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Thursday 13 September 2012

Jeudi 13 septembre 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 13 September 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 13 septembre 2012

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

WIRELESS SERVICES AGREEMENTS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LES CONVENTIONS DE SERVICES SANS FIL

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 6, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 82, An Act to strengthen consumer protection with respect to consumer agreements relating to wireless services accessed from a cellular phone, smart phone or any other similar mobile device / Projet de loi 82, Loi visant à mieux protéger les consommateurs en ce qui concerne les conventions de consommation portant sur les services sans fil accessibles au moyen d'un téléphone cellulaire, d'un téléphone intelligent ou de tout autre appareil mobile semblable.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It's a pleasure to rise today to speak on Bill 82. First and foremost, I'm encouraged by the fact that we have a bill that, for the most part, is clearly in support of the consumer. It's a bill that puts consumers first, and as a member of the New Democratic Party, I'm happy to see something that puts people first.

There are some good points in the bill, which I'll discuss, and of course there are some points that I would like to see added—perhaps amendments—and we'll talk about those points as well. Then there's a bigger picture, a broader picture of where we should be headed with respect to cellphone usage and cellphone affordability as well as cellphones as an issue of accessibility, particularly given the rise of cellphone use as the primary avenue for Internet access.

We'll talk about what that means for young people and what that means for society when Internet is more and more one of the primary sources of information transmission as well as obtaining data or sharing information around the world; what that means for accessibility if cellphone prices and terms of wireless contracts are exorbitantly high and how that would negatively impact the ability of various members of society, particularly those of lower socio-economic background, to access something that more and more is becoming a necessity.

Before I begin my specific comments with respect to government Bill 82, it's important to note some interesting trends in terms of cellphone usage. Cellphones are more and more the primary telecommunication device that most individuals use. Many people do not have a land line and rely upon cellphones as their primary way to communicate with one another: to stay in touch with loved ones, to stay in touch with employers—essentially, the primary means to communicate with other people around the world.

As the use of cellphones increases and becomes the predominant means of communication, it becomes more and more important for us as a government to ensure that there is proper oversight of consumer rights, of affordability, of the contracts and the way in which these services are provided to consumers. As cellphone use increases, as it rises, it's more and more important that there are strict measures imposed on cellphone or wireless contract providers to protect the consumer. I think that's a logical connection.

I think it's important to note that the trend is particularly interesting amongst young people, students, those who are in employment which require travel and particularly, newer employees, people who are just entering the job force whose employment may shift from city to city or from different parts of the city. There is a definite connection with young people, students and the newly employed and the use of cellphones. The issues affecting affordability will affect young people or youth with a higher proportionality as opposed to elders or older members of society.

One of the interesting things that comes to light with this particular bill is the effectiveness of the complaints mechanism as a tool of democracy. We see that the CCTS, the Commissioner for Complaints for Telecommunications Services, received an inordinate amount, a disproportionately high amount of complaints regarding cellphones; that the primary complaint that consumers had with regard to their telecommunication was cellphones. It goes hand in hand with the idea that cellphone usage is increasing, but it also is interesting that there were so many complaints about cellphones. If I can summarize: Essentially, the primary complaint was with the contracts—lack of disclosure of the contracts, lack of clarity with respect to the fees charged, lack of effective communication in terms of how to cancel one's contract.

I'll list some of these specific statistics. For 2010-11, the Commissioner for Complaints for Telecommunications Services received 8,007 complaints, which constituted a 114% increase over the previous year. The per-

centage of Ontarians who use cellphones was noted at 77%, and the percentage of complaints received by the CCTS that were in respect of wireless companies or wireless contracts was 62%. Again, that's the Commissioner for Complaints for Telecommunications Services. So, well over half of the complaints received by the commissioner were with respect to wireless-related issues.

The complaints broken down in 2010-11: 29.32% of the complaints were related to Bell; 16.92% related to Rogers; and 17.32% related to Telus. Complaints about cellphones and long-distance charges consistently appear on the Ministry of Consumer Services' annual top 10 consumer complaints.

It's also of note that cellular phone service is the business category for which the Better Business Bureau in Canada has processed the most complaints this year.

What's interesting to note here is that this was certainly a key issue among consumers, this was a major issue among consumers—and this is a demonstration of one additional tool that I strongly encourage citizens and residents of Ontario and Canada to make use of: The complaints process is a tool of democracy. Complain about things that you don't accept. Raise issues about things that aren't acceptable to you, and it is a way to have your voice heard by the government.

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It was something that I found interesting given the malaise or the apathy with respect to political engagement that is plaguing our society, that is plaguing our province. I want to just encourage people to, in any way possible, interact and engage with their community. Be politically active; it's important. This is another mechanism by which your concerns, that people have raised, have effectively resulted in the government listening. I'm encouraged by that, and I think it's important that we really look at the complaints process in any area as a tool or mechanism of democracy. I encourage people to use this tool broadly, though. It's not limited to this particular area, but it's a positive example of how we can use this idea or mechanism of complaint—the complaints process—to forward democratic principles.

One area, I think, in which we don't see enough action is with respect to police accountability. That's an area where I really encourage people to make use of the existing civilian complaints commission, but we need to expand that.

Looking at some of the positive points of this bill, the number one issue or one of the primary concerns that was raised by consumers was the nature of the contract. The contract that is signed that governs one's cellphone expenses or the contract or—the terms of one's cellphone bill are defined by a wireless agreement. These wireless agreements were often riddled with optional fees, hidden fees, hidden expenses that the layperson, that a person without a degree in law, wouldn't be able to decipher, and they were not written in clear language that was meant to be understood by the consumer. Because of that, it's no surprise that many people were left very confused about why their cellphone bills were so high, were left very confused about how they could cancel their cellphone contract, and felt trapped in their cellphone bills. It is currently a very serious issue of affordability. Many people are faced with extremely high cellphone bills month to month, and it is certainly a serious affordability issue.

The requirement of Bill 82 to full disclosure is something that is much needed. It's concerning that it wasn't already there. Why it needed to be legislated raises some concerns and some questions, but it's very encouraging to see that there is now greater protection with respect to providing clear and full disclosure of the contract. This disclosure will include optional and mandatory services like the emergency fee that many people see on their cellphone bills—those are mandatory, and then certain optional fees.

Now, what is also very important, and I think is a clear message in favour of consumers, is that if the contract doesn't include full disclosure, if it does not satisfy all the requirements of full disclosure, then the consumer can cancel his or her contract without any cancellation fees. I think that's a strong message in support of the consumer, because if there are any concerns that come up that weren't disclosed in the wireless agreement, the consumer then has that right to cancel their contract. I think that's very encouraging. I'd like to see—my concern is that when someone chooses to engage in that and make use of that right, I want to see what happens with respect to whether there are collection agencies called in and whether or not the wireless supplier honours that.

I know that there are some strong penalties in this bill, but sometimes legislation, which is very well meaning, doesn't end up being implemented in a way that the consumer actually gets the benefit. So, I am encouraged by the legislation in that regard. I'm curious to see what will happen if an individual claims this was not disclosed in the wireless agreement and chooses to cancel their contract—what the supplier will do in that regard. I'm hopeful that they'll follow through on this legislation and they don't take the action of engaging the collection agencies.

Also, another key point that is encouraging in this bill is the protection with respect to contract termination fees. Many people feel very trapped. They find out that there's a much better contract available, a much better plan available with another provider, but they're trapped in their own plan, and if they were to cancel, it would cost the equivalent of a year or two years or even more of a plan with another company. They feel that it's simply impossible, or financially such a burden, such an obstacle to actually cancel their plan. So it's important to allow the consumer the opportunity to actually cancel their contract with reasonable termination fees.

At first blush, two areas come to mind that aren't addressed in this bill which are quite important and should have been addressed, and I'm hoping we can look at ways of addressing these in committee hearings. One is current contract holders, people who have a contract right now and what they can do, because the way the bill

is written, if you have an existing contract, it will not be subject to the protection in this bill. So if you already have a cellphone contract and it has a very strict form of cancellation or termination clause that would sometimes be quite exorbitant in terms of cost, you're not protected at this point. I think there's a way to address that, and I strongly encourage all members of this Legislative Assembly to look at ways of ensuring that this protection actually applies to people who currently have a contract so that they aren't stuck for two, three or four years.

The other area that many people complain about—I have constituents who complain about this—is when you travel overseas or even out of the city and you incur roaming fees. Roaming fees are one of the most vague and unclear areas in terms of cellphone usage. People are completely unaware that simply crossing an imaginary line results in the doubling, tripling or quadrupling of their actual fees, and there is no reminder. There is no update provided that you have incurred this many minutes of roaming or this many megabytes of data while roaming, and if you want to consume any further or use your phone any further, there is an option for you to purchase a roaming package. That type of awareness is not provided. Some cellphone companies do provide it, but by and large, people are left unsure, and they come back with very exorbitant bills, very expensive cellphone bills because they were unaware.

I think that if we want to talk about consumer services and protection of consumers with respect to cellphones, roaming charges is an area that should be addressed. It was left unaddressed in this bill, and I think that's something we need to look at. Hopefully, that's an area where we can hear from consumer groups, citizens and residents about how we can address that and some requirements we can place on wireless providers so that we can address that issue.

The list of requirements of a contract is pretty exhaustive, things that one would assume: name of consumer, name and contact info of supplier, date of agreement, terms of agreement, expiry date of the agreement, description that itemizes each service, a statement indicating whether any goods provided are subject to any technological or physical features that restrict their functioning.

So if you obtain a feature that doesn't actually work on your phone, you should be made aware of that. If there's a feature that you're paying for but you require an additional type of handset—you require a smart phone or any other type of particular hardware—you shouldn't be paying for a service that you can't actually use on your cellphone. I think that is quite sensible. It makes sense, and it's something I like that has been included. Terms and method of payment, total amount paid by the consumer—again, all important things that should be included.

The area that I think many people were quite confused by, and I think including this in the contract is very important, is the manner of calculating the amount the consumer is required to pay to the supplier if the consumer cancels the agreement. That's an area where many people were left guessing. If I cancel my contract, how much is it going to cost me? I think that's a positive sign that we have that added in there.

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The positive side is that if any of these requirements aren't met, the cellphone provider has this sword of Damocles hanging over their head that the consumer can cancel the contract if they don't provide all those details. Again, that's a positive thing.

