families depend on and working to protect family members, friends and neighbours in their home communities on their days off. This is an incredibly stressful situation for firefighters. It's especially stressful when they are forced to stay at home, instead of helping respond to fires in their home communities.

In late 2014, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario communicated a draft resolution for municipal councils to consider in support of double-hatters. Numerous councils have passed resolutions of support.

The member from Wellington–Halton Hills—a good colleague of mine, Mr. Ted Arnott—has fought very hard to make this change, over a decade. I'm glad that he will see this issue get resolved after so many years of effort on his part.

His work received expressions of support from the Fire Fighters' Association of Ontario, representing volunteer firefighters, by the way; the Association of Fire Chiefs of Ontario; the Association of Municipalities of Ontario; and the Fire Marshal of Ontario.

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Schedule 1 of this bill seeks to address this issue, as well as a few others. Bill 109 incorporates significant portions of the Labour Relations Act into the Fire Protec-

tion and Prevention Act, including unfair labour practices, membership in associations and expedited rights arbitration. Bill 109 would, in fact, allow labour disputes under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act to be heard by the Ontario Labour Relations Board as opposed to an Ontario court. This is something I support, given the tremendous backlog of cases that our province's court system is currently struggling with. This seems like a win-win, as we have labour disputes for firefighters handled more effectively and efficiently while also reducing the burden on our justice system.

The bill will also permit associations to require the inclusion of closed-shop language in a collective agreement, with features such as mandatory association dues deductions and provisions requiring membership in the association, or giving preference of employment to members of an association. This can be seen as a positive for the firefighter unions. This measure is balanced by the fact that the bill would allow double-hatters to continue their work without fear of reprisal, which is something that firefighter unions have argued against for the past several years here in Ontario.

With any labour laws in the province, there needs to be proper balance. The balance is between a respect for the needs of workers and the needs of employers. When it comes to changes to the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, there are elements that both firefighters and their unions can in fact agree with. The changes to the Fire Protection and Prevention Act have been developed in consultation with the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association, and they seem reasonable as a whole.

We look forward, Speaker, to hearing input from individual firefighters and associations during committee to get further feedback on this bill so that we can make it as beneficial as possible for the brave men and women who risk their lives to help keep us safe.

Many firefighters around the province are happy to see this piece of legislation tabled by the Minister of Labour. At the same time, they may be concerned about what is not included in Bill 109, nor any piece of government legislation that has been tabled to date. Countless firefighters and other first responders, and also the province's correctional officers, are anxiously awaiting some action to be taken by the minister when it comes to post-traumatic stress disorder, also known as PTSD. Our first responders know that seconds matter. For our first responders suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, seconds can feel a lot longer. That's why they're frustrated by this government's stubborn unwillingness to support a good idea when they see it.

The Minister of Labour said, in question period, "I'm convinced that we must do a combination of what's envisioned in Bill 2, with some improvements to it." Well, Speaker, I can't speak for the member from Parkdale–High Park, but I'm confident that she would be willing to have friendly amendments made to her bill if it means that the province will tackle the problem of PTSD sooner rather than later. We already have a bill on the table with full opposition support. It's also received support from the government, at least at second reading.

If you have improvements to the bill, do it at committee. Let police officers, firefighters, EMS personnel and correctional officers explain to Ontarians how post-traumatic stress disorder impacts their lives. Bill 109 is already opening up the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act and making amendments to it. Perhaps this can be an opportunity for the government to address this critical issue. Instead, the government has, thus far, indicated that it wants to introduce its own bill, and hold consultations away from the public. Speaker, there's no need to go back to square one on an issue that is clearly non-partisan, where seconds matter, let alone weeks or months. There must be room for compromise and co-operation.

When our first responders show up at a scene, they simply do their jobs. They don't play politics or bicker with each other about who gets credit. They see a problem and they do whatever they can to fix it, together. That's what they expect of their politicians, and that's what they deserve.

Whether it's a third-party bill or a future piece of legislation from the Minister of Labour, we are committed to helping our heroes who are suffering from PTSD. Perhaps this issue could be addressed when Bill 109 heads to the committee stage.

Let me wrap up my comments today by stating that I do support Bill 109 at second reading. While the changes found in schedule 1 seem reasonable, members of the official opposition have expressed some concern, or at least they feel that there are some questions that should be addressed when it comes to the changes to the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. We feel that more public discussion is required for Bill 109 and that public hearings at the committee stage are, in fact, necessary.

I do look forward to the passage of Bill 109 at second reading and the protection of double-hatter firefighters. I also look forward to the strengthening of the bill in committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: I'm so pleased to be joined by my new seatmate here.

It's interesting. The member from Chatham-Kent-Essex—I think it needs to be said that sometimes the content and the substantive material get lost in the presentation, because to say that this member is a smooth talker is a whole other area, right?

But I notice that the member did not make reference to one of the key issues of this bill. This is another omnibus bill that contains a lot of really important issues. For us, though, the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act is one of the key factors, and the member, for some reason, wasn't that focused on the rights of those respective public service unions as they transition throughout these scenarios.

The major factor is that under section 2 of Bill 109, which includes a provision that provides regulation-making authority regarding bargaining units in the case

of mergers in hospitals or school boards or what have you, it removes the requirement of a vote in the case of a merger if one of the existing bargaining agents meets the minimum threshold of 60%. If a new bargaining unit meets that threshold, a vote is not required.

These are fundamental democratic rights that we hold dear, so I was very surprised that the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex didn't weigh in on that issue. When we give these rights up, we never get them back. Especially when they're embedded in an omnibus bill, they're buried. So one has to wonder, what is the real intention of this bill as it goes forward?

As always, though, I appreciate listening to the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex, and I look forward to his rebuttal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I listened very attentively to the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex, who puts a lot of local colour into his remarks. I appreciated his trying to liven this debate up.

I agreed with a number of his comments. I certainly don't agree with everything he said, but that's what this place is about, right? We have the right to have our own opinion, and we don't have to say what other people expect us to say. He said what he thought was right, and I congratulate him for that.

I just wanted to mention one aspect of this bill. I know it talks about the first responders quite a bit, but part of this bill strengthens the whole area of labour protection for people who get hurt on the job. It's not just about first responders or people in unionized workplaces.

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There are all kinds of ordinary Ontarians who work at low-paying, low-wage jobs who don't have the protection of a union. They get hurt and then, in many cases, are not protected by anyone because the employer feels that they can take advantage of that low-paid worker because they may not have command of the English language or they may not be well educated. They're very hard-working people, but they get hurt on the job. And then there are all kinds of situations where sometimes the employer will try to suppress that worker's injury. That is something that is not acceptable. That's one of the important aspects of Bill 109, where there is an attempt to stop the suppression of reporting workplace injuries. If you're hurt on the job, you have every right to go to the WSIB and present your case and get the protection offered to you under Ontario law.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's a privilege to rise and comment on the comments from my colleague from Chatham-Kent-Essex. Firefighters have the right to volunteer. Nobody knows that more than a rural municipality. In our riding, we border on the city of Cornwall, which has a professional firefighting organization. Many of their firefighters actually help out in the counties.

In our county, Bryan Ward has been a great volunteer for years in many aspects, but certainly in the fire

department—one of our captains and chiefs throughout the years. That expertise is looked upon favourably right across all the counties as they get together for their county-wide meetings, as well as township-wide. I think that that expertise has proven time and time again to be very important. When people want to volunteer, this is their own time; it doesn't impact their job at all, and the way they look at it, they're able to give back to their community. I think that's important. I'm glad to see this bill, finally, after many, many years of some talk around protecting the doubt-hatters—I think it's important that it is here.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Stop the clock. I'm trying to listen to the member, and his members are all over the place, disturbing the House, and he's trying to make a presentation. The member from Renfrew is down in the third-party area. He's been down there a lot today, I've noticed. He's talking a lot down there. I'm having trouble hearing your guy.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I wasn't even speaking.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You were speaking.

Anyways, continue.

Mr. Jim McDonell: I know that my colleague from Renfrew is in the same boat. They have many volunteer fire departments in their riding, and they depend on this professional help. I think, when you look at return to the community, rural areas are very much in favour of that, and this just goes in line. We have firefighters who live in our community who want to help out with their neighbours and their friends, and it's just a normal process. It's really been part of Canada for its 200 years, and I'm glad that, we got some commitment from a government to follow through. After years and years of promising, finally, they took care of the double-hatters. I guess there's one attaboy due there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's a pleasure to stand and contribute to this debate from the member from Chatham—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Chatham–Kent–Essex.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Chatham–Kent–Essex. Thank you very much, our new-found member here.

This bill is definitely an omnibus bill. I'm not sure what the government's message is when they've put in schedule 2, in particular. When you look at the bill, there's quite a bit on schedule 1 where what we talk about pertains to the firefighters.

Schedule 2, of course, talks about union mergers. Workers are able to vote a union in when two workplaces merge, kind of like hospitals or municipalities. But it is taking rights away from those workers. It's really saying that the majority of members in one particular union de facto—the whole voting process is not democratic. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo hit it right on the head, that once you take certain rights away, you never get them back, because then it becomes the norm. It

becomes the norm not to have those rights, to use your democratic process, your right to vote.

Absolutely, Speaker, there's a lot to talk about in this bill. I know that with my debate time I'm going to focus on schedule 2.

Schedule 3 is good. There are areas in here that we talk about: that employers are not reporting injuries because they get a bonus, they get some kind of incentive, not to report these injuries. Workers are coming back to work not 100% healed and feeling well. Employers are benefiting from that, and that shouldn't happen. When you're ill, you should be at home, fully recovered, and come back to the job healthy, without being compromised or pressured by an employer because of an incentive for economic or monetary return.

I look forward to hearing further debate on that and contributing later on in my turn.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Chatham–Kent–Essex has two minutes.