The other area many constituents have approached me on, and that I think ends up being a very sore spot for many consumers, is when you make a change on your plan. You decide to change something in your plan—you decide to add additional minutes or add voice mail—and all of a sudden you get a letter in the mail saying that you've now increased or agreed to renew your contract for another three years or another two years, and there is no agreement. There is no question about increasing or renewing the term of your contract, but simply by changing one feature, you've automatically been deemed to have renewed your contract. I think that's something that's been happening to many people. It's a scary thought when your clear agreement isn't required to renew a contract. I think that's absolutely unacceptable.

This bill does include some clear parameters around requiring a clear notification—not a tacit agreement but a clear agreement—that you have acknowledged that you're renewing your contract and that you make that agreement. I think it requires great attention, because without having a clear acceptance of renewing a contract, it's completely unfair, and it results in people being trapped in contracts unfairly.

Now there are some concerns in terms of the remedy, and I want to talk about this as an issue of affordability. If a consumer cancels a wireless agreement and the supplier demands payment, the bill indicates that the consumer can commence action in the Superior Court of Justice. If there's an issue that comes up and the supplier doesn't provide the adequate details that were required under the law or there wasn't full disclosure as required by the law, and the consumer decides to cancel their payment or cancel their contract, but then there's an action commenced by the supplier—basically the supplier says, "Hey, you didn't pay your fees. We're going to take you to collections for that," the consumer's allowed to commence a claim in court. You're basically allowed to go to court. The problem is, how many people have the time, the knowledge or the ability to actually go to court?

So, sure the remedy is there. Sure, if you're improperly treated by a cellphone provider you can take the issue to court. There is some strong language in terms of the offences and the fines that would be imposed on the corporation: $250,000 is the maximum for a corporation, and $50,000 is the maximum for an individual who is convicted under this offence for not following any of the agreements. The problem is that requiring court action will preclude a large number of people who can't take time off from work, are intimidated by the court system, feel that this would just incur further costs by taking it to

court and processing it in court—that it will cost them more money without any guarantee of getting a result.

Again, I'm skeptical about that portion of the bill and how well the average consumer will be able to actually employ that. How could a consumer take a matter to court when they've never gone to court, and they're intimidated by the entire process? Hiring a lawyer would be almost counterintuitive. If you're arguing over a couple hundred dollars, which is significant in terms of your monthly budget, but how are you then expected to obtain legal representation for such a paltry amount, in the scheme of what the lawyer's fees would be? I mean this amount may make the difference between affording your groceries or not, but in the context of paying a lawyer hundreds of dollars, it makes no sense to pay hundreds of dollars to a lawyer over $100 or $200 of a contract fee. So, again, I question that area in terms of the remedy, and I encourage perhaps a less legal or a less strict imposition in terms of how you can access a remedy. Going to a board that's outside of the legal system might be something that's easier and might be something that a consumer will actually make more use of.

In terms of the broader point of cellphones and cellphone usage as an accessibility issue, we need to understand exactly how many people this impacts in Canada. We know that globally, cellphones are certainly on the rise. In many areas in the world, you can't actually get a land line set up due to geographic and infrastructure issues, but you can certainly put up a cellphone tower and access satellites. So we know globally that cellphones are certainly bringing the world together.

In Canada right now, there's an indication that over 22.5 million Canadians subscribe to wireless services. Again, specifically in Ontario, 77% of Ontarians are actually using cellphones or subscribe to a cellphone service.

When we look at what this means for accessibility, there is research that was released this year, January 25, 2012. It was research conducted for Google by Ipsos. In this survey, there were six major companies used. Many people probably don't know that the number one way in which consumers today access the Internet is by their cellphone. In the US—they combined laptop use and desktop use, so basically any type of computer use—and found that 69% of those who access the Internet access the Internet through a laptop or computer, but 78% of people use a phone. In the UK, the numbers are even broader: 87% of people access the Internet by their mobile device and 74% by a computer. In France, the numbers are about the same: 74% use both a cellphone or a mobile device to access the Internet and a laptop. And in Japan, 96% of individuals who access the Internet use a phone or a mobile device and 86% use a laptop or desktop.

I was once in a class, and my professor was talking about the Internet and how he viewed the Internet should be used. He looked at it like a highway. When you're driving on a highway, you can to be driving a very reasonable car, and you can still travel 100 kilometres per hour and get to where you want to go. You can be driving in a sports car, you could be driving a luxury sedan, but you're still able to make use of those roads; you're still able to travel to where you want to go. Your make and model of car are not determinants of your ability to access the highways.

Similarly, if we want to live in a truly free society, we want to narrow the gap of inequality. We want to increase the equality of opportunity—which is important language, because opportunity exists, but there is a vast inequality of that opportunity. Depending on where you're from, your community, your background and your access to resources, your ability to access resources and your ability to access opportunity are completely disparate, depending on what your background is. If we really want to be serious about addressing inequality, addressing poverty reduction, addressing creating a society that's more fair and equal, we really need to look at how we can make opportunity more equal so that more people can access opportunity. If we accept—and I think we all should accept, that the Internet is an invaluable tool: It is the culmination of global information; it's a way of sharing and learning, communicating; it's a way of accessing information. And we refer to this age as the information age: Education is power, information is power. Then access to this power, access to this information, access to this wealth of data, access to the Internet has to be affordable, has to be equal and has to be something that is not dependent on your socio-economic background. If you are not well off, if you are not wealthy, that doesn't mean you don't have the same ability to access the Internet or access information, access data.

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In that light, if we look at the Ipsos research that cellphones are now becoming the primary way in which we actually access the Internet, how we actually get information, then it becomes more and more important that our cellphone and wireless contracts are affordable, and particularly that our data portion of that wireless contract is affordable.

When we look at the bill that's before this assembly, Bill 82, it provides some protection, for sure. It provides some much-needed clarity; that's sure. But what it doesn't provide is a requirement of affordability. I think that's something we really need to move towards, because providing clarity in the contract is one thing; providing disclosure is one thing; providing the consumer with more rights is one thing; but affordability is another thing altogether. If we want to be engaging in this notion of accessibility, of equal opportunity, and we realize that cellphones are now going to be the primary way that the majority of people in this society access the Internet, then we really need to get serious about making it affordable.

The bill does not touch on affordability. It doesn't touch on making data usage, voice usage and text usage more affordable. I think that's where we need to head, in terms of our climate right now, financially. We are still hard hit; families are hard hit. People are struggling to

make ends meet. People are struggling to pay their bills. In that context, it's very important that we actually make cellphone usage more affordable, that we make our bills more affordable, that we make what citizens are paying for more affordable.

Why I bring that up is, if we compare what we're paying here in Canada with the rest of the world, we would be astounded by the differences. Let me touch on some of those areas right now.

There was an initiative, New America Foundation's Open Technology Initiative, October 14, 2010. The initiative did some research and did some survey work. What they found—what we've already known very clearly—is that cellphones are intertwined with our lives, with the way we live and the world we live in; and that over the past five years, the problem is that North America is paying far more than anywhere else in the world and Canada stands amongst the highest, or the most expensive, for cellphone use.

On average in Canada—this is the on-average amount that Canadians pay—for a voice, text and data plan, Canadians pay on average $67.50 per month—$67.50. Remember that number. It's almost $70 a month; $70 a month in Canada is the average. Do you want to know what the average rate is in Hong Kong or in India? In Hong Kong, the average similar plan—data, text, voice—it's $70 here in Canada. In Hong Kong, it's $13.50 for the same plan, far less than half—almost 75% less than what we're paying.

In India, which we consider a developing nation—it doesn't have the same infrastructure; it doesn't have the same technology in terms of the saturation that we have here in Canada, in terms of the infrastructure that we have here in Canada—they're paying $12.90 per month.

I just need to stress that again. We're paying $67.50 per month for the similar plan that in Hong Kong and India they're paying close to $13 per month for. That's outrageous.

Why is it that we're paying so much more? We consider ourselves an industrialized, developed nation. Why are our fees so high? It has a lot to do with competition. It has a lot to do with the number of competitors in the industry. I'm sure my colleagues from the Conservative Party would like to hear this: There is far more competition in other countries, there are far more providers in other countries, and there's a more open market when it comes to provision of wireless services.

Even the States, just across the border, has a more competitive market and much more affordable rates and fees. The majority of companies in the US don't have roaming across any of the states. You can purchase your plan in one state and use it in any other state and there are no roaming fees whatsoever; that's a very common occurrence. Whereas in Ontario and in Canada, it's a completely different picture.

For basic voice, text and data plans, the cost is around—and this is just a step up from the average. If you look into a little bit better plan—voice, text and data—the cost is around $75 with only four megabytes of data. That's just unacceptable. I mean, four megabytes of data is a paltry amount; it's an insignificant amount. With current data usage, you can't get much with that.

If we compare just some other countries, besides—we're looking at density. I think someone from the Conservative Party was talking about maybe the issue is density, that Canada's population is less dense. We have less population compared to other countries. If you look at population size, Denmark and Finland are countries of smaller population than Canada.

In Canada, if we look at a post-paid plan just for voice and text, it's $38. This is according to the research conducted by the Open Technology Initiative, which was done on October 14, 2010. I'm referring to a chart where they looked at and compared countries like Canada, Denmark, Finland, Hong Kong, India, Japan, South Korea, Sweden, Taiwan, the US and the UK. They found that in Canada, it's $38.70 for a 250-minute plan. The post-paid plan charge was about 31 cents per minute. In Denmark, they were paying $17 for 240 minutes, and it works out to about seven cents a minute. So we're paying 31 cents a minute; they're paying seven cents a minute in Denmark. In Finland, again, they're paying about seven cents a minute, where we're paying 31 cents a minute. So we really need to look at what we can do to address this issue of affordability because, as it stands, we are far too expensive. It is far too expensive to pay for a cellphone here in Canada.

Just to explain how the study worked: In the study, they researched cellphone, text and data services for prepaid, regular post-paid and unlimited post-paid plans. They looked at the various plans you can get where you receive a bill in the mail every month, or the plans where you pay as you go, and they compared various plans by various carriers in 11 countries. To allow a more direct comparison, the study basically broke down the price in US dollars per minute and per text and per megabyte.

I've just compared some of the per-minute voice costs. If you look at Canada versus other countries around the world—even our neighbours to the south—we're paying 31 cents a minute; they're paying 18 cents a minute. In the UK, it's 17 cents a minute. If we look at other countries, though, outside of the developed nations—if you look at India, Hong Kong, they're paying one cent a minute. In Sweden, it's actually four cents a minute; Taiwan, 12 cents a minute.