Mr. Rick Nicholls: I'd like to thank the members from Kitchener–Waterloo, Eglinton–Lawrence, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and London–Fanshawe for their comments. The member from Kitchener–Waterloo referenced “smooth talker.” Speaker, I'm not always a smooth talker, but when I do, you need to listen. So stay listening, my friend; stay listening. I'm a politician as well, and we've been known to be somewhat of a smooth talker. Though I'm not a smooth operator, as Sade might say.

I did mention in my opening comments that I was going to reference schedule 1, the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, whereas the member from Kitchener–Waterloo chose to reference schedule 2. I might add thanks to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence. He said, “You know what? We don't always agree in this Legislature. That's okay.” I chose to talk about schedule 1. She chose to talk about schedule 2. I understand. We come from different perspectives. That's why we are in different parties. So please understand that as well.

Double-hatters: They deserve to be able to protect the communities in which they live, even though they may be working full-time in another jurisdiction. I'll tell you why. Several years ago I was driving down Highway 2, heading into Chatham. I was in a little town called Louisville. I happened to look to my left and I saw flames in the general store. I immediately pulled over, ran there, pounded on doors and then ran across and got a hold of 911, and guess who responded? It was the volunteer firefighting unit from the Louisville area that responded to that fire. I'm very grateful for that. They got the fire out.

My point is, we need to protect those double-hatters. I'm very pleased that our member from Wellington–Halton Hills—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Let us talk about this bill. There are a number of issues with this bill: certain things that are positive and certain things that are troublesome. Let's talk about what those are.

In general, we've seen a trend with majority governments to bring in omnibus bills. When you modify a number of bills or a number of sections within one bill, it creates problems, because there are components of a bill that make sense and there are components that don't make sense, so it creates a difficulty in terms of those who want to support components but oppose very strongly other components.

It also ties into the notion of cynical politics, because you can avoid conflicts by making sure there are certain areas people agree on, and put those forward and everyone agrees. The areas that are contentious can be carved out and those can be debated, because they're contentious. When you wrap in areas that people agree with and areas that people don't agree with purposefully in a bill, it really fuels this notion that parties are more concerned with encouraging divisive politics, politics where people are unable to come to consensus, as opposed to working towards creating more harmonious legislation. That is very common when it comes to this government.

Let's talk about the various schedules. With respect to schedule 1, issues around ensuring there is fairness and various interested parties have rights that are offered to other parties, ensuring that there's consistency: These types of issues are not overly contentious.

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When we move into schedule 2, this is a very clear attempt of the government stripping a fundamental right. There's really no other way to put it. It's pretty blatant. It's pretty overt. That workers should be entitled to vote on their representation is a very fundamental element of workplace democracy. What's really ironic is that we're here in the Legislature, which is supposed to be the pinnacle of democracy—this is the final arbiter of decisions when it comes to how the province is governed. For the government to come up with a bill that takes away the right to vote, in scenarios where 60% of workers can impose on 40% of workers, just doesn't make sense. One of the members brought it up before—the member from Kitchener–Waterloo: What is the purpose of that? Why is the government seeking to remove this ability for workers to choose who they want to represent them? Why is that even a factor? Why is that something that's a priority? Why did the government put this component into this bill? Mr. Speaker, I ask you: Why did the government do this? It really makes no sense. If we talk about fundamental principles of democracy, why would you want to get rid of this ability to vote? Why is the government choosing this as a priority? It simply boggles my mind.

In fact, what we've seen is when the government makes decisions to override these sorts of fundamental principles, often these are challenged in court, and the government incurs considerable legal costs to fight something that they probably will end up losing. There's some jurisprudence that shows that these types of decisions—in this case, where the government is trying to strip a right to vote—very well may be challenged in court and this law might be deemed unconstitutional. Then, we

have the added cost to an already wasteful government for something that, really, has no benefit to the workers, and I struggle to see how it benefits us in a broad sense.

Then, schedule 3 of the bill touches on something that's quite important. I know a number of members in this House, I'm sure, have had constituents come to their offices and complain about what's going on in the WSIB. So appointing an ombudsman to address some of those concerns seems to be a step in the right direction. But what we really need to see is an overhaul of the WSIB. We need to see a significant improvement in the way it's structured and in the way it's working, because there are some serious problems. There's no way you can tell me that you're not getting the same complaints that we're getting in our offices about the WSIB.

Mr. Randy Hillier: They don't answer the phone.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: One of our colleagues from the Conservative caucus brings up a great point: Maybe you're just not answering your phones. Mr. Speaker, maybe they're just not answering the hundreds and hundreds—maybe thousands—of complaints that are being fielded on this issue. Maybe they're not answering the calls because it's something that we know is there. The government has an opportunity. They have a majority. They could bring forward some amendments to actually improve the system to address the concerns, but the government is not doing that. Why they're not doing it, who knows? I don't know, but I can certainly raise a concern.

Though that is a good step, really the problem with schedule 3 of Bill 109 is that—you have a golden opportunity here. Our member from Oshawa has put forward Bill 98, which actually goes much further and is a much more comprehensive and really a much more fair bill. It addresses issues around loss of earnings and survivor benefits and does so in a manner that's more wholesome and accounts for the realities of workers. It looks at latent illnesses, instead of ignoring this as a reality, instead of putting arbitrary time limitations and denying benefits simply for the purpose of just denying benefits and, really, no other purpose—finding an excuse to deny a benefit which should be provided and applying time limitations where the only purpose of this limitation is just to find another way to deny a claim. I implore you, with respect to Bill 109, to take our member's Bill 98 and implement it. Our member from Oshawa has developed a very comprehensive bill, and we encourage you to implement it. We hope you do.

When we're talking about employment and labour law and the fact that the government is addressing this in this bill and is trying to tackle some of the issues, I implore the government to address a very large concern when it comes to employment law in this province. It's the issue of precarious employment. Precarious employment is one of the major concerns of people across this province. More and more, we're seeing people who are being hired in precarious positions and people who are hired in part-time employment with no sense of when they're going to be called in for work and no sense of security.

The Law Commission of Ontario did a very comprehensive report, as did many other organizations, and went into discussion around the impact of precarious employment. Precarious employment has significant impacts on family lives and on individual stress levels, and it impacts people's wages. In fact, a report commissioned by McMaster University and the United Way talks about the fact that with precarious employment, when you don't have secure employment you're less likely to be engaged in civic responsibilities. You're less likely to be engaged in your school and less likely to be engaged in your community, because you don't feel as worthy. These are some serious issues.

It is important to note that over the past 10 years—the past decade—there has been a phenomenal increase in temporary and precarious employment, particularly in temporary agencies. I quote a newspaper article written by Sara Mojtahedzadeh, published on May 10, 2015. She writes, “The province's employment services sector earned \$5.7 billion in revenue in 2012, a near 72% jump from 2002. Temporary agencies account for an estimated 60% of that industry's total revenue.”

I point to a 72% increase in temporary agencies in the past decade. Guess who was in power over the past decade. Guess whose responsibility it is that we have seen such an increase in temporary job agencies. It's this government, the Liberal government of Ontario. It is under this government's rule that temporary job agencies have increased and we find racialized people, women, new immigrants and new Canadians disproportionately impacted by this. The responsibility and the fault lie squarely at the feet of this government.

I call on the government to address the issue of precarious employment. Let's tackle this issue to ensure that people can get full-time, good-paying, permanent jobs instead of precarious employment.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm grateful to have an opportunity to respond to the always eloquent comments by the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton, and to make the point very strongly—there won't be enough time in my couple of minutes to speak about all the aspects of the bill that I think are so important—that it really is about amending three separate acts to increase fairness and efficiency.

I think that what I want to reference most specifically are the amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. I have worked very closely with the Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group, who have been working very, very hard to continue to see fairness for those who are in need of those benefits.

One of the best and most important things about Bill 109 is that it would provide a greater safeguard to all workers in the province. Specifically, in terms of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, it would ensure that workers—workers need to know that it is their right to file a WSIB claim. One would tend to think that shouldn't be an issue, but it is. Under this legislation, that right will be protected.

If passed, this bill will prohibit employers from taking any actions against a worker with the intent, on their part, of discouraging a worker from filing a claim or influencing a worker to withdraw or abandon a claim with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board for benefits for work-related injuries or illnesses. That is really an important aspect of this legislation. These are things that need to be put in place.

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Again, I stand here in strong support of that measure plus the other measures that are in this legislation and certainly hope that we will have the full support of the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I listened intently to the deputy leader of the third party's comments on Bill 109. I'm certainly in agreement on schedule 2. This provision in schedule 2 cannot be justified. We know that people using the vote—and the rule of law and democracy is that we need to put protections in to protect the minority from the majority. Here in schedule 2, the Liberal government is going completely counter to that premise. They're saying that if you have a majority union in a workplace, the minority no longer has any rights to choose or select who might be their bargaining unit. We know that this will only lead to greater mergers and acquisitions and bigger unions being the sole bargaining unit for many industries, which is not justifiable.

I do want to comment on the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. He said that schedule 3 will now protect workers, because they would have a right to file a WSIB claim. Of course, they already have that right. They've had that right for a long time. If the minister read the bill, he would see that under section 155.1, that protection has been modified. Presently, there's a \$100,000 fine for anybody who prevents an employee from doing that. It now is raised to \$500,000. So the protection is already there.

In addition, under section 22(3), we're also going to add in an administrative monetary penalty, which is not defined under this legislation. The problem with AMPs, of course, is that there is no defence. We do not know what the penalty will be, but there will be no defence and a five-fold increase in the present offence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: As always, it's a pleasure to rise in this House and follow the comments of my colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton on this bill.