There is a serious issue of affordability, and it's very troubling that we are paying so much. It's one of those things that's not going to greatly impact the wealthy, it's not going to greatly impact those who are very well off, but it is going to make a big difference, a serious difference, in the lives of those who are already hard hit—who are already struggling to afford their monthly rent, their monthly hydro bill, people who are struggling to pay their student debt down. For those individuals, it will make a significant difference.

If we look at texting, texting is a technology that—it's important to note that there isn't a significant difference between sending a text locally or internationally. In terms

of the usage of data or the usage of the wireless network, it doesn't actually make a big difference for the provider where the text is being sent. But what we're charged if we ever send a text internationally is just an outrageous amount, given how much it actually costs the provider. If we compare that to other countries, we find that Canadians and Ontarians are being charged significantly higher than other countries around the world.

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If we do a comparison of post-paid plans—your regular plan where you get your bill in the mail on a monthly basis—and we look at what we're paying in terms of texts: If we compare Canada, for about 250 texts a month, it's about $5—$4.80. If we compare that to other countries—for example, Sweden: They pay $17.80 for 5,500 texts. So compare 250 to 5,500, and it works out that it's essentially—they deem it almost unlimited. It's an unlimited texting plan. For what we're paying here, we're paying far, far more.

The area where we're seeing the biggest problem or the most marked difference is when it comes to our data. Data is, again, the most important area if you look at access to the Internet as being an essential or an important tool. In Canada, we're paying for our monthly plans, for 500 megabytes, which is a reasonable amount of data that you can actually access and make some good use of: We pay $24 a month on average for 500 megabytes. If we compare that to other countries around the world, Finland is paying $8.90. Denmark is paying close to half, about $17 for 500 megabytes. If you look at India, it's completely different; they're paying $2.10 for 5,120 megabytes. If we look at the UK and the US, they're paying $15 for 200 megabytes and $7.70 for 120 megabytes. So again, we're being charged significantly more for our data, significantly more for our voice and significantly more for our text messages.

In Canada and the US, consumers have the highest minimum monthly charge for a complete post-paid cellphone. Other countries that follow similar cost structures are significantly lower, like the UK, Denmark and Finland. On a broader picture, on a broader level of affordability, there is much work that needs to be done. In Ontario, we need to really address this issue if we want to be serious about addressing inequality and equality of opportunity.

Some areas that I think we need to look at, and I want members of this Legislative Assembly to turn their minds to, when it comes to committee hearings and when it comes to looking at ways to improve this bill: One area which many people I'm sure themselves have been affected by, and I have been affected by this, is overusage. Overusage fees: If you have a set amount of minutes that you've signed up for, be they 300, 200 whatever amount, you have a set amount of minutes that you signed up for—say it's $30 a month for 300 minutes. If you go over those 300 minutes—let's say you double that or triple that—if you were bumped into the next plan up and the next plan up was $60 for 600 minutes, you'd be fine. But what happens is that cellphone companies don't, first of all, let you know that you're over your limit, that you've gone over. They don't bump you or roll you into a higher usage. You end up paying hundreds of dollars because you've gone over your minutes, where you could have just paid $60 if you had been bumped up to the next category.

Companies want to make a profit and they want to make money—I understand that—but there has to be some fairness. The best would be if they automatically rolled people into higher minutes. That would be the best. That would be a great step forward in terms of affordability. People would be automatically rolled into a higher category and not have to worry about their overage.

But in the alternative, at the minimum, all cellphone providers, all suppliers, should be required to make it very, very clear when you're nearing your limit, when you're at your limit and when you're over your limit. That should be a minimal requirement. That would be a simple tool—cellphone companies are able to do that, providers are able to do that—and it would be a very serious step forward in terms of making the consumer better protected and insulating them from some serious overuse charges that they could incur.

This has been the subject of a number of complaints. In fact, the CCTS, the Commissioner for Complaints for Telecommunications Services, found people complaining that their data usage was over, and it was over on a regular basis. There's an example of someone being charged $3,000 for data usage—$3,000 for data usage—when all they required was some notification that "Hey, you're going over your limit," and that person could curtail their usage, that person could choose a higher plan. Many options were available, but instead they racked up the fees, and it turned out that they had been going over by 70% each month, and it could have been dealt with by either bumping them up to a higher plan or curtailing their usage.

Again, if we want to take affordability seriously, then this is an additional area that we need to look at, and that's having the consumer be notified when they're going over their usage.

This overage applies for voice, it applies for data—and I stress data again, because if we're looking at the accessibility issue and that piece of accessing the Internet, that's where we need the most protection. That's where you can easily go over without realizing it. Depending on the website, depending on the content, it's very easy to go over in terms of the usage there.

What we're looking at now in terms of other areas of affordability when it comes to cellphone usage is the connection cellphone companies use between a handset and a contract. What happens is the handset itself is worth far less than the actual termination fee. A provider will have you sign up to a contract and get a free phone—and many people, again due to affordability issues, need that free phone, so they make use of that plan, which is fine. But what happens is, if they ever need to cancel their phone or they need to cancel their contract—the cost of the phone would make sense if that

was a part of the cancellation fee, but they're charged far more than that. They're charged far, far more than the actual cost of the phone that they purchased, just to cancel their contract. That's an area we really need to look at as well: tying in the use of promotional deals which require one to sign a contract to obtain a phone, and how we can make that more fair, more transparent and ensure that when you cancel your contract, you're not being charged more than the price of the phone in total.

The other area that I touched on briefly was how we are going to deal with those who are currently in contracts and the fact that this bill doesn't address that. I think it's very clear that for existing contracts, the cellphone provider should be required to implement this bill in perhaps a modified fashion. Of course, for a new contract, it's a very easy mechanism. You have a new contract; you have to fulfil the requirements of this bill, you have to fulfil the requirements of disclosure or your contract can be cancelled.

For existing contracts, people who are trapped in those need to make sure that there's a way, a modified approach of this bill, to allow them to have some protection as well, whether that is requiring information to be sent out to current contract holders expressing what their contract is in totality and clarity, and requiring that that clarification be sent out with a monthly statement within a certain time period—I mean, that's one mechanism; that's one way so that we can at least give current contract holders some protection. I would say that in committee we should look at amending the bill so that we actually give the same cancellation rights to these current contracts as well They should also be entitled to the same ability to exit their contract or terminate their contract with the same protection provided for new contracts.

0950

I started off talking about the big picture in terms of accessibility, affordability, access to the Internet, and in a smaller portion as well, democracy. They all tie together. The complaints process that initiated this was something that came from the people. People complained about an issue. They complained about the high cost of cellphones. They complained about the disclosure of their details in their contract. They complained. They complained, and their voices were heard.

On a bigger picture, we're looking at using technology, using the Internet as a way of engaging our voters and engaging our society. As we move forward, there has been discussion of using cellphones for feedback in terms of research and surveys. There's been discussion of using or moving towards online voting, and we've seen online voting work at least at some level. At an internal party level, we've seen that there's a use of online voting. If we want to make democracy more accessible, if we want to move with the times, we need to change our model. In changing our model, the cellphone may be the tool that allows us to engage more members of society quickly, in a more efficient manner, and may encourage participation.

On a broader picture, this tool may be the tool that gives us more participation when it comes to politics and more participation when it comes to community engagement, and may reverse the trend of growing apathy. As voter turnout goes down, as less people are inclined to go to the ballot box, perhaps we need to look at different ways of engaging people, and politically as well as in a society sense, perhaps we can use this tool. If we can use the cellphone as a method of communication and as a way of transferring knowledge and transferring information—and we've seen the signs that people are trending toward using cellphones more as their means of communication and Internet access—then we are coming to a point where this becomes more and more a necessity of life. It becomes more and more a requirement of a modern society.

We are also faced with, perhaps, the potential fear that certain people will be left behind. If certain people are left behind and we want to have a more democratic and free society, then we are not fulfilling our duty here as legislators.

So the bigger picture is, in terms of where we move as a society, we need to look at different ways of engaging our community in terms of political awareness, in terms of civic duties and in terms of community engagement. As the means or the method of disseminating information moves more towards the Internet and more towards social media, then this will become a powerful tool.

We've seen this tool used in terms of the Arab Spring. We've seen people using technology as a vehicle for democracy, as a vehicle for freedom and as a way of inspiring change in the world. While there are some criticisms of technology and its sometimes negative impact on the social fabric of society—that people are not engaging one another, that there's certain etiquette that we're losing as we talk to one another and you see groups of people who are on their cellphones—there's still the positive side where it can be used for progressive politics. It can be being used for positive ideas spreading in a society, and it can be used as a tool towards greater democracy and freedom.

I encourage any tool that promotes those values. If we can use our technology more effectively in a way to spread a message of freedom, if we can spread a message of participation and we can spread a message of equal opportunity and equal access, then we should do everything we can to make this tool more accessible to all people because, on a broader level, that's a way of making our society more fair.

As my professor talked about the Internet being a highway and that you shouldn't be precluded from being able to access this highway based on the type of car you drive, the make and model of that car, whether or not it's a luxury sedan or whether it's a simple or modest vehicle—everyone should have the ability to get on the highway and drive for transportation—similarly, we want everyone to have the ability to tap into the social media that is becoming more and more prevalent in our society. We want everyone to be able to tap into the information

and data that's available online. If we do so, we will do a great deed in terms of making this world more fair, in terms of narrowing the gap of inequality, in terms of making opportunity more equal.

So I look forward to taking this bill into committee and addressing some much needed amendments.

I applaud the government. I think it's important to applaud where there are some positive things done. It's important to put partisanship aside and say it was a good step, and I think it's important, as parliamentarians, that we acknowledge each other when there's a positive idea. This was much needed. Constituents have complained about it, and there are certainly some key points that have been addressed.

As always—and I think that the government should take this seriously but again take it in a good light—there's always more that can be done. I urge the government side to heed the advice of the opposition members, all party members, and not be blinded by partisanship. If there's a good idea that comes to the floor, whether it comes from the New Democratic Party or my colleagues from the Conservatives, who are unlikely to have that many good ideas—just kidding, to see if you're listening—I encourage you to take any idea that's positive. Don't worry about the credit.