This one, again, is basically three bills put together into one, and they don't serve the same purpose. Two of them are fairly progressive. Basically, what the government is doing is taking, for instance, the part of this bill that is aimed at firefighters—a good thing—but then, with the second part of the bill, it's strictly aimed at eliminating the democratic rights of workers. Basically, they're pitting the workers of other sectors against the firefighters.

They have great speaking points on firefighters; we agree. On the WSIB stuff, there could be better changes made, but again, it's a step in the right direction, a small step. But in the middle, they've basically put a poison pill. The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton did a good job of explaining that, and he was supported by the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington. And we don't always agree with that member, but he made a very good point.

You always wonder, and I still would wonder after four years in this place, why the government doesn't put forward a bill in its entirety—which could be molded or made better but that dealt with one issue—get it passed and then put forward another bill, which we would agree or not agree with, and pass it or have it fail. At least then it would actually be constructing a better province and a better society, as opposed to always pitting one against the other. Why, in a majority, does this government do that?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Ottawa South.

Mr. John Fraser: It's a pleasure to respond to the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. I do agree with his comments about precarious employment. As a matter of fact, I think most of the people in this Legislature—I daresay all these people—have those same concerns.

In that vein, when we are talking about the provisions in the bill that affect the WSIB, I want to assure you that, just as you answer the phones, we answer the phones as well. I really took some—I don't want to say I took offence to that, but I think it was a bit out of character for the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton to suggest that.

The provisions around the WSIB are there to protect workers from employers who are trying to suppress claims. It's to give them some added protection. In response to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, by providing stiffer penalties, you do give a stronger enforcement tool. That makes that tool more effective, and I'd like to suggest to him to remember that.

Back to the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington: Section 2 applies to the public sector bargaining act. It's the public sector; it's not across all industry. That's my understanding. That's the way the bill reads.

Back to the final point that the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton made about there being a poison pill: I wouldn't suggest that the government has to create legislation where we all agree all the time. Otherwise, we really wouldn't need to be here. There's a matter for debate that's in the middle of this bill. We do disagree on it; there is a difference. It's there. That's why we're here for debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton has two minutes.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I want to thank everyone for adding their voice to this debate. I appreciate it.

I want to end with again addressing that this government has an opportunity, in tackling the employment and

labour statute law, by addressing this, to look at the very serious issue of precarious employment.

I want to just summarize this issue one more time in closing. Precarious employment is a serious problem in this province. There have been far too many people who are being hired in temporary and part-time employment. This type of employment is damaging our society. It's significantly impacting our communities. We know that this issue of precarious employment is impacting racialized individuals and new Canadians; it's particularly impacting women as well. It's a serious issue that needs to be addressed. We also know that since 2002 to 2012 there have been clear studies that have shown that this industry's profits have increased by 72% during this time; they have skyrocketed in profits. The industry has increased significantly under this government's rule.

The government may claim that they care about this issue, but they created the problem. They created the problem by allowing temporary agencies to flourish and by making it far easier to hire someone temporarily than to hire them permanently. It's far easier in this province to hire someone on a temporary, part-time basis than it is to hire them in a permanent position. That's simply unacceptable.

This province needs to do more to ensure that employers can hire people in a permanent manner and to make that easier to do, as opposed to hiring them through an agency, which has now become the easier way to hire.

I ask this government to take some serious action on this file. The track record of this government is abysmal. We ask you to improve the situation and ensure that people can get full-time, permanent, good-paying jobs in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. I'm pleased that you recognized me.

I'm pleased with the opportunity to speak to Bill 109, which covers a number of different things. As the third party has indicated, they see this as an omnibus bill, and it does deal with several different statutes and amends said statutes. I want to speak about a couple of them myself here.

I do want to speak about schedule 1, which is one that is of great interest to me. I come from a rural part of the province, as most of you people know, the great riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I would say, somewhat subjectively, I represent the best people in this province, and I'm proud to do so. They're very hard-working people who look forward to a hard day's work and being rewarded for it fairly.

1640

One of the challenges we have in rural Ontario, of course, is fire protection. As any of you people know who live or have vacation homes or wherever in this vast province, the ability to provide fire protection becomes somewhat more difficult as the distance between a fire station and the dwellings becomes longer and longer.

One of the things that has been a contentious issue and that I think this bill helps to address is the issue of double-hatters, or two-hatters, as they are referred to. That is a firefighter who is employed as a professional in the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association but also has connections or maybe a home in an area that is not serviced by a professional department.

In my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, I really don't have much in the line—I have Pembroke, Petawawa, Renfrew—very few which are professional departments, and we have a number of volunteer departments. What is difficult is a situation that has cropped up in my riding more than once, and that is someone who works for a professional department elsewhere—I remember a gentleman; I won't use the name because I haven't talked to him about it. I'm not even sure if he lives in my riding anymore. He was a professional firefighter here in Toronto, and he had property, which he spent a lot of time at, in the Killaloe area. He volunteered on the Killaloe–Hagarty–Richards fire department, and he was always under a great deal of pressure back here to stop doing that. They didn't want him doing that. In fact, he was always under threats of possible sanctions by his union for providing his expertise and services to the fire department back in my riding. It was a win-win, as far as we were concerned, because he was a professional firefighter in Toronto—he got all the training there, as well. He could impart some of that knowledge and that training as a professional firefighter to our firefighters back home. It makes perfect sense. When he would be home sometimes, there was no issue of danger or him being overworked. He was at home, sometimes, for two or three weeks, on holidays. He could be of great service to the people in my riding. But he was always under increasing pressure to not continue as a volunteer firefighter. I'm not sure that at some point—because this goes back even before I was an MPP—he didn't give up on being a volunteer in the fire department because of the pressures that were brought to bear on him.

I remember, before I was elected, I had a discussion with Ted Arnott. It wasn't Wellington–Halton Hills then; I forget what riding it might have been, at the time, that he was representing. He was pushing this double-hatter issue very, very strongly, as a private member's bill. He was one of the guys I contacted. I talked to him, before I was ever elected, about his pursuit in double-hatters and got to understand his dedication to the issue and how it could be helpful to others of us in other places in the province. So it was an issue that I was aware of before I ever got elected. Here it is, some 12 years later, that the government has actually moved in this bill in a way that I think will be helpful in resolving that issue.

The other issue is, of course, in schedule 2. I share some of the concerns of my friends in the third party. I understand the logistical desire to make these transitions easier.

I apologize, Speaker, if I turned my back on you. That was totally unintentional.

I understand the logistical challenges, sometimes, if there are two unions within a workplace and there's talk

of amalgamation and they want to make it maybe a little simpler. What the government has done is, if 60% of the unionized people at that workplace are in your union, you simply absorb the members of the other union and one union represents it. But what would be wrong with just letting people vote? What would be wrong with just allowing the democratic process to take place? I'm a big believer in democracy. I see in this House how democracy gets subverted, many times when the opposition is not even allowed to debate an issue beyond the desire of the government, because they feel that it's gone on long enough.

But I also want to point out to those people who are concerned about democracy that we have an issue in this province: card-based certification, which is a big concern to me. In my riding, we had unions go into an electrical shop on New Year's Eve when three of 30 people were working, got two of them to sign a union card, and the next day that shop was unionized. By the way, that was a year and a half ago, or almost two years ago; that company is out of business. The IBEW went in, unionized it—that company is out of business. Not because the workers didn't have the democratic right to vote as to whether or not they wanted to join the IBEW—no. They simply went in, got two people out of three who were working that day to sign it, and anybody became a member of the union.

I don't have a lot of time, but I do want to talk—there's also the issue of the changes to the WSIB. My goodness, I won't have time to talk about all the issues, but if there's ever a place where changes could be made, it certainly is the WSIB. But I'll just relate a little story of how life has changed when it comes to workers' compensation. I had the opportunity to talk to my friend from London–Fanshawe about this earlier today. We were talking about how life has changed in this Legislature and the work of an MPP.

I was talking to a gentleman last year while I was having my truck serviced. He starts talking to me—my dad was elected here in 1963—and says, “Your dad really helped me.” I said, “I'm really pleased when I hear about those stories.” He said, “Yes. I got hurt on the job in construction. It was five months. I hadn't received a penny. I was in the Bo-Peep Restaurant in Eganville having a coffee, and your dad was in there having a coffee with Harry Searson. They were talking, and your dad comes over to me, because Harry probably told him that I was having trouble with WSIB”—at that time, it was workers' compensation. “Your dad comes over and he says, ‘How's it going with the compensation?’ And I told him, ‘Not worth a darn. At five months, I haven't had a penny. We're living on dust.’”

That was a Friday morning. He said the next Wednesday, he had all his back cheques; five months were all paid. Never had another problem with the workers' compensation. Now that was the way—I'll give my dad a lot of the credit, because he was a bulldog. But at the same time, it's how the world has changed as well. How people were able to get things done in those days because

we weren't encumbered by such a gigantic system that bogs progress down sometimes.

But that's just one story. I could tell you a million stories about things that my dad did for people. And you know who the big beneficiary of it has been today? It has been me, because I then received the support of my constituents many, many times because of things that my dad did for them in the past, or their parents or grandparents, because it goes back a long way. He was elected 52 years ago.

But, anyway, does the WSIB need some work? Oh, yes, it does. Will this bill address all of the needs? No, it won't. There are a lot of things to be done. I don't have that much time left, but we'll look forward to having a chance to discuss this at a later date.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Catherine Fife: After listening to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, it's quite possible that we have more in common than we originally thought.

I will just finish off, though, his last point around WSIB. The big concern—and perhaps he'll touch back on it in his two minutes—is that there are some good things that this bill is trying to address about WSIB. All of us in our respective ridings hear about WSIB every single day.

There are procedural provisions against claim suppression, which is good, but the problem is that—so it prohibits employers from suppressing claims directly or indirectly, and then employers, if they're found guilty of claim suppression, can be fined up to \$500,000. But the big missing piece, Mr. Speaker, is that there is no language in the bill around procedural mechanisms for enforcement or prevention of employers from receiving annual rebates.