Let's just work on making protection for consumers and take it seriously, because consumers need that protection. There are so many laws and so many issues that are in favour of the supplier, producer, retailer. We really need to make sure that we take care of the consumer, and let's take any ideas that are effective in doing that and implement those to make sure that, at least in this one area, we make life more affordable, we make the consumer more aware of his or her rights, and that the contracts and the agreements that people get into are more transparent. I think that we'd be doing a good job for the people of Ontario, and we'd be doing our job that we were sent here to do.

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

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: It's a pleasure to rise in debate on Bill 82. Mr. Speaker, this bill is all about protecting consumers in cellphone and wireless service agreements.

As we all know, cellphone contracts are a huge issue for many Ontarians. This is a pocketbook issue. Our government's bill contains measures that will reduce costs, cap cancellation fees, prevent automatic renewal of the contracts, and will make contracts more fair and transparent. And at any time, if any individual wants to cancel their contract, he or she can cancel with a modest cancellation fee.

Mr. Speaker, consumer protection is a matter for the provinces. That's why our government has brought this bill forward, and that is why there is a lot of independent support for this bill. Much of the problem in the wireless industry falls under the jurisdiction of the federal government and CRTC rules. I encourage the members from opposite benches to call on the federal government to take strong action. All this bill is about is empowering consumers to make informed choices, to make informed decisions, when they are spending their hard-earned dollars.

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The member from Prince Edward–Hastings, in his presentation, spoke about regulations. When we brought in the HST, that HST implementation eliminated a significant number of regulations—which the member's party and leader have voted against.

I'm also looking forward to sitting down at committee for further debate on this bill.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I endured the hour from the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. I don't say that to be critical; I just think it was long. An hour on this bill is an endurance test, actually.

In fairness, we would say that the consumer needs to be protected, and I think the remarks he made with respect to comparisons with India, Hong Kong, other countries: Canada is way out of line, technically. I agree. I like the nuance to the bill. I will be speaking. I wish I had an hour too. I wonder if I could seek unanimous consent for an hour here now.

The point being, though, I really feel badly for David Orazietti, the member from Sault Ste. Marie. I think he was really on the right track here. I would have jumped on board entirely because he was right down at the private members' level. I think the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton is on the same page. Let's put the consumer first and in front of this issue.

More importantly, Ontario—this is going to come under the CRTC, as you know; you're a lawyer—and as such, we don't need a whole meandering of regulations and exemptions. Section 10 is worth reading, as you know. It's the whole disclosure part.

We need to get a consistent and uniform system across Canada. The biggest thing that troubles most people, the viewers here today, is that if you're out of the province or out of the country, you'd better check out a roaming plan. My biggest surprise was a couple of years ago, when I was receiving calls, making calls and downloading stuff when I was out of the country; I was in Europe. When I got the roaming charge, I was floored. I just couldn't believe it.

There's stuff in here, protecting services, whether it's voice or data, that we need to make sure we're on the right page and be consistent with other provinces on.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I just want to commend my colleague here from Bramalea–Gore–Malton for a great disclosure of how he sees this bill this morning.

I agree with him: We need to give credit where credit is due—to the member who proposed this bill, along with the member from Sault Ste. Marie, who has got a similar bill that's looking at consumer protection as well. Give kudos where kudos are deserved. Let's work towards bringing greater protection for consumers. Let's look at

having that information available where there are clear parameters and clear understanding of what the disclosure is, knowing exactly what I'm purchasing.

When you buy a pair of running shoes, you know what you're getting. When you're buying a cellphone, it's not that easy anymore, where you have the hidden fees. I have a couple of boys who, with the jobs that they have, decided to purchase their phone. The contract went in the garbage, and it was only a couple of months later that they found out how expensive it was. That's one of the mistakes that a father learns from, but you've got to let those boys make those mistakes.

My friend alluded to something else where we—

Interjection.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I know; I just love bringing up my boys.

Another thing that my friend alluded to is that we're looking to maybe use this as an opportunity to bring a more inclusive province, to get more involvement from individuals. That raises a big red flag with me. The reason why it raises a big red flag with me is because we do not have the services in northern Ontario that are available here in southern Ontario. I myself as an MPP am challenged extremely hard with having regular communication with my constituents throughout my riding and my office.

I like the intent of the bill. It's really good, and it's going to be really nice to discuss this at committee. We need to keep that, in fact, not all of us have the same service across this province.

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

Mr. Jeff Leal: The remarks that were just delivered by the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton on Bill 82 I thought were very, very relevant, and I thought his detail was much appreciated. I thought, generally, it was a very positive speech.

I think all of us are certainly concerned about consumer protection in the wireless field. This is something that, 10 years ago, wasn't a particular problem, but you've seen a real change. People who at one time were solely dependent on land lines for communication—we're witnessing a significant move from a traditional land line to wireless technology throughout our lives.

I could just share something. We had a short family holiday in Saint John, New Brunswick, and my daughter, who is 13, of course wanted to communicate with her friends back in Peterborough, so she had her BlackBerry, plus her iPad. She was able to use the BlackBerry to call her friend back in Peterborough, and was able to use her iPad to call up her friend on the screen and engaged in a fairly detailed conversation about the family trip and tour that we were experiencing in Saint John, New Brunswick, back with her friends in Peterborough. So that was a very interesting thing to watch, and of course, as has been mentioned by my friend from Durham, we got back to Peterborough to see the roaming charges for her to have that great conversation with some of her friends back in Peterborough.

I think this bill, which will ultimately go to committee, is an opportunity for all of us in this House to join together to really come up with an outstanding consumer protection bill in this particular area. We're witnessing great corporate concentration in the market, and there needs to be a balance with consumer protection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton, you have two minutes for a reply.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'd like to thank the member from Mississauga–Brampton South, the member from Durham, my own colleague from Algoma–Manitoulin and the member for Peterborough for their remarks and for their responses.

One area that I didn't touch on in my speech and that I wanted to touch on a little bit more, in terms of a potential way of dealing with the high costs, which I mentioned before, is that there are limited—this may be a bit odd coming from the NDP side, but there are a limited number of competitors in the cellphone market here in Ontario or here in Canada. Sometimes there's an illusion of greater competition, but if you look at Rogers, Rogers owns Fido and chatr. Koodo, which looks like another cellphone company, is actually owned by Telus, and Bell owns Solo. So again, we don't really have a great deal of competition. Two new companies that made it into the market were Public Mobile and Wind, which did actually help in creating some unlimited plans, which I think definitely had a positive impact on the rates of other companies. But that may be an area where we need to look at opening up the market to allow smaller companies to come in and compete.

I would encourage those smaller companies to be Canadian companies so that we can keep industry and innovation here in Ontario, here in Canada. But I'm sure that we can come up with different strategies to allow for an opening of that market and a way to ensure that we create jobs here in Ontario, that those businesses that are encouraged to develop or to be established here have a job tax credit so that if they create jobs in Ontario, if they create infrastructure here in Ontario, if they train people in Ontario, they get tax credits based on that. But I think we can look towards creating more competition to bring down those rates, and one of those ways might be encouraging local industry or local, Canadian-based, new companies. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Seeing the time on the clock, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1009 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: It gives me great pleasure to introduce my niece from Winnipeg, Tania Webster. Welcome.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Today, in the west members' gallery, I have with me constituents of mine from Nepean–

Carleton. They're the family of Eric Leighton. I have with us Sheri and Patrick and their daughter, Kaitlyn Leighton. I want to thank them for coming to Queen's Park today and for being so courageous over the past year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Welcome.

Today, visiting us from the riding of Niagara Falls, we have with us in the members' gallery Jacquie and Sam Seaver, parents of page Ethan Seaver, and their friend Judy Murray. Welcome to Queen's Park.

We also have in the Speaker's gallery today a delegation from the Empowered Committee of State Finance Ministers of India, a multi-legislative body made up of federal and state parliamentarians from the Republic of India. They are accompanied today by the Consul General of India. Please join me in warmly welcoming our guests today.

Applause.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On Monday, August 27, 2012, the member from Cambridge, Mr. Leone, rose on a question of privilege concerning the government's failure to produce certain documents requested by the Standing Committee on Estimates.

The government House leader, Mr. Milloy; the member from Timmins–James Bay, Mr. Bisson; the member from Chatham–Kent–Essex, Mr. Nicholls; the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, Mr. Yakabuski; the member from Nipissing, Mr. Fedeli; the member from Leeds–Grenville, Mr. Clark; and the member from Beaches–East York, Mr. Prue, also spoke to this matter.

Having reviewed the notice provided by the member from Cambridge, the subsequent written submissions of the government House leader and of the member from Cambridge, the August 27 report of the Standing Committee on Estimates, relevant Hansards for the committee and various parliamentary authorities, I am now prepared to rule on that matter.

The details of what occurred in the committee are contained in the above-mentioned documents, but the essential chronology is as follows:

On May 16, the Standing Committee on Estimates formally adopted a motion requesting that the Minister of Energy, the Ministry of Energy and the Ontario Power Authority provide, within two weeks, all correspondence relating to decisions in 2010 and 2011 not to proceed with the construction of the power plants in Oakville and Mississauga, respectively.

On May 30, the minister responded to the request by indicating that it would not be appropriate to disclose the correspondence because the files were confidential and because many of them were either subject to solicitor-client or litigation privilege or else highly commercially sensitive; their disclosure would tend to prejudice ongoing negotiations and litigation. The Ontario Power Authority responded in a similar vein on the same day.

On June 5, in the Standing Committee on Estimates, a motion was brought forward by Mr. Leone calling for a report from the committee to the House with respect to the minister's May 30 decision not to provide the requested documents. The committee debated the motion and amendments to it on that day and three subsequent meetings of the committee—June 6, June 12 and July 11—finally adopting the version of the motion contained in the committee's August 27 report to the House.

On July 11, an agreement having been just reached to relocate the Mississauga plant, the minister provided some of the requested documents. The minister indicated that other documents would not be provided to the committee because they were subject to various legal privileges.

On August 27, shortly before the member for Cambridge rose on his question of privilege, the Standing Committee on Estimates reported that, for reasons indicated in the report, the government had not produced certain correspondence that the committee had ordered to be produced, and that this non-production may raise a matter of privilege. The report also recommended that the Minister of Energy be compelled to provide the documents requested by the committee without delay and that the minister be held in contempt if he refuses to do so.

Given these developments, the nature of parliamentary powers respecting the production of documents requires some examination. With respect to committee powers, standing order 110(b) provides as follows: "Except when the House otherwise orders, each committee shall have power to send for persons, papers and things." This standing order effectively empowers committees, including the Standing Committee on Estimates, to order the production of documents.