1650

You know, the language can be beautiful; it can be. The intention can even be there, but if there's no oversight, if there's no mechanism to ensure that the legislation is actually being upheld, then it means nothing. There is a pattern of legislation coming forward from this government and it having huge weaknesses in it. This has been a serious criticism that we have had. If you're going to craft a piece of legislation, build it right and consult.

The other piece where there was no consultation was on schedule 2; the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke also references that. This is removing the requirement of a vote, in the case of a merger, if one of the existing bargaining agents meets the minimum threshold. So if a new bargaining unit meets that threshold, a vote is not required. There has been no call for this change from our labour partners and there was no consultation on this particular issue. It ignores and overrides the basic principles of workplace democracy.

Mr. Speaker, we heard a lot about the activist centre from this Premier and this government. These are not progressive changes, and we would hope that there would be room to amend them going forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Steven Del Duca: I always look forward to having the opportunity to lend my voice to the discussion and debate that's taking place here this afternoon. Obviously, this is a couple of minutes that I have to respond and ask questions, perhaps, of the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

I have to say, even though do I have limited time, that I want to begin by actually acknowledging the eloquent storytelling of that particular member, specifically talking about the good memories and the good legacy left to him in his community by his father. That was a good story, and I know that the member says that he has a million more. I'm guessing we will not have time to hear the balance this afternoon in his two-minute conclusion.

I just have to say that there is always a significant—healthy, I would argue—cut and thrust here in the debates that we have, but it is heartwarming and it is encouraging to hear a story such as that, in reference to how things have changed—dramatically, some would argue—over the years in terms of individual MPPs' abilities to cut through the complexities of government. I don't think there's a member on any side of this House that would disagree that, as we have gone forward over the years, perhaps it has become a bit more difficult to navigate government across the board, at all levels, regardless of who happens to be in power.

On the bill itself, on Bill 109—I'm actually holding in my hand a significant document with respect to the contents of the bill. I listened not only to the member from Renfrew but also the member from the NDP caucus from Kitchener, who spoke about the thrust of the bill, I suppose, but then also some of the specific concerns that they have. I think that people on this side of the House would understand and respect the questions that are being raised and the details that are being sought. That is, of course, part of the legislative process.

We believe, on this side of the House, that it is important to move forward with this legislation, that it does move the yardstick significantly forward in terms of the issues that it will address. I think that we all look forward to having this bill navigate itself through the entire process. I look forward to continued debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to stand to recognize the valid comments that my colleague from eastern Ontario shared. I really appreciated the anecdotal stories that he shared with us when his father had the honour of representing the very same riding. He referred to his dad as a bulldog. Well, Speaker, I have to say that his pup didn't fall too far away from the doghouse—

Interjection: He's a chihuahua. He's more of a chihuahua.

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson:—because he is as much of a bulldog as I know.

Setting all jesting aside, you have to know that I'm sure that the constituents of your riding truly appreciate

the fine work that you do following in your father's footsteps, and I'm very sincere in saying that.

He raised a very good point in terms of the efforts that need to be done in terms of moving that yardstick ahead in terms of WSIB. We all have stories from our own respective ridings with regard to how it's not working. Speaker, I can think of a handful right now, in a second, where WSIB has made people feel absolutely irrelevant. They feel distrusted when they come forward and say, "We have a problem. It's happened in the workplace, and we need your support in terms of fair representation in addressing the issue at hand." They're literally put through the wringer, Speaker, and it's not right. So if we can move the yardsticks ahead, as we heard from across the floor, I support that wholeheartedly.

The other thing I would be remiss in noting if I didn't say it here is that it's time that double-hatters are allowed to follow their hearts and not only work on a professional firefighting force but also volunteer in smaller communities as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to rise in this House and follow the remarks of the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. I must say that he is one of the most enjoyable people to listen to in this House. Although I don't always agree, I'm always in awe of how he can weave his personal stories. I think that one of the reasons he keeps getting elected is that he's a very personable fellow. Once again, I don't always agree, but on this bill he brought forward a couple of issues regarding the democratic rights of people, about which we have concerns and about which he also expressed that he shares concerns, and it's nice to be able to agree with him on that.

When he talked about the WSIB, and when other people who commented on his remarks also talked about the WSIB, it sure strikes a chord with all of us. When I got elected, I didn't realize there were that many problems with the WSIB until I had to start dealing with everyone else's problems. It's not a simple system. It's not that if you get hurt in the workplace, you go and make a claim and—you know what?—you're protected. It doesn't work like that anymore, Speaker. Maybe it used to, but it doesn't. It's basically a for-profit or minimize-loss agency, and their first response is to deny and deny and, once again, deny. That's a huge problem, because people's lives, in some cases, are shattered, not only from the injury but from having to fight the WSIB.

In every insurance agency, there are some people who try to stretch the system, but they're not the majority. For a lot of people who aren't trying to stretch the system and who have legitimate claims, their lives are ruined. It would be much better if we actually spent several days or weeks discussing that and fixing that instead of piecemeal here and there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has two minutes.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Come on, give me four. Thank you very much, Speaker.

I want to thank the members from Kitchener–Waterloo, the Minister of Transportation, the member for Huron–Bruce and the member for Timiskaming–Cochrane for their comments.

I did want to thank the minister for his comments and his acknowledgement. I agree with him that regardless of what party holds the levers of power in this chamber, life has gotten more difficult when it comes to the issue of getting things done and getting things done on a timely basis. I recognize that and share his views on that, too. It would be nice if we could all work at getting things done on a more timely basis.

I did want to comment on the kind words of my colleague from Huron–Bruce. While I do try to get things done for my constituents, it is a different time and all I will say is that, in fairness, sometimes it's difficult when you get compared to your father. Because I will also have people say to me, "Well, why can't you fix that? If your dad was around, that would have been taken care of yesterday. I knew your dad, and I'll tell you, when you called Paul Yakabuski, you got on the phone with Paul Yakabuski and within a day things were fixed." I stand there sometimes saying, "I know, I know. But we live in a different world today, and it is more difficult."

The WSIB is one of the most difficult issues. I think it's universal in this House that every one of us has dealt with situations in our ridings where we are exasperated. We wish that we could do more to help that individual who has come through our door. And they are countless; they are many. We're up against a system that just moves at a snail's pace. As my colleague says, the word there is to do everything you can to minimize or deny the claim at first blush. We really do need to come up with a better system to assist injured workers in this province.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's always my pleasure to stand in the Legislature and speak on behalf of my constituents of London–Fanshawe.

I rise today to speak about Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015. This bill was introduced in the Legislature just before the end of the sitting, with a last-minute notice given the same day it was introduced. Simply put, this is an omnibus bill that contains a number of changes to the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act and the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act.

Speaker, I have some concerns with this bill, specifically in regard to the proposed changes to the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act. This section of Bill 109 includes a provision that provides regulation-making authority regarding bargaining units in the case of mergers in hospitals, school boards and municipalities. While doing this, it removes the requirement of a vote in case of a merger if one of the existing bargaining agents

meets the threshold of 60% of total membership. This means that if a new bargaining unit meets the threshold, there is no vote required for workers. I don't understand how a government can even legislate taking your democratic power away to vote who you want representation from. That, Speaker, is unfathomable, that we can legislate things like that.

Again, I can't begin to explain how dangerous this is to labour unions across the province and to the workers they represent. We should not and cannot take away the democratic rights of workers in the case of an amalgamation or merger. We as New Democrats oppose this change, as do major public service unions representing thousands of workers.

I would like to share some words from the president of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union who was concerned about this proposed change: "If Bill 109, as currently drafted, passes into law then a worker will lose the right to determine which union he or she chooses to represent them. That is fundamentally unjust and it ignores the principle of workplace democracy...."

"In a merger vote, workers should be entitled to judge each union on their own merits. Bill 109 rewards one union for having signed up the most members compared to the other union. It doesn't allow for members to decide for themselves which is the stronger union with respect to negotiating, or enforcing, a good collective agreement. The proposed legislation snatches away that entitlement." Those are the words of the OPSEU president.

This proposed legislation would absolutely and clearly snatch away the rights of workers. I really don't even know how to put into words how ridiculously wrong schedule 2 is in the bill.

OPSEU is not the only group opposed to this change. The Canadian Union of Public Employees, the Ontario Nurses' Association and the Ontario Federation of Labour have all called this into question. So you have experts in this area raising the flag to this government, to the members in this Legislature today. They're explaining to them, they're giving them their professional opinion: This is bad for the workplace. This is bad for workers. Yet it falls on deaf ears.

Furthermore, there has been no consultation with any union on this proposed amendment. Is this really how this government wants to treat the hard-working men and women in this province—by having no consultation at all on this piece of legislation?

Time and time again this government has shown its true colours by ignoring the facts and pandering to political insiders. You have to ask yourself, how can you sell Hydro when you don't have a public consultation? How can you sell Hydro when 85% of the people have said, "No, do not sell our public asset"?

Every day, Speaker, every day—this is not an exaggeration—I get emails on Hydro. They say, "Please, stop this Liberal government from selling off our public asset." I would love to continually forward them to you, if you don't believe that that's the case. Maybe you'll read them. Maybe you'll understand there is a public

push. The problem is, Speaker, they have to listen, and they're not listening.

Schedule 2 is a perfectly illustration of the fault of this government not to pay attention to real consultation and real expert advice. We have seen it under the previous Premier and we are seeing it again, as I mentioned. Even though, as I'm taking about London Hydro, 185 municipalities across the province, numerous chambers of commerce and all of the independent officers of this Legislature have called on this government to reverse their decision to sell Hydro One, they have ignored the facts, the experts and Ontarians.

What will it take for this government to listen and stop, or even consult? What will it take for this government to bend and actually pay attention to the people they represent? Does it take seats in an election? Is that what will move you? Is that what will profoundly make you understand the repercussions of your actions? I don't know, Speaker. I have to really just shake my head on that one.

It was not long ago that this government had, of course, their gas plant scandals, and, you know, we all want to forget about that on that side of the House. And once again, they turned their backs on Ontarians. It's the same old story from—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): Excuse me. Sorry; the member has a point of order. However, for your point of order, you must be in your seat, so we will continue and I will listen attentively to what she has to say regarding—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Rick Nicholls): To the bill. Thank you very much.

Back to the member for London—Fanshawe.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This is kind of the mantra that we're going to talk about when this government first proposes legislation. They propose a piece of legislation or an idea, and the idea in this particular case in schedule 2 is clearly flawed. I can't imagine you can argue that on that side of the House.

Next, even after the facts and the experts prove that the legislation shows not to be in the best interests of Ontarians and people or workers, they do it anyways. They bring it forward like nothing happened, like they don't realize what their actions mean. So they pass it through. Then afterwards, when people aren't happy, they explain it away like it's not their fault. They did this with the gas plants, they did it with what's currently happening with Hydro One, and again with this piece of legislation.

Last week, my colleague from Welland spoke on this bill, and I agree with what she had said wholeheartedly. She said that what's worse than any of this and most offensive to the hundreds of thousands of workers across Ontario is that we know for certain that the Liberal government held absolutely no consultations with relevant stakeholders with regard to this schedule. Everyone knows this. Yet they sit there on that side of the

House and they have blank looks on their faces like that's okay. That's not okay. It's not okay in a democracy not to listen to the people you represent. It's not okay in a democracy not to listen to the other members of this House when they're ringing alarm bells. That's not okay.

What you're doing is you're taking the rights away from someone to vote. That doesn't make any sense. We talk about electoral reform, and then here we are taking rights away from workers. Then they tout how progressive this government is. This government does not understand how important the fundamental freedom of choice actually is in a democracy like ours. In my experience, quantity isn't the predeterminant to success.

So I have to ask this government—I know some of the members aren't standing up in this debate for their 10 minutes and contributing to it. I wish I could have an opportunity to really listen to their justification in putting schedule 2 in this omnibus bill, because I would like to have some hope. I would like to have some hope for democracy. I would like to have some optimism for democracy and some fairness. In your two minutes that you may have that you can summarize some of this debate, please provide some justification on the rationale for schedule 2 to take the right of workers to vote for who they want to have representation for.

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

Hon. Mitzie Hunter: I'm very pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 109, because this bill is actually about strengthening protections for our workers. That's something that we take very seriously on this side of the House. We want to ensure that we have fairness within our labour laws, and that's actually exactly what this bill is addressing.

1710

I want to speak specifically to the addition of section 48.1 in the WSIA. In the current section 48 of the WSIA, it really outlines the statutory minimums for calculating benefits for spouses and children of deceased workers. This minimum is currently about \$15,000.

Let us consider this scenario: A plumber retires in 2005, is diagnosed with cancer in 2008 and passes away in 2010. It was determined that the cancer was the result of the plumber's work environment. For the purposes of calculating survivor benefits, the WSIB would consider the plumber's earnings on the date of illness, which is the date of diagnosis. As a retired employee, the survivor benefits would simply be the statutory minimum.

With the addition of section 48.1, the WSIB's operational practice of calculating survivor benefits based on the average annual earnings of a worker engaged in the same trade in which the worker's disease was contracted, or the 12 months prior to the date of diagnosis, whichever is greater, would become the law.

Therefore, in this scenario, the WSIB would consider what a plumber in the same industry was earning in 2008 to determine the diseased plumber's earnings. This way, the spouse and the children of the deceased worker are protected from being denied survivor benefits because the disease was contracted after retirement.

Speaker, Bill 109 is about ensuring that we protect our workers' rights, and that's what we're doing with proceeding with this bill, if passed.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I know that we're looking forward to this bill being passed. I know that schedule 2 is particularly, I guess, an annoyance to the third party, but really, I look at it and it's not very often that we do anything in this House that actually cuts regulation. It is a step in the right direction where it seems to make sense. The group already is a majority. Certainly there are ways to contravene that, if the overall group wants to change that.

We see a government here that—time after time in my riding, we look at the complaints people have through simple things like building a home. It's getting so expensive under this government. There are so many regulations. People are turning around and blaming our local building inspector—

Mr. John Yakabuski: Now they want to put a land transfer tax in there, as well.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Yes, a land transfer tax.

They have taken away the average Joe's ability to have a reasonable home and to survive work in this province. I think we've got to get back to the point where we start making life a little bit simpler and a little bit cheaper. Because as we say, the taxpayers in this province, if they can, are leaving. They're turning out the lights. A lot of them are turning out the lights because they can't afford them, but they're turning out the lights as they leave. I think it's time to change and to try to reverse that, to try to get things under control—power, regulation. I tell people at home, when they blame the local building inspector, "Those are just the massive changes that happened last year. You're blaming the wrong people. It's the Liberal government in Toronto that's causing this trouble, causing this expensive life where no longer can you just go out and get anything done."

Some regulation is important to a point, but when it takes away our right to a reasonable life, then I think it's gone overboard.

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to have a couple of minutes to put on the record regarding Bill 109, and to comment on the member from London—Fanshawe. She focused on the second part of this bill.

I'd also like to comment on the Associate Minister of Finance, who said that this bill is about strengthening protections for workers. We would agree that two parts of it are. But I would like to know from the government's side exactly how removing the democratic right to decide who you're represented by as a worker, how on earth that strengthens your right as a worker. I fail to understand that.

This is a classic example of how often we hear that Liberals campaign on the left and govern on the right.

Here they say they're protecting workers, and we have the Conservatives agreeing with the NDP—and they're on the right—saying that the Liberals are removing democratic rights from workers. Yet, they stand there and say, "But this bill is all about strengthening protection for workers." Schedule 2 is removing their democratic rights. It's got nothing to do with protecting any worker. For this bill to actually protect workers, schedule 2 should be struck right out of it. Then it would, to some degree, protect workers.

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

Hon. Bill Mauro: I'm happy to have a couple of minutes on Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015. I want to congratulate our Minister Flynn for bringing this forward. I think he's doing a great job there, quite frankly, Speaker. I think he is well placed in the labour ministry. He's got a great passion for issues related to workers and worker safety. I want to thank him for the work that he's doing.

A little bit earlier, my colleague from Thunder Bay, the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, referenced a group in Thunder Bay that has been very active on a lot of these files, the Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group, a very proactive—I would say probably as proactive of a group as there is in the province, and a group that I spent a fair bit of time meeting with and working with. I want to thank them for their advocacy.

I would think that in here there is a point or two that I think they would be thankful for and appreciative of. I just want to read that quickly in the little time available to me. As mentioned, the legislation deals with three different acts. This part is the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act that I'm referencing, that I think they'd be interested in. If passed, this bill would also provide greater fairness for survivors in case of work-related death. Bill 109 would enable the WSIB to calculate survivor benefits based on the average earnings of a worker engaged in the same profession as that out of which the deceased worker's injury arose.

It's important, Speaker, because—and I'll just conclude with this point. It's important for how the WSIB calculates survivor benefits for a worker who, unfortunately, dies of an occupational disease and who had no or low earnings at the date of the diagnosis because they were retired. Obviously, in many of these examples, there is also a latency period that needs to be accommodated for.

I think the group in Thunder Bay and others across the province would be happy with that part of the work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from London–Fanshawe has two minutes.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Thank you, Speaker, for the wrap-up here, but it's a little disappointing that my whole debate piece for 10 minutes was on schedule 2 and it fell on deaf ears. Selective hearing is a talent that's acquired by the Liberals.

Avoidance of schedule 2 is not going to make those things go away. I hope that when there is a committee

hearing—now back up a minute. Today, I looked up how much time we spent debating this bill. It's about five hours and 22 minutes as of this morning. Now this afternoon, we're going to be almost on the verge of six and a half hours, which means this government can call time allocation. Shame on you that you would even—the pattern of behaviour leads me to believe that tomorrow or sometime when we get back from break on Remembrance Day, you're going to call this bill for time allocation.

Our only saving grace is that I hope, when we get this to committee, you will allow presentations and you will allow a substantial amount of time for people to come forward and travel to Toronto. If you look at your history, if you look at your pattern of behaviour, you won't travel the bill because you don't want to hear from workers who are losing their rights. Honestly, when you look at the set-up of this House, there is a majority government, but you haven't taken away our right to vote. We can still voice our opinion that we're dissatisfied with something even though, technically, you can just pass it through because you have a majority. But you haven't taken away our right to speak; you haven't taken away our right to vote.

You're taking the rights away from workers, and that's wrong. That's wrong, and you should listen. You should listen to me because I generally don't get this fired up about something. The members know—and this is probably as fired up as I'll get, so you need to pay attention—that schedule 2 is not democratic. Schedule 2 is wrong for workers. I hope in committee you're going to listen to people who are going to be affected by this bill because of your legislation.

1720

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? The member from Prince Edward–Hastings.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, and good afternoon. It's a beautiful day here in Toronto. Enjoy it while it lasts; that's all I can say. It's like summer out there.

It's actually a pleasure to rise in the House this afternoon and speak to Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, because, as the member from London–Fanshawe just indicated, a lot of us in the Legislature aren't going to get the opportunity to speak to this bill. As the chihuahua from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke would point out, the guillotine—

Interjection: Is about to fall.

Mr. Todd Smith: —is about to fall on this bill, and they're going to cut off the rights of elected members of the Legislature to speak to this piece of legislation. So I'm honoured that I get the opportunity before that guillotine falls.