Further to this point, in a March 9, 2011, ruling dealing with a non-production incident in the Canadian House of Commons, Speaker Milliken found that there was a prima facie question of privilege where there was non-compliance with a production order made by a committee; the committee's report on non-compliance was not concurred in before a question of privilege was raised in the House.

Between the time of the raising of that question of privilege and the time that the Speaker ruled that there was a prima facie question of privilege, the House made an order for production with respect to the same documents; nevertheless, the ruling clearly indicates that it was based on non-compliance with the production order of the committee, not of the House.

Therefore, non-compliance with a production order made by either a committee or a House can, in a proper case, constitute a matter of privilege.

Turning to the issue of whether the matter before me is such a case, members will know that as a matter of parliamentary privilege the House has the right to institute inquiries, to require the attendance of witnesses and to order the production of documents. The House exercises this right when it gives mandates to committees and delegates powers to them; the committees in turn carry out

the mandates and exercise the powers within the limits of their authority. Therefore, when the Standing Committee on Estimates considers the estimates, it does so pursuant to standing orders 59 and 60, and the order of the House referring the estimates to that committee; when it orders production of documents relevant to its mandate, it does so pursuant to standing order 110(b).

The right to order production of documents is fundamental to and necessary for the proper functioning of the assembly. If the House and its committees do not enjoy this right, then the accountability, scrutiny and financial functions of Parliament—which go to the core of our system of responsible government—would be compromised.

At meetings of the Standing Committee on Estimates, the Minister of Energy did not assert that the committee had no right to inquire into the matter before it or that it had no power to send for the documents in question. Rather, the minister indicated that legal and other considerations should militate against the production of all requested documents.

But as Speaker Milliken indicated in the following excerpt from the Afghanistan ruling, page 2,043 of Hansard for April 27, 2010, parliamentary privilege—of which the right to order production of documents is but one category—trumps such considerations:

"Procedural authorities are categorical in repeatedly asserting the powers of the House in ordering the production of documents. No exceptions are made for any category of government documents, even those related to national security."

Furthermore, pages 978 and 979 of the second edition of the House of Commons Procedure and Practice provides as follows:

"The standing orders do not delimit the power to order the production of papers and records. The result is a broad, absolute power that on the surface appears to be without restriction. There is no limit on the types of papers likely to be requested; the only prerequisite is that the papers exist in hard copy or electronic format—and that they are located in Canada. They can be papers originating from or in the possession of governments, or papers the authors or owners of which are from the private sector or civil society (individuals, associations, organizations, etc.).

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"In practice, standing committees may encounter situations where the authors of or officials responsible for papers refuse to provide them or are willing to provide them only after certain parts have been removed. Public servants and ministers may sometimes invoke their obligations under certain legislation to justify their position. Companies may be reluctant to release papers which could jeopardize their industrial security or infringe upon their legal obligations, particularly with regard to the protection of personal information. Others have cited solicitor-client privilege in refusing to allow access to legal papers or notices.

"These types of situations have absolutely no bearing on the power of committees to order the production of papers and records. No statute or practice diminishes the fullness of that power rooted in House privileges unless there is an explicit legal provision to that effect, or unless the House adopts a specific resolution limiting the power. The House has never set a limit on its power to order the production of papers and records. However, it may not be appropriate to insist on the production of papers and records in all cases."

In many parliamentary jurisdictions, the House and its committees often accommodate or respect security, legal and public policy considerations; they often accept reasonable excuses for non-production. However, these authorities also indicate that a decision to be selective with respect to production is a decision for the House or the committee.

In the case at hand, the Standing Committee on Estimates made a production order despite the arguments made by the minister. My response to the government House leader's claim that the committee did not turn its mind to the reasons for non-production proffered by the minister is,

—First, it was not obliged to do so.

—Second, the documents could have been offered to the committee under conditions that would both satisfy the needs of the committee and the minister: for instance, being received in a closed session without public disclosure, or in an acceptably redacted version. The Chair put forward this notion on one occasion, and it was passed by without comment by any member.

—Third, the government House leader in his written submission repeatedly points to what a difference a clear motion would have made to the Minister of Energy's ability to fully respond to the committee's request; that is, a motion that explicitly expressed the committee's request even for documents that are highly commercially sensitive, for which solicitor-client privilege is claimed and/or are subject to litigation privilege. It is claimed that the minister could have and would have complied in that scenario. During the time in question, the minister could have requested the committee to pass just such a motion, making it explicit that it still demanded the requested documents, notwithstanding the minister's wish to withhold disclosure for reasons stated in his May 30 reply to the committee's original request. The record does not show that the minister proactively did so.

The Standing Committee on Estimates was unquestionably entitled to request the documents sought from the Minister of Energy, and in the end the minister had an obligation to comply with the committee's call for those documents. The committee did not accept the minister's reasons for withholding the document and persisted in its demand during an extended period of time.

I am therefore satisfied that a prima facie case of privilege has been established.

However, in the face of all of the submissions, the committee transcripts and its report to the House, it seems possible to me that, but for the lack of frank communication, this matter might have been settled in the estimates committee some time ago. Further, given that

in his submission the government House leader wrote, "If the House chooses to issue the requested order or the committee chooses to pass a motion that clarifies its position with respect to the motion of May 16, the government will abide by the will of the Legislature," I am hopeful that there is a possibility that the matter still can be settled.

I want to quote two passages from Speaker Milliken's April 27, 2010, Afghan detainee ruling: "(I)t seems to me, that the issue before us is this: Is it possible to put into place a mechanism by which these documents could be made available to the House without compromising the security and confidentiality of the information they contain? In other words, is it possible for the two sides, working together in the best interest of the Canadians they serve, to devise a means where both their concerns are met? Surely that is not too much to hope for....

"The fact remains that the House and the government have, essentially, an unbroken record of some 140 years of collaboration and accommodation in cases of this kind. It seems to me that it would be a signal failure for us to see that record shattered in the third session of the 40th Parliament because we lacked the will or the wit to find a solution to this impasse."

I, too, have immense faith in the abilities of the honourable members of this House. I know that a solution can be found to this impasse. All sides need to exercise sobriety in this. Political fortunes should not be the motive for eroding the supremacy of Parliament or ignoring the best interests of citizens in this province. Assiduous attention should be paid to dealing with matters such as this responsibly.

Therefore, inspired by the precedent of Speaker Milliken's innovative ruling in this Afghan detainee case, I am going to presume leave of this House and set this matter aside for the moment. I ask that the three House leaders take it upon themselves to find a path that can satisfy the request of the estimates committee. If this cannot be accomplished by the end of the day, Monday, September 23, then I will return to the House with a statement on a motion by the member from Cambridge that would be appropriate in the circumstances.

I thank the member for Cambridge, the government House leader, the member for Timmins–James Bay, the member for Chatham–Kent–Essex, the member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, the member for Nipissing, the member for Leeds–Grenville and the member from Beaches–East York for speaking to this matter, and I thank the member for Cambridge and the government House leader for their written submissions.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order for the member of Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Where do I start? I'm a little bit surprised. I just want—a couple things need to be said at this point.

First of all, what is clear is that there has been a prima facie case of contempt that has been found. If we look at the precedent in regard to what Speakers have done both nationally and provincially, we have—you know, I can go through and cite all of the various cases, but the presumption has always been, on the part of the Speakers, except for the Afghanistan case, to immediately take up that matter before the House. The case of Afghanistan was very different because we were talking about national security and there was some sense on the part of everyone, "Okay, we kind of get it." But this, as you said, has nothing to do with that. You can't hide behind sub judice, client-solicitor privileges etc., in order to not produce the documents. There's a clear responsibility on the part of whoever is summoned before a committee to co-operate with the committee when it comes to evidence, including what is given as far as paper.

If you look at the various cases in 2001, March 19, the case of Speaker Milliken, there was such a case and immediately the motion was taken up. On March 9, 1998, under Parent, again, the motion was taken up immediately following the finding of a prima facie case of contempt. The list goes on. I'm not going to go through it because it would just be going on further.

But, listen, if the House leaders would have been able to resolve this by now, we would have done it. That's the point. It's abundantly clear, Speaker, that the government members at committee did not want to compel the minister to produce those documents. The minister didn't want to produce the documents, and I would presume that the government, in its whole, didn't want to produce those documents. If there was a way forward, there would have been some attempt on the part of the minister or the House leader to try to find a way for us to deal with this. That's why this is a matter that has to be taken up immediately by the House by way of motion. It is up to this House to decide at this point how we're going to deal with it and the precedent is pretty clear that it is us, the House, that makes these decisions and it's not, in this particular case, to be punted off to the House leaders. I'll wait for further comment from my colleagues, but I urge you strongly that we don't go down this path.

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We are currently trying to negotiate how we're going to get various legislation through the House, with the House leaders. We're trying to deal with trying to strike our committees. Throwing this into the House leaders' meetings, quite frankly, is not going to help the creation of committees in this House or the movement of the legislative agenda of the government through the House.

Your punting that issue to the House leaders' meeting, I think, is going to lead to very difficult House leaders' meetings at which the government's House agenda will be held up because we'll be seized with this matter. The government will never agree, and we'll have to come back in September and deal with the motion. So let's deal with it now.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke on a point of order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Speaker. I share the concerns of the member for Timmins–James Bay, but by way of clarification, I want to get

something on the record as well, in the interests of accuracy. September 23 is a Sunday, and in your ruling, you've indicated by Monday, September 23. I would like to get that on the record, that September 24 is the Monday.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: On the issue at hand, I share the view of my colleague from Timmins–James Bay that you have found a prima facie case of breach of privilege here and that the motion should be the next item of business.

We know what difficulties there have been in House leaders' meetings to this date, trying to re-establish committees, for example. We know that there has been less than co-operation on the part of House leaders on a number of matters. To believe that this matter will somehow be dealt with in the intervening week, I think, is asking a little much.

The committee was well aware, and I think the government was well aware, of what the likely finding of this motion on the breach of privilege would be, given Speaker Milliken's ruling on the Afghan detainee issue in the federal Parliament of 2010. Clearly, you have found a prima facie case for contempt here, for breach of privilege, and I think the matter should be dealt with forthwith by this House so that this does not linger on and on and on, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. As the official opposition House leader, I too want to join in previous colleagues' comments, both the member from Timmins–James Bay and the member from Pembroke-Renfrew—somewhere over there in eastern Ontario. It's a wonderful riding and a good member.