I would also, as the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry just said—he commended the Minister of Labour for coming up with this piece of legislation. Although it has its flaws, I like the fact that he actually named it something that it is instead of something a little bit condescending or misleading, like some other titles of

bills from the government have been. This is simply called the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act. On that score, full credit to the Minister of Labour. You know what? He's a good Irish guy. He seems like he just wants to get down to the basic facts of this issue.

Bill 109 seeks to amend a few labour statutes to reflect certain issues that the government has run into in recent years because of decisions made without thinking about the potential consequences. The first one is the amendments to the Labour Relations Act and the Fire Protection and Prevention Act in order to protect double-hatters. I know there has been a lot of talk about that this afternoon. There has been a lot of good work done by members on this side of the House, in particular my seatmate from Kitchener–Conestoga, Mr. Harris, and also the member from Wellington–Halton Hills, Mr. Arnott, on this file. The fact that it's in this bill I think speaks to the dogged determination, if we can continue down that road this afternoon, of those members in the House, and it's reflected in this legislation.

In my riding, we have professional firefighters in Belleville, in Picton, in Quinte West and in Bancroft. Many of the smaller municipalities live only by the volunteer aspect of firefighting. By protecting double-hatters, we're allowing firefighters who live in communities that they don't work in to play a role in protecting their homes and the homes of their neighbours.

I know that in some of my communities and in communities right across the province, volunteer and professional firefighters work together in a hybrid-type situation, like they do in Belleville. This legislation protects double-hatters. It's in the best interests of many of our smaller municipalities.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. Continue.

Mr. Todd Smith: The volunteers are really important in these smaller communities. I just had the opportunity to pass a note over: a letter that I had written on behalf of the Belleville fire department to the Minister of Transportation. A lot of people in urban centres, because they're served by professional firefighters, don't understand, when they go into a smaller, rural area that has volunteer firefighters, that those volunteers have green flashing lights on their personal vehicles. If you come from an urban centre like Toronto, for instance, you might have no idea, if a vehicle pulls up behind you with a green flashing light, that you're supposed to pull off to the side of the road and allow them to pass because they're on their way to a fire, a motor vehicle accident or some other type of potentially tragic situation.

The Belleville fire department, at its own expense, made up these signs to put on the local roads, advising people from out of town—the Bay of Quinte tourism area is quite a hot spot for people from urban centres to come visit these days because of our award-winning wines. The green-light issue is a big issue. They paid for these signs—professionally constructed, reflective signs. The

Ministry of Transportation isn't allowing them to put the signs up on their provincial highways. Hopefully we can work together with the Minister of Transportation. He has promised to get to the bottom of that—but I digress.

The rest of the bill: You know what? I do agree with the members of the third party when they stomp their feet and point at the government, saying that the democratic rights of workers are being removed in schedule 2 of the bill. I actually do agree with them on that. The thing that surprises me most is that the government is saying that when two unions come together in one workplace, and you have one union representing 60% and another representing 40%, 60% is larger and should therefore swallow up the 40% in the other union.

The thing that's amazing to me is that the members of the government are saying that 60% is more than 40%. Because when you look at the Hydro One sell-off that's occurring right now, they believe that by having a 40% share in Hydro One, they have the majority of Hydro One, yet when it comes to this bill, clearly they know that 60% is larger than 40%. It's amazing to me that they've been able to draw that distinction. I would fully agree with them that 60 is more than 40; however, when it comes to Hydro One, it's a completely different story.

In the second schedule of the act, we've got several interesting questions being raised by amendments that the government raises. Currently, when a workplace is represented by two or more unions, as I just described, the members vote on which union they want to have representing their bargaining unit, and that is as it should be. In instances like this, democracy should always win out, and it harms no one to simply conduct that vote to determine which union will represent the workforce there. This provision has kept some major unions from supporting this bill, and it's completely unnecessary.

It's likely that this measure is a reaction to an issue that occurred last year, when the government forced the merger of the OPA and the IESO and ran into workplaces represented by multiple unions. That having been said, a founding principle of the organized labour movement has always been the democratic contributions of its members and their right to participate in their governance and the bargaining process. It's interesting here that the government would seek to amend a process that has existed for decades, and simply state that if 60% of a workforce belongs to a union, the other 40% of employees are automatically represented by that union, by virtue of working in the same workplace.

This government does, however, have a tendency to undermine the democratic process at times, especially in local municipalities when it suits them. We've seen that borne out in legislation in this House, time and time again. We're seeing it borne out with the Hydro One sell-off—the Hydro One fire sale that's currently occurring. One hundred and eighty-five municipalities have said they're not in favour of selling Hydro One. Were they ever given an opportunity to provide any input on the sell-off of Hydro One? No, they weren't. The fire sale of Hydro One has been anything but a democratic process.

We've seen it with the Green Energy Act. The municipalities have actually had planning authority taken away from them as a result of the Green Energy Act and now, to a much smaller but still significant extent, in this bill, in schedule 2.

The final schedule of this bill deals with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. I know, as we've discussed here this afternoon, that WSIB claims are some of the most frequent issues we deal with in our constituency offices every day. Every time we start dealing with the WSIB legislation, we have to use a scalpel instead of a butcher knife to cut away at it. As the member from Timiskaming–Cochrane said, when you phone the WSIB looking for an answer for one of your constituents, it's always deny, deny, deny. I agree with him wholeheartedly on that. It's a big problem for all of us in our constituency offices, and nothing is happening to fix that problem. It's something we are all dealing with.

1730

While we will be supporting this bill and we look forward to some amendments—the members of the third party are looking for the complete removal, I believe, of schedule 2 of the act when it does get to committee. We will be supporting this at second reading to get it to committee.

It's important to clean up legislation from time to time, and what we're seeing cleaned up hasn't been fixed up since 1997. It's time to make some changes, and I look forward to commenting on this further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I've just got to say to my friend who talked, maybe one of the things we should do, if we're having problems with the WSIB, is to call Elizabeth Witmer. She was a member of this assembly and knows well the inner workings of the Workers' Compensation Board. If we were to call Ms. Witmer, I'm sure she's prepared to deal with her former colleagues, especially in the Conservative Party, and deal with some of the problems at WSIB.

I want to say—because this particular bill is troubling—that there's a number of parts of this bill that are, quite frankly, quite supportable. Who can argue with some of the motherhood and apple pie issues in this bill that we can support? But the other parts of the bill are, quite frankly, a step backwards. Where is it that we have a bill that essentially takes away the right for members to decide which unions they're going to be part of, Mr. Speaker? That's unheard of. Everywhere we've ever worked in this province, when it comes to the rights of workers, we've always understood that 50% plus one means something, and that at the end of the day, the members have the right to be able to choose their own union.

Well, what they've done in this bill is put a poison pill in. They've essentially said that workers are going to lose their right to select which union they want to represent them when it comes to bargaining and other conditions of work, as a right that they have with a collective agree-

ment. I'm just saying to the government, why put this poison pill in the bill?

There are things in this bill that we support. Do we not support the issue of how we're going to be able to help firefighters on the issues having to do with presumptive legislation? My God, Andrea Horwath brought that bill forward when she was first elected in this Legislature some years ago. Other members such as Cheri DiNovo brought forward bills in order to deal with presumptive legislation. New Democrats are on side. We're prepared to support, and we will push that bill forward. But putting a poison pill in this I think just shows to what degree the Liberals are playing games with what are the rights of workers, and that is not the way things should be done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Z. Milczyn: It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon in the House in response to the member from Prince Edward–Hastings and some of his remarks on Bill 109, the Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act. The member started his remarks about symbolic guillotines falling, as if members of this Legislature were in actual danger. But this bill is actually talking about protecting hard-working Ontarians, giving them more protection from the dangers they face in their workplace and giving them more protections when they get injured in that workplace.

As many members have said this afternoon during debate, I think we can all agree how important the changes to the Fire Protection and Prevention Act are to ensure that the double-hatters in this province, who give of themselves, sacrifice their private time, their family time, to share the skills that they already have to protect their communities—how important it is that we extend more protections to them.

Certainly, it's incredibly important that those who pay into the workmen's compensation system, who expect that they as workers have certain protections in place—that if they were to become ill in the future or potentially die in the future, there would be benefits that would flow to their families.

These changes to this act I think are incredibly and profoundly important. The whole notion that somebody who may have suffered some kind of latent disease that lay dormant for many years and later on they become ill, perhaps they die—ensuring that their families receive the benefits that those employers and employees paid for, is incredibly important. I hope all members support this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Speaker, it's always a pleasure to listen to our colleague from Prince Edward–Hastings engage in debate.

I think I'll just take this moment to restate that this is the time for debate, not the time for statements. I think the Liberal Party has confused making statements with debate. One of the core elements of debate is to put forth an assertion, a proposition, and have the other side challenge it or agree with it or provide their evidence.

We've been doing this for a while now in this House. I asked a number of questions last week during debate on Bill 109. Many members here today, including the member from Prince Edward–Hastings, have again raised the issue about the 60% threshold on union certification of mergers and acquisitions. Not once has any member from the Liberal Party put forth any rationale or any justification for taking away the rights of workers to choose who their bargaining unit is going to be—not once.

That is the purpose of debate, for the member from Etobicoke–Lakeshore, who got up and made his statement just a few moments ago—please, take a moment to respond to the questions during the debate. Have somebody in your communications bureau bring up some new talking points, maybe, to give some creative answers to what the questions are during this debate. Otherwise, you're just making this whole period of time redundant. Please answer some of those questions.

We also raised questions about the WSIB last week, and continued, and still no response. Somebody over there has to be able to do some thinking sometimes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I want to add my voice to the debate. I want to thank the member from Prince Edward–Hastings for his comments. One of the points he brought up, while we've been talking about the fact that this bill takes away the right of workers to choose their bargaining unit—many of the members have brought up this issue.