The fact of the matter is, this is such an important point of history for this Parliament. We've not dealt with this before. We've not dealt with the fact that the government refused to honour or respect a point of privilege by the honourable member from Cambridge and, at the same time, the estimates committee coming forward and demanding—requesting the production of documents.

I respect fully—we've all studied, as you obviously have, Mr. Speaker—obvious in your ruling and, I think, a very correct application of Speaker Milliken's previous rulings with respect to the Afghani case, and also the case of the production of financial documents by one of the committees of the House of Commons and a refusal of the government of the day to produce those documents.

Clearly, your ruling today is a shot across the bow to the government. The government should be ashamed of its actions in this case. As the honourable House leader for the NDP said, if we could have resolved this matter in both committee and in House leaders', we would have done so, I say respectfully, Mr. Speaker.

We can't even get the committees re-established in this House, I guess because the government doesn't want any more hearings on Ornge, and it probably doesn't want the estimates committee to be seized with this matter, because it's got to be terribly embarrassing for the government when you had to go all the way to the Speaker to be told to do the right thing on behalf of the people of Ontario and disclose the financial numbers and the true cost around the political cancellation of both the Oakville power plant and the Mississauga power plant.

I have one request, Mr. Speaker, because I agree with the member from Timmins–James Bay that to punt this to House leaders is probably not the most productive thing to do, although I do respect that you did put a time limit on that, as Speaker Milliken did in the Afghani detainee case. I think we should deal with this matter on the floor of the House now and ask to—

Interjections.

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

Mr. Jim Wilson: Again, it's unprecedented for this Parliament to be seized with such a matter. The fact of the matter is, we can do it, move to committee of the whole House and try and deal with it here on the floor in a very public way. This matter should be dealt with in public, not in the secrecy of House leaders' meetings.

If that is not acceptable, I would ask at least the courtesy that the honourable member from Cambridge, whose privileges have been breached, be allowed to place his motion. He's prepared to place a motion to move this to a more appropriate committee so that this matter, again, can be dealt with in an open way, in an honest way, in a transparent way.

Once again, shame on the government for putting all of us in this position.

Interjections.

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

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I just want to begin by saying that on this side of the House we thank you for your ruling. I'd also point out—although we've heard from members opposite—that I'm very respectful of standing order 13(b), which outlines that no debate shall be allowed on a Speaker's ruling. I respect the fact that, after much reflection, after research into precedents as well as what had happened with the committee, you have reached your conclusion.

Anyone who has been following this closely, anyone who had looked at the debate within estimates, with the submissions that were put forth, both orally and written—I know from my vantage point but I also know from the opposition—will know that we are dealing with an extremely complex and complicated matter. We are dealing with issues around solicitor-client privilege, around commercial confidences, around the power of committees, around many precedents and many issues, which as you pointed out today, that Parliaments—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): First, I would ask—

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order, please. I would ask that everyone show respect when the Speaker is standing and not to add extra comments when I get silence.

Now, I would ask the government House leader to finish his point of order and that he not revisit the ruling but talk about what is the topic, and that is my recommendation.

Hon. John Milloy: As I said, Mr. Speaker, I wanted to thank you for the recommendation. I think that it recognizes the complexity of the situation. I just want to simply state that on this side of the House, we are very happy to comply with the ruling. I have a lot more optimism than the other speakers about the ability of House leaders to reach an agreement on this.

Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for my colleagues, my two fellow House leaders, and I know that neither of them would ever want to leave the impression in the House that this has ever been dealt with at House leaders' meetings. In fact, it has never been a topic on the agenda. It was something that has been dealt with by estimates. Now that you have asked House leaders to take a look at it, it will go to the top of our agenda, and Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure you that the government will work co-operatively to find a solution to what, as I said and I think you have recognized, is a very complex situation.

So, again, I thank you for the ruling, and I stand here today to commit the government's full co-operation in reaching a solution by the date that you've put forward—or actually, I think the day after you put forward.

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Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): First, let me be clear about one thing. I appreciate the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke's correction of the date. It is the Monday that I am making reference to, and it shall be changed to the 24th. I appreciate that.

So that we have a clear understanding of what the points are to be made for this issue, I will come back to recognize the member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I want to be clear, because we understand that you've made a ruling in regard to the prima facie case of contempt, and we're not arguing; that is decided. But you said you had a recommendation, and I think what the majority of the House is telling you here is that that recommendation is not going to work. The majority of this House wants this issue dealt with now, because the problem in punting this over to the House leaders, first of all, is, as I said, that the government and the opposition have not found a way to deal with this at House leaders. There doesn't seem to be a will to make that happen. The government has not reached out.

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Listen, I think we should all be very calm here.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Well, then say things that are factual.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Okay, thank you. It is pretty clear at this point that the House leaders have not dealt with this for a reason, and that is because it has always been felt that this was an issue that arose out of committee. It was brought to the House by a proper form, which was Mr. Leone to get up on his point of privilege. The normal precedent for these things to be dealt with is that the motion be taken up immediately. It is clear, Mr. Speaker—and I don't know how to tell you this any other way—that the majority of the House does not agree with your recommendation and believe that this matter—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Challenge the Chair.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No. Members should understand the standing orders. The recommendation of the Speaker is that he's reaching out, trying to find if there is some consensus for it to be dealt with in the way that you've suggested, and the majority of this House is telling you no. I would ask you to reconsider and to come back and deal with this now as a proper motion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I do appreciate the time that you took to rule on this matter. There were lots of back-and-forth documents that were going—transcripts from Hansard and letters from the House leader and myself and others who contributed to the debate when I rose on a point of privilege.

I do want to say, on the point of the prima facie breach, that I think the ruling is sound. I agree with that ruling. One of the things, Mr. Speaker, that I heard you say was that this direction that you want to, in essence, put this in the hands of the House leaders was a "recommendation." I think what this House is looking for from the Speaker is a directive to actually state that we have to solve this matter. I think we have to do that very firmly.

I can say, Mr. Speaker, being someone who was at estimates for the duration of this debate, that we tried to deal with this in estimates. We tried very long to deal with this in estimates. We spent more than seven hours—probably close to 10 hours—debating the various motions that were put before estimates committee. The estimates committee has been logjammed on the basis of the fact that we're dealing with this particular matter, and it just hasn't been able to be resolved there. I can see what happens if it goes back to estimates committee, where we'll have, time and time again, the kind of obstruction that we saw on the government side on all the things that we put forward in that committee.

We're here today because of the committee's failure to get the documents it has requested. That's why we're here today. We're here today because the estimates committee could not get the documents, and we're hopeful that this House can actually do its job: that the opposition can hold that government to account. That's our job.

I do want to make very clear, because I read and listened to the government House leader very intently with respect to his point, that the clarity of the motion did not suggest what we were actually looking for. I do want to restate that in the original motion, Mr. Speaker, we asked for all documents and all—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm loath to interrupt, but I want to remind the member that we're not talking about the issue of what went on before; we're talking about the point of order. The point of order is to talk about the recommendation.

Let me also be clear once and for all about this: Any recommendation I have is within my ruling. This is a ruling. This is not just one part, two parts, three parts; I'm making my ruling, and inside of it is a direction that the member has asked for.

Please finish your point of order.

Mr. Rob Leone: I don't have very much more, Mr. Speaker.

I also note in your ruling that you said that you were hopeful that the House leaders would be able to do that. I hope that hope turns into an absolute necessity, because we need these documents to do our job.

I do want to make it clear, though, that we asked for all documents at the Standing Committee on Estimates—asked for and requested them in the proper manner, going through the procedures that we knew. We couldn't do it in estimates, and I'm hopeful this House can finally get to the bottom of what happened with the Oakville and Mississauga gas plants. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Interjections.

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

Point of order from the member for Toronto–Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Speaker, I'm appreciative of the fact that you concluded that, on the face of it, prima facie, there was a violation of privilege. I think that is obvious to all who read the transcripts, who sat through those committee hearings, who understand our function, our duties and our rights.

Speaker, we went through many days on this, and I'm saying that because in your recommendation to essentially put it back to the House leaders, you have to recognize that if there had been the potential in the course of those days to amend the demand for material, to heal the breach, then that could have well been done then, sir, through many a day of discussion. The motion that you considered that came from the committee had been amended in the course of discussion because we tried to work it down to the heart of it so that we could find what common ground was possible to find and move it forward.

This government does not recognize that it is not a majority. It does not recognize the legitimacy of the majority of this Legislature—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Again, I've been providing some leeway for comments on this issue, but the point of order and what I am listening for is not to challenge the ruling, not to revisit what my ruling is about, but to speak specifically about the recommendation within the ruling. I would like you to stay focused on that, please, without comment about the previous activities that have taken place on all sides. I'm talking about this particular issue here.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Speaker. If I may complete my remarks: I understand the need to focus on your recommendation within the ruling. Since we have already had the experience of seeing whether or not that sort of accommodation was possible aside from this chamber, I have concluded and I believe the majority have concluded that that isn't possible. We need the debate now and a decision by this body on how to proceed.

I would ask you to reconsider that part of your ruling.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. The member from Peterborough.

Mr. Jeff Leal: Point of order, Mr. Speaker: I just want to make reference to standing orders 13(a) and (b): "13(a) The Speaker shall preserve order and decorum, and shall decide questions of privilege and points of order. In making a decision on a question of privilege or point of order or explaining a practice, the Speaker may state the applicable standing order or authority." Then (b) goes on to state, "No debate shall be permitted on any such decision, and no decision shall be subject to an appeal to the House."

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Point of order, the member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I want to add my voice to our House leader, the member from Timmins–James Bay, and, from the estimates committee, the member from Toronto–Danforth.

This is not a challenge to your chair, this is not in any way impugning on your ability to make rulings. What we're questioning here is simply the recommendation. With all due respect, sir, Milliken—there are many, many cases—and you, of course, have cited them yourself. The House leader has cited many others. There's no question that this is a prima facie case of a breach of privilege. We all agree on that.

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But we're talking here about the cost of relocating gas plants. We're not talking about a case of national security of Afghan detainees. We're talking about simple documents that point to simple costs. And surely, having gone the route that they've already gone and coming back to this chamber, it's pretty clear that this is the forum in which to deal with that.

Again, if it could be resolved at House leaders, it could have been resolved at the estimates committee. It was not resolved at the estimates committee. For the same reasons that it wasn't resolved there, it will not be resolved at House leaders. The majority of House leaders are—

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: You know what? The Speaker ruled.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Excuse me. The majority of House leaders have already spoken.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: You heard from the majority of House leaders. Our leader and the official opposition leader are in accord. That's two out of three, sir. How will it make any difference going back to House leaders than dealing with it today? Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): First, let me be clear about assumptions: I won't make them. Let me also be clear that I am not suggesting, in any way, shape or form, that this House should not be considering this matter.

What I am asking, in my ruling, is to allow a specific named amount of time be dedicated to the House leaders to see if resolve could be found, and in the event that it's not possible, it will return to the House.

It is now time for oral—

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, may I, on a point of order?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I've made my ruling.

It is now time for question period. The leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Acting Premier, the education minister: Minister, it's been 10 months since the election. We've actually gone backwards when it comes to creating jobs. The deficit's actually gotten larger, not smaller. You basically paralyzed any kind of decision-making by government to risk everything on a by-election for four and a half months, and now we find that we may be paralyzed here for some time because the energy minister refuses to release documents related to the cost of the Mississauga gas plant.

The House leader says, "Well, it's complex." The complexity seems to be deciding whether to use a printer or send forward an email—no more than that. I'd ask you to take some action.

To the minister: We found out that the deficit between 2010-11 went from $14 billion to $13 billion, in public accounts. That's only $1 billion. Surely it's not going to take us 15 more years to get back in balance. That's not progress. That's digging the hole even deeper.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Certainly, on a day where public accounts is released—and we make it very clear that the deficit for 2011-12 is $13 billion. It is $3.3 billion ahead of the 2011 budget projections, 47% lower than forecast in 2009. At the same time, program spending growth was held below 1%, lower again than the 2011 budget target. We've been able to accomplish that, despite challenging fiscal times because we have made difficult choices.

One of those choices, which we believe is fair and responsible, is to freeze public sector wages, and that is allowing us to ensure that we create jobs and grow the economy. So on this, of all days, Speaker, I would hope that the Leader of the Opposition would say that we are on the right track.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Speaker, it took a year for us to get them to use words "wage" and "freeze" in the exact same sentence. We would actually have believed you, we would have given you even a bit of credibility, if you had stood on your feet and voted for Jeff Yurek's bill that would have frozen wages across the board back in the springtime.

You know, it's shocking, Speaker. Only the Ontario Liberals would applaud a deficit of $13 billion. Only the Liberals would applaud a deficit that is greater than all the other deficits in Canada combined, times two—dramatically out of touch, Speaker. It's time for action—10 months of treading water, 10 months of spinning your wheels, 10 months of stopping to get out of this hole. Surely you've got to have some new ideas. One single bill this entire session: They're out of gas.

If you have no ideas, take ours. We'll balance the books; we'll grow the economy; we'll get Ontario moving again.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: As the Leader of the Opposition talks about—he talks about fiction, frankly. Speaker, 325,000 jobs have been created since 2009, at the depths of the recession. That's 325,000 Ontarians who are employed, who can look after their families and who can have a future here in Ontario. That's almost half of all jobs created in Canada.

The tax reforms that have taken place in Ontario have resulted in Forbes magazine saying that Ontario is the top destination in the world for investment. We look forward to a day in this House when the Leader of the Opposition actually stands up for Ontario instead of putting it down.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I guess she got me there. When I do talk about the Liberal budget projections, when I do talk about their plan, I guess we are talking about fiction, because there is no plan. Your plan continues to fail.

You're off on all of your numbers. You missed your targets by $3.3 billion. That's not just a little bit of a miss, Speaker; it shows that they have no plan. They make up numbers and they fail to make any kind of progress whatsoever.

Here's the reality. Spending is up in 14 out of 24 ministries. The Drummond report came in the front door and went out the back door before you could blink. Ongoing scandals at the gas plants, at Ornge, at eHealth—you're digging a deeper and deeper hole. If you have no plans, you have no legislative agenda, then maybe it's time you hung up your skates and took our ideas to balance the budget, create jobs and get our province moving again.

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Here in government, we need to do what families are doing at home—saving, paying their mortgage faster, watching budgets—and we are tightening our belt. I will say again: Program spending growth was held below 1%, lower than the 2011

budget target. Jobs recovered since the depths of the recession—let's be clear how we compare to others who are living through these same challenging times as we are in Ontario: The UK, 87% of jobs recovered; the USA, 46% of jobs recovered; here in Ontario, 122% of jobs recovered.

Let's focus on supporting Ontario families and making the decisions and the choices that put them first.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Acting Premier: I ask the Acting Premier to look at last month's numbers alone.

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, they did create jobs. They added 30,000 more jobs to the public sector payroll. The problem is that we lost 55,000 jobs in the private sector. Under this government, we've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs, and they've added 300,000 jobs to the public sector payroll.

It doesn't work. It can't balance. You can't have a healthy, sustainable public sector program without a thriving, healthy private sector. That's what they don't get. You can't add government jobs and reduce private sector jobs. That's a spiral to the bottom.

We have a better plan, Speaker, one that will focus on growing the economy, putting people back to work and, yes, reducing the size and cost of government.

I'll ask the minister with her numbers: Why in the world did you add on 30,000 government jobs last month when we lost 55,000 in the private sector? How do you reconcile those numbers?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Our plan, which we have set out in the budget and have been talking about here in the House for some time, is to ensure that we protect the public services that Ontarians rely on, that we protect education, that we protect health care and that we ensure that we protect public sector jobs and public services at the same time. It's a different approach than the federal government, than some US states, Speaker, where they're firing public servants and where they're cutting services.

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We all have a role to play in Ontario. Today's public accounts demonstrate that we can hold the line on spending, that we can protect public services and that we can put Ontario families first with a plan that is fair and reasonable and focuses on those services that Ontario families rely on each and every day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: You've protected, I guess, government jobs. Already, you've added 30,000 to payrolls last month alone. When we lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs, you added 300,000 government jobs, and you gave pay and benefit increases that are way beyond what's happening in the real world.

Let me go back and test the minister, then, on her new-found religion on wage increases. I want to congratulate my colleagues Mr. McNaughton and Mr. Shurman for pouncing on the MPAC scandal, forcing the government to back down. Let me ask you: If you were so against what MPAC was doing, why, in your most recent collective agreement, did you give MPAC workers an 8.4% wage increase? At a time that you're saying you're freezing wages, Minister, I ask you, why did the government allow an 8.4% wage increase to MPAC tax collectors and assessors?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: The Leader of the Opposition seeks to vilify those who are public servants who work in our schools and our hospitals every day.

We know what the plan of the opposition would be; we've seen it before. They fire teachers. They fire nurses. They want to privatize health care, and they want to cancel full-day kindergarten. That would put our recovery at risk, and it would put at risk the services that Ontario families rely on every single day.

Public education and public health care are the areas that families turn to, especially in challenging times, especially as we live through a worldwide recession and we need to come out of the other side of this. We need to ensure that those services are there when families turn to them.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Maybe I can get the minister to move aside from the talking points for a second and respond to this particular question. The minister was condemning MPAC yesterday, but under the same finance minister, they just signed a collective agreement from 2012 to 2015 that will give MPAC workers an 8.4% wage increase. You say you're going to freeze wages out of one side of your mouth, and you hand out an 8.4% wage increase. They will also now get 100% benefits when it comes to life insurance, from 75%. They enhanced vision care from 75% to 100%. Not only did you increase wages by 8.4%, you also gave out benefit packages that are way out of line with struggling families at home who don't get that kind of benefit but are asked to pay higher and higher taxes.

Minister, if you truly do believe in having a wage freeze—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question.

Mr. Tim Hudak: —voting against it, then why in the world would you give an 8.4% wage increase through 2015 to MPAC workers and enhance their benefits?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: The Leader of the Opposition certainly knows that all members of this House would agree that the conversations and what we've talked about in this House with respect to MPAC are not acceptable. But he also knows that it is AMO and the municipalities that need to look at the decisions that are being made with respect to MPAC.

When the decisions are ours to make on this side of the House, Speaker, we've made decisions to find a pathway forward, to make choices, to move forward with public sector wage freezes. We've just passed the Putting Students First Act legislation here in this Legislature, and we are asking our partners in the public sector to take a pause when it comes to wage increases. The Premier and

the Minister of Finance have been very clear that our request to do so would expand beyond that area that we have responsibility for. It is incumbent upon all of those in the public service to do their part.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question goes to the Acting Premier. The Speaker made it really clear today that the Minister of Energy is in contempt for refusing to disclose details of the cancelled power plants in Mississauga and Oakville.

My question is a very simple one: When will the government table the documents and disclose the details of that private power contract and the details of the estimated cost?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: We respect the Speaker's ruling and his recommendation. The Speaker suggests further discussions will be helpful, and we agree. We look forward to working, in an ongoing way, between the House leaders to resolve the issue.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Speaker has made it clear that the minister is obligated to disclose the information, but what's most concerning is that the Liberals should know better. Over a decade ago, this government came to power on a commitment that they described as follows: "We will make the government's business your business. We see it as an essential means of ensuring that decisions are made in the public interest. We will require that all future contracts signed by the government be subject to public scrutiny."

That's from your 2003 platform. What the heck happened to that commitment?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I think all members of the House respect the fact that you have made a decision on this matter, and I think all members of the House are also aware that when we are talking about these documents, we are talking about a very complex situation.

The leader of the third party likes to quote. Let me quote the Auditor General at public accounts on September 5, when he was talking about these documents. He said, "My sense on the Oakville one"—that's the Oakville document—"where it's currently in arbitration, and taking into consideration Ms. Gélinas's comments about not disclosing any information, is that it could very well be that some of this information could be subject to client-solicitor privilege, or, even if we were to get it, in my opinion, it could be damaging to the province's negotiating position."

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: For nearly a decade, this government has insisted that private power deals would ensure affordable and reliable power and eliminate the politics from our electricity system. Instead, we're paying untold millions for decisions made by the Liberals' election team and we have the most expensive electricity bills in the entire country that the people of this province are paying.

The people of Ontario are paying the bill. Why is the government hiding the information from them?

Hon. John Milloy: In terms of accountability, we have no lessons to learn. We are the government that gave the Auditor General power over the broader public service, including Hydro One and OPG. The Auditor General himself, on September 5, noted in the public accounts committee that the complexity of these documents—the fact that these documents could, in his words, damage the province's negotiating position; could, in his words, be subject to client-solicitor privilege—an officer of this Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, I respect the fact that your ruling recognized that this is a complex situation. I am optimistic that the House leaders can sit down, as House leaders have in other situations—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The members from Renfrew and Prince Edward–Hastings, come to order—now.