What the member did, though, in addition, is that he pointed out that this is not just one example; this is part of a larger trend where the government doesn't address the concerns of the people of Ontario and in fact purposely seems to override their concerns time and time again. Whether it's the lack of proper consultations with municipalities or with other partners and stakeholders, there seems to be a trend that the government continues to run roughshod over the concerns of the people of Ontario.

One of the great examples is the current sale of Hydro One. Taking away the ownership of this public asset for absolutely no reason whatsoever, for no justification, for no real, solid evidence-based reasoning, makes no sense.

Similarly, it makes no sense to take away the right of workers to democratically vote for who they want to represent them. It seems to be very basic. As one of my colleagues from the Conservative Party—the opposition—also mentioned, the government has yet to provide any insight into why they're doing it and why they're doing it in a bill which purports to be protecting workers. They simply do not make any sense. They do not coincide. On one hand, you're talking about protecting workers; on the other hand, you're stripping them of a right. Please explain.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Prince Edward–Hastings has two minutes.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you to the members from Timmins–James Bay, Etobicoke–Lakeshore, Lanark–

Frontenac–Lennox and Addington and Bramalea–Gore–Malton for their comments.

I would just like to pick up on where the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton left off. What we've been seeing from the members of the government when it comes to debating their own bills is this speed-debating where they're given their three minutes of talking points and they stand up and say exactly what the corner office has instructed them to do. That's exactly what we're seeing from them on the Hydro One file as well.

Smokey Thomas, the president of OPSEU or the top dog at OPSEU, was in committee earlier this week. He said that every individual member of the government that he has spoken to is against the sale of Hydro One, but they have been told to do exactly what the corner office tells them to do. They've lost their voice.

1740

If I'm a member of the Liberal government, I am offended at what I'm being told to do by the corner office, because everyone who has come out against the sell-off of Hydro One has had valid reasons as to why this is a bad deal for the province of Ontario. Whether it's members of the official opposition or the third party, or 185 municipalities in Ontario, or the Financial Accountability Officer, or all eight independent officers of the Legislature—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order, the member from Etobicoke Centre.

Stop the clock.

Mr. Yvan Baker: Speaker, I think we're debating a bill, and I don't believe that the member's remarks are guided towards the bill. I humbly suggest to you that maybe we ask the member to refer his remarks to the issue at hand.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It's my opinion that if he gets off line, I'll let him know, but I think he's trying to do a comparative analysis.

Continue.

Mr. Todd Smith: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I will just jump to a comment that was made by the member from Timmins–James Bay when he said that I should be picking up the phone and contacting Liz Witmer to try and fix those problems at the WSIB. You know what? He is absolutely right. If you want to fix something in Ontario these days, you've got to call a Conservative. That's what you've got to do.

We're going to support this bill going forward, get it to committee and make sure that we get the amendments that we need to the bill.

I thank the member from Timmins–James Bay for the support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker, although that is a tough line to follow, I can tell you.

I've been here all afternoon and I've heard some very compelling evidence, really, as to why this is a flawed piece of legislation. Just for those people who are

watching, which includes my mom and maybe my husband: Bill 109, Employment and Labour Statute Law Amendment Act, 2015—there are three parts to this piece of legislation. It contains amendments to three different bills on three separate and equally important issues, two of which come at the expense of one, which is the poison pill. I'm going to address schedule 2 in a few minutes.

I do want to speak to the entire culture of how legislation comes through to this House. Quite honestly, these omnibus bills that come before us, which—for no good reason; there is no good rationale to do so, and it runs counter to that narrative that we heard from this Premier and from this cabinet that there would be an openness and there would be a transparency to how legislation flows in this place, because people wanted to ensure that legislation would meet the needs of the people that we are elected to serve here in this place.

Unfortunately, we are seeing a pattern from this government—now we're well into this session—it's copying the former federal government, where there is so much in a bill, and yet it doesn't address—there's always a hook, if you will.

We heard about this activist centre—do you remember that, Mr. Speaker?—and that legislation would be progressive and that it would be responding to the needs, the expressed needs, evidence-based needs, of the people of this province.

There isn't anything progressive about this legislation, particularly schedule 2, which involves the stripping of rights of employees to vote for who will represent them. That's a core issue. We will never support any piece of legislation that has this caveat contained within it, and the Liberal government knows that. Yet, they still crafted this piece of legislation with it. Instead of trying to get unanimous support going forward, instead of trying to find consensus—they're going to do what they're going to do. Clearly, they already have.

But this activist centre concept, that's clearly been abandoned, although, quite honestly, there are not a lot of people who really understand what it meant in the first place. It was thought to look like something that might be considered to be progressive. Stripping the rights of employees to choose their representation in the workplace—there isn't anything progressive about that. Certainly, the biggest transfer of wealth from the public sector to the private sector through the sell-off of Hydro One—there isn't anything progressive about that either. I feel like there's this giant walking contradiction in this place, and it is our job, obviously, as opposition members to draw attention to some of those weaknesses.

In this piece, in Bill 109, I'll give you an example. The issue of WSIB, as has already been stated here in the House all afternoon, is that this is a broken system. It is a long-standing problem for the people of this province who become injured in the workplace and who are seeking compensation—and, in some cases, just seeking compassion. In fact, tomorrow, our labour critic, the member from Welland, is going to be hosting some medical professionals and psychologists who are coming

here to Queen's Park to expose the fact that WSIB has interfered in the medical care of workers in the province of Ontario. That's a serious issue, but it is not a new issue, and all of us know that.

In fact, even going back to May 2012, even after it was included as a key recommendation of the Arthurs commission report of May 2012, it still took the government over three years to implement legislation. There's no need for this. I mean, it is truly about priorities. Some people would say that rushing the sale of Hydro One has moved at breakneck pace. Yet there are issues pertaining to the safety of workers in the province of Ontario that move as slowly as possible. One only has to consider, for instance, the safety of workers who work at heights, which obviously is more and more; or the issue of temporary agencies and the influx of workers who are precarious, part-time and contractual workers in the province of Ontario: This, apparently, is a priority for this government, but not addressing those key safety issues.

The main issue I have primarily, though, with schedule 3 of this is that, while we do, of course, support the procedural provisions against claim suppression, which we know is an issue with the WSIB and workers—it expressly prohibits employers from suppressing claims directly or indirectly. This is good. This is a good piece of the legislation. Employers who are found guilty of claim suppression can be fined up to \$500,000. That's up from \$100,000. That's good. We hope that that might be a deterrent for employers to try to suppress claims. But there is no language in this bill around procedural mechanisms for enforcement or prevention, so you can't ensure that these good intentions are actually going to be followed through on.

We also have Bill 98, which the government did support. This was our member from Oshawa, Ms. French, who brought forward an excellent bill which is more comprehensive, which is more responsive and which there was extensive consultation on.

The Ontario Federation of Labour, as it relates to schedule 3, states that schedule 3 of Bill 109 doesn't go far enough and only goes halfway. This is the pattern for this government. Why not fix it now? There's no excuse. There were excuses in the past: that it was a minority government and that things couldn't move forward—which actually, in my view, was untrue. Minority governments actually provided greater opportunity for us to work together to find consensus and to actually listen to each other and work together. I think that the people of this province primarily were served well in that respect.

Schedule 2 is obviously the non-negotiable piece of the legislation. Just for those who are watching, schedule 2 of Bill 109 removes the requirement of a vote in the case of a merger if one of the existing bargaining agents meets the minimum threshold of 60% of total membership. So if a new bargaining unit meets that threshold, a vote is not required. Of course, we oppose this, as do all of the major public service unions, representing thousands of workers. Why would you put this piece in? There's no good rationale. There's no good reason. It

ignores and overrides the basic principles of workplace democracy. You wouldn't find a move like this in the activist centre, as far as I could tell. There isn't anything progressive about this, and there was no consultation on the overall issue. People would genuinely be surprised. I know that you must be feeling some pressure coming from your constituency.

Also, it's not a burning issue versus the countless other labour issues that are long-standing here in the province of Ontario. So this is something that we will not back down on. It's a core principle that people have the right in their workplaces to come together and to have a vote—to have a democratic process where they are part of that conversation—and select their leadership and to select their representation.

1750

So here we have a piece of legislation which has some good components of it, but there's this hook that will prevent us from supporting it. As I've said, bringing forward a piece of legislation like this really just adds to the entire cynicism that is growing in the political arena of this province. It's discouraging; it truly is. I think that people in this province deserve better. They deserve more from their politicians. We should set the bar higher when legislation comes to this floor for debate. Obviously we cannot be supportive of it, and we'd be looking to amend and remove schedule 2 in its entirety.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Chris Ballard: Thank you for the comments thus far.

It has been very interesting. I just wanted to take a minute in reviewing this bill again before I stood. I just want to quote from a letter that was received by the Minister of Labour not too, too long ago. It was a letter from Injured Worker Outreach Services, which represents 14 autonomous injured worker groups across the province. The groups are partially funded by WSIB. As a whole, the groups assist and represent thousands of injured workers. I've got a few bullets of a direct quote from their letter. All of the quotes pertain to this bill.

"After careful consideration of the bill, the IWOS groups' signatories to this document are pleased to offer our support and congratulations to you on these much-needed changes.

"Injured workers' survivors will especially benefit from the changes you have outlined in section 48.1. We are especially pleased that this long-standing issue is being addressed and rectified."

The letter goes on to say, about sections 22.1 and 155.5: "The proposed changes to the issue of claims suppression are also long overdue. The groups are certainly in support of these increases in the financial penalty from \$100,000 to \$500,000 for employers who discourage workers in filing claims."

Mr. Speaker, one final point the letter makes, about section 176.1: "Enshrining a Fair Practices Commissioner and the commission in legislation will ensure that

workers have an independent ombudsman they can contact when those issues arise."

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim McDonell: I want to rise and make a couple of comments on some of the discussion today, particularly around schedule 2. I'm hearing from the third party how serious they are about the fact that there should be a majority of workers that have some say in what organization represents them. I think that flies in the face of the construction industry, where we don't see that. We've had cases in my riding of two people with a card working on a weekend, or a case a couple of years ago in Renfrew, on a New Year's Eve, where they organized a whole company, against the wishes of the vast majority. They aren't given an opportunity to exercise their democratic rights. This was put in by the government on the other side and of course endorsed by this side here. I don't know where the difference is.

In that case here and the one in Renfrew, more than half of the people involved quit because they didn't want to work under the basis of the union in that case. Where are the differences? In that case, two people were able to exercise their will over 40 or 45 other workers. That has happened in my riding; it has happened in numerous places across this province.

We agree. We think things like that should be democratically—the opportunity should be to choose your own organized labour. I don't know why the difference. I introduced a bill in the last term and reintroduced it in this term again. We didn't get support from the third party or from the party opposite here, the government.

I think it's a very poorly understood issue across the public. I know it has garnered a lot of support for this government during some of the elections, but I think it's the wrong thing to do and I think it's time for that to change.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The member from Kitchener-Waterloo emphasized how important it is to protect democracy. I want to mention how ironic it is that in this place, which is a place of democracy, a place where we all represent our communities—we have been elected to represent our communities—the government would enact legislation that would remove a democratic right.

There are different circumstances that apply. I want to point out some significant differences between what the member who just spoke from the Conservative Party pointed out with respect to card certification and what we're talking about today with respect to the membership choosing who they want to represent them as a bargaining unit. In circumstances where there are mergers, where a hospital is merged with a larger hospital, the workers should have a right to choose whether to remain with their existing bargaining unit, move in with the incoming bargaining unit, or some alternative. They should be able to choose that. They're already in an organized labour position. They're going to decide who to go with.

That scenario is a very different scenario than whether or not we want to make it easier for people to organize. In general, it's very clear; the evidence shows that wherever there is organized labour, people have better working conditions, both in the public and in the private sector. The evidence is absolutely clear that workers enjoy more rights and that society has better conditions for workers. That is something that we can look at with very clear objective evidence. On this issue, though, it's absolutely clear that being able to choose who represents you is fundamentally important.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Questions and comments?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I'm very pleased to have another opportunity to stand up and speak about this important legislation. I was speaking, in my first turnaround at this, to the significant amendments to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act. I listened to one of my colleagues, the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, make reference to the increase in the penalties that will be put in place, going up to \$500,000. The point that I would have made were I able to get up again and respond would have been to say, "That's why it's important: We're increasing protection." I don't think the member disagrees with me on that. I think that's an important element.

I think there are a number of parts of this legislation, particularly related to the WSIA, the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act—greater fairness for survivors, I think, is another important element, in cases of work-related death. Bill 109 would enable the WSIB to calculate survivor benefits based on the average earnings of a worker engaged in the same profession as that out of which the deceased worker's injury arose.

These may seem like things that are relatively obvious because they make sense. The fact is, I think it's important that we put these clear protections in place. With my number of years now as MPP for Thunder Bay–Superior North, one of the most important relationships

that I've had from the very beginning, when I first got elected until now, is with the Thunder Bay and District Injured Workers Support Group, who do remarkable work on behalf of the people who need it perhaps the most.

I'm delighted to stand here and support the legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kitchener–Waterloo: two minutes.

Ms. Catherine Fife: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. Thank you for the comments. It is interesting that there's nothing substantive coming back as far as the rationale around schedule 2, which specifically is our concern. It's disappointing that there's no commentary, there's no rationale and there is no good reason for this section, the Public Sector Labour Relations Transition Act, to be contained within this piece of legislation. So one has to wonder why it is there. Why would this government actively and aggressively be moving to override the basic principles of workplace democracy? Why?

I think that that is the overriding question. Why isn't this government doing a number of things? Why is this government selling off Hydro One and transferring wealth from the public sector to the private sector? Why is this government continuing to bring forward pieces of legislation like this, which involve the stripping of rights of workers in the workplace?

All that we can do is raise our voices in this place and bring the concerns of our constituents to the floor of this Legislature and hope that someday, at some point, this government decides to listen to the real concerns of Ontarians and bring forward legislation which is truly progressive and meets the needs of workers in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): It being 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Baker, Yvan (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Ballard, Chris (LIB)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Brown, Patrick (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and International Trade / Ministre des Affaires civiques, de l'Immigration et du Commerce international
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre du Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Damerla, Hon. / L'hon. Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Associate Minister of Health and Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) / Ministre associée de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée (Soins de longue durée et Promotion du mieux-être) Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Del Duca, Hon. / L'hon. Steven (LIB)	Vaughan	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Dong, Han (LIB)	Trinity–Spadina	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development, Employment and Infrastructure / Ministre du Développement économique, de l'Emploi et de l'Infrastructure
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Fife, Catherine (NDP)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Flynn, Hon. / L'hon. Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fraser, John (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	
French, Jennifer K. (NDP)	Oshawa	
Gates, Wayne (NDP)	Niagara Falls	
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Gretzky, Lisa (NDP)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hatfield, Percy (NDP)	Windsor–Tecumseh	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Hoggarth, Ann (LIB)	Barrie	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	
Hunter, Hon. / L'hon. Mitzie (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Associate Minister of Finance (Ontario Retirement Pension Plan) / Ministre associée des Finances (Régime de retraite de la province de l'Ontario)
Jaczek, Hon. / L'hon. Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Kiwala, Sophie (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Marie-France (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Leal, Hon. / L'hon. Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Hon. / L'hon. Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Malhi, Harinder (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Martins, Cristina (LIB)	Davenport	
Martow, Gila (PC)	Thornhill	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Deputy Premier / Vice-première ministre Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy / Ministre responsable de la Stratégie de réduction de la pauvreté President of the Treasury Board / Présidente du Conseil du Trésor
Mauro, Hon. / L'hon. Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry / Ministre des Richesses naturelles et des Forêts
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGarry, Kathryn (LIB)	Cambridge	
McMahon, Eleanor (LIB)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Attorney General / Procureure générale Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Milczyn, Peter Z. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP)	Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton–Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Munro, Julia (PC) Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	York–Simcoe Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of the Environment and Climate Change / Ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Action en matière de changement climatique
Naidoo-Harris, Indira (LIB) Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Halton Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Natyshak, Taras (NDP) Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Essex Chatham–Kent–Essex	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Orazietti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Government and Consumer Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux et des Services aux consommateurs
Pettapiece, Randy (PC) Potts, Arthur (LIB) Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB) Rinaldi, Lou (LIB) Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB) Sattler, Peggy (NDP) Scott, Laurie (PC)	Perth–Wellington Beaches–East York Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord Northumberland–Quinte West Guelph London West / London-Ouest Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors Affairs Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Leader, Recognized Party / Chef adjoint du gouvernement
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP) Smith, Todd (PC) Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB) Tabuns, Peter (NDP) Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB) Taylor, Monique (NDP) Thibeault, Glenn (LIB) Thompson, Lisa M. (PC) Vanthof, John (NDP) Vernile, Daiene (LIB) Walker, Bill (PC) Wilson, Jim (PC)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton Prince Edward–Hastings Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud Toronto–Danforth Mississauga–Erindale Hamilton Mountain Sudbury Huron–Bruce Timiskaming–Cochrane Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound Simcoe–Grey	Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB) Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC) Yurek, Jeff (PC) Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB) Vacant	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke Elgin–Middlesex–London Willowdale Whitby–Oshawa	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Présidente: Cheri DiNovo
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Monique Taylor
Bas Balkissoon, Chris Ballard
Grant Crack, Cheri DiNovo
Han Dong, Michael Harris
Sophie Kiwala, Todd Smith
Monique Taylor
Committee Clerk / Greffier / Greffière: Christopher Tyrell

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Présidente: Soo Wong
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Z. Milczyn
Laura Albanese, Yvan Baker
Toby Barrett, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Ann Hoggarth
Peter Z. Milczyn, Daiene Vernile
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Joe Dickson
Mike Colle, Grant Crack
Joe Dickson, Lisa Gretzky
Ann Hoggarth, Sophie Kiwala
Jim McDonnell, Eleanor McMahon
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: John Fraser
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Cristina Martins
Robert Bailey, Vic Dhillon
John Fraser, Wayne Gates
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Cristina Martins, Randy Pettapiece
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Bob Delaney
Randy Hillier, Michael Mantha
Cristina Martins, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Arthur Potts, Shafiq Qadri
Laurie Scott
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Monte McNaughton
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jack MacLaren
Granville Anderson, Bas Balkissoon
Chris Ballard, Steve Clark
Jack MacLaren, Michael Mantha
Eleanor McMahon, Monte McNaughton
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Han Dong, John Fraser
Ernie Hardeman, Percy Hatfield
Lisa MacLeod, Harinder Malhi
Julia Munro, Arthur Potts
Lou Rinaldi
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Présidente: Indira Naidoo-Harris
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Kathryn McGarry
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Jennifer K. French
Monte Kwinter, Amrit Mangat
Kathryn McGarry, Indira Naidoo-Harris
Daiene Vernile, Bill Walker
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffier / Greffière: Christopher Tyrell

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jagmeet Singh
Granville Anderson, Vic Dhillon
Amrit Mangat, Gila Martow
Kathryn McGarry, Norm Miller
Jagmeet Singh, Peter Tabuns
Glenn Thibeault
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Sexual Violence and Harassment /
Comité spécial de la violence et du harcèlement à caractère sexuel**

Chair / Présidente: Daiene Vernile
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laurie Scott
Han Dong, Sylvia Jones
Marie-France Lalonde, Harinder Malhi
Kathryn McGarry, Eleanor McMahon
Taras Natyshak, Peggy Sattler
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