Hon. John Milloy: —and find a way for these documents to be viewed so that it can protect Ontario's position.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. I do think I need to remind the government House leader, though, that the ruling was that privilege was breached; that the privilege of the member is primary in this House.

The Speaker made it very clear: The minister is obligated to disclose this information. Yet when we've asked for it, when we have asked for this information, the government has used every single tactic in the book to hide the facts from the public. How can the minister claim concern for the public interest when he's blocking transparency?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: To the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm a little bit confused here, Mr. Speaker. We've had a ruling from the Speaker which has mandated the three House leaders to meet, to discuss a way forward in terms of the documents that have been requested. Is the leader of the third party suggesting that the New Democratic Party will not be part of these discussions?

I'm entering into these discussions with the spirit of optimism that, by the three of us working together, we can find a way to make sure these documents are produced, and produced in such a way that respects some of the concerns which were raised by the Auditor General, an officer of this Legislature.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Give me a break is all I can say. This government has played political games with

this issue from day one. This information does not belong to the government. It belongs to the people.

This government has blocked the auditor. They've refused to disclose via freedom of information, and now they've breached a member's privilege. When will we get the facts?

Hon. John Milloy: We are talking about a situation in which the Auditor General, an officer of this Legislature, has said, "Some of this information could be subject to client-solicitor privilege, or even if we were to get it, in my opinion, it could be damaging to the province's negotiating position."

What you have directed us to do is for House leaders to sit down. Mr. Speaker, I am quite frankly disappointed the New Democratic Party is not willing to sit down and find a way forward so that these documents can be looked at by the committee so that we can comply with your ruling in a way which does not damage the position of the government of Ontario. Again, Mr. Speaker, I ask her, is she standing here today and saying the New Democratic Party will not co-operate in this process?

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: You know, Speaker, the saddest thing of all in this mess that we're dealing with today is that 10 years ago this was a government that was elected on a mandate for change. Now they're employing the same secrecy that they used to rail against. People in this province deserve much, much better than that.

Will the minister disclose today and avoid all of the hassle that's going to come over the next week or so—actually disclose today the cost of the Liberal Party's private power deals and the details of the contracts for the Mississauga power plant?

Hon. John Milloy: I would remind members that the Minister of Energy appeared in front of the committee day after day and answered questions about a variety of issues related to his portfolio. The documents were released related to the power plant in Mississauga. Now in terms of Oakville, what we are talking about is a situation in which, as I just quoted several times, the Auditor General of this province himself has recognized that there are sensitivities; there is solicitor-client privilege and commercial sensitivities. You have asked the three House leaders to sit down and come forward with a solution to this situation.

Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed with the New Democratic Party that they are challenging your recommendation and that they will not co-operate in this process, one which, as I say, has been replicated in other Legislatures and in the House of Commons in terms of finding a way forward.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the energy minister. Minister, you've been found to have a breach of privilege and in contempt of Parliament. You know what, Minister? You can do the honourable thing today: Tell your aides to print those documents and let us see what's—what are you hiding? What are you ashamed of?

Minister, will you tell your aides right now to print those documents so we all can see them?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thank you very much, Speaker, and I want to thank you for the ruling, for the consideration of the issues and for the very clear direction on the privileges of committees in the House. I understand the recommendation within the ruling and I understand, further, the government House leader's indication that he is prepared to pursue the recommendation. I also clearly understand that this matter returns to you.

Within the next week and a bit, I'm hopeful that those meetings will take place, but I very clearly understand that it returns to you on September 24.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm amazed each and every day I sit here and listen to the obstruction on that side of the House. What are you afraid of? What's in those documents that you're afraid of? What are you hiding? Does the word "contempt" not bother you?

Will the minister assure this House that the shredders won't be called in to continue the cover-up that we see in that ministry?

Interjections.

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

The member from Cambridge will withdraw.

Mr. Rob Leone: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As I was in the House with all other members and heard the ruling, it sounded clear to me: a clear review of the authorities and a clear direction that we return before you, against the backdrop of the clear review of the authorities. I am mindful of that. I will leave the other discussion to the House leaders. But I do know that on Monday, September 24 we return to the Speaker, who just made the original ruling, and I thank you for it.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Minister of Energy, who is in contempt of this Legislature: Minister, people are tired of your self-serving actions. People are upset that the Liberal government spent $190 million to cancel a plant that they approved. How can you, Minister, continue to evade and to show contempt for this Legislature?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Speaker, the ruling that you made this morning sets out a clear direction and a path. I respect the ruling. Thank you for the ruling. We'll comply with the ruling.

The member was there during estimates, and we had a lot of discussion about various issues, including the Mississauga gas plant. He did outline the costs that we outlined, the overall costs, as soon as the resolution of that

matter had been reached. In fact, I attended a news conference which he was at, the day after the agreement to relocate that plant was signed.

I return to the ruling that you made. We will return before this House, where it is within your jurisdiction to assess the ruling itself. Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Minister, the ruling of the Speaker made it very clear: The information that you are withholding belongs to the people through this Legislature. People are tired of paying public money for the private goals of the Liberal Party. When will you provide this Legislature with the details behind the expenditures that you made?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The day after the relocation of the Mississauga plant had been concluded, I did speak to that issue. I spoke to the relocation. I spoke to the costs. I spoke to the issues and released a number of documents. The ruling of the Speaker is with respect to all documents. I'm aware of the ruling. We're all aware of the ruling. Thank you for the ruling. We respect the ruling. We'll see what the House leaders come up with. We know that we're back here on the 24th with respect to the ruling and with respect to the history and the obligations that that history entails.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Reza Moridi: My question is for the Minister of Health. Investing in hospital capital projects is important, not only to ensure that residents have access to health care close to home but to also enhance the region's economic viability. A new hospital in Vaughan is important to me and my constituents in Richmond Hill, and I will continue to ensure that we move forward with this.

Many areas of the province have faced tough economic times, including southwestern Ontario. As you are well aware, Minister, there's a strong link between a robust local economy and the quality of health care services. In particular, communities need well-funded hospitals in order to attract the skilled workers who will be confident that they can raise their families close to accessible health care services. What investments has your ministry made to improve health care infrastructure and, through that, the economy in southwestern Ontario?

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Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Richmond Hill for reminding us of the many ways in which improving the quality of health care fosters stronger communities.

Let's take as one example Stratford, Ontario, in Perth county. We've invested over $58 million in a major capital project: Stratford General Hospital. It's got a new emergency department, intensive care unit, surgical suites, and space for mental health and maternal-child services, along with the hospital's new MRI. It means that current and future residents of Stratford-Perth and surrounding communities will benefit from faster access to high-quality services.

But that's not all. Just this morning, I was very happy to read an article in the Stratford Beacon Herald that talks about improvements in the coordination of care, not only between hospitals, specialists and family doctors but also hospitals in the area.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Reza Moridi: Thank you, Minister. A healthy rural Ontario is a key driver for our economic recovery, and we thank the front-line health care workers in Perth–Wellington for the great work that they do.

Minister, there are many communities in southwestern Ontario that are growing very rapidly. One that comes to my mind is Waterloo region. Many families are choosing this region to raise their families because of the promise of good jobs, vibrant neighbourhoods and quality health care. Minister, what types of investments are we making in this region so that this community can continue to grow?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: There are so many, but let me give you one great example: Cambridge Memorial Hospital, a fantastic example of planning to accommodate for more patients. The emergency department will be able to serve an additional 10,000 visitors. The acute mental health unit will accommodate up to 25 patients. There will be an addition of 33 new medical surgical beds, five intensive care beds, two maternity beds and four additional pediatric beds. That's why I was so disappointed when the PC members dismissed our budget, because it contained a commitment to continue investments in more than 30 new major capital hospital projects, in addition to the 25 currently under way.

Cambridge is a growing community. We're proud to make investments to provide better health care for the people of Cambridge.

Interjection.

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

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My questions are for the Minister of Energy. Speaker, we'll try this in the good-cop fashion first. Minister, we've heard today that we have the right to know the real costs. We've already heard about the $190 million in Mississauga. Those documents that we're looking for—we want to get to the bottom of the $300 million-plus that is going for the sole-sourced contract to Lambton. We want to know if that sole-sourced contract into the Lambton plant includes additional payments.

Minister, the Oakville plant, at $300 million to $1 billion—this is the information that this House has learned that we need to get to the bottom of. Minister, there are 11 days that the Speaker has given us. Why would we use those 11 days? We already know what the answer is going to be. You're going to have to turn those documents over. Minister, we respectfully ask you to ask your staff to turn those documents over to us right now and put an end to it.

Interjections.

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

Minister.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The Speaker has made a ruling. We'll comply with the ruling and we thank the Speaker for the ruling.

You've mentioned on a couple of occasions about a sole-sourced Lambton plant. Let's be clear: There was a contract for a plant in Mississauga. A same-sized plant is going to Lambton with the same company. So I'm not sure where you're coming up with an extra plant.

We've released a number of documents, we've released costs, and we'll be complying with the Speaker's ruling. I know that the next date on that is September 24.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Well, Speaker, sadly, good cop didn't work, so we'll try a little of the bad cop then.

The Speaker has ruled, "A prima facie case has been established." Minister, the jig is up. You've been caught red-handed. You're a lawyer; you know the next stage is to charge you with contempt.

Speaker, the minister is making both a mockery of this House and of you. You have nothing else to lose now, Minister. Bring us the documents today. Please, bring us those documents now. Put an end to this misery. Put an end to it.

Interjections.

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

Minister of Energy.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Respecting the Speaker's ruling, we'll be complying with the Speaker's ruling.

Of course, we reached an agreement to relocate the plant to Lambton on the Monday. On the Tuesday, we were before a number of the members of the House and a number of members of the press speaking to the relocation, speaking to the costs, speaking to some of the terms of the contract. We released a number of the documents. Your Speaker's ruling covers the rest, and I look forward to speaking to address that issue in compliance with the Speaker's ruling.

But just to be clear, there was a plant that was to go in Mississauga. It's the same-sized plant that will be going to Lambton, so there is no new plant. It's the same one that has been moved.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the government House leader. It is clear that during the process at committee that dealt with this issue in regard to the gas plants, your office and your staff directed committee members on the government side how to vote on all of the amendments and also drafted all of the amendments and all of the motions that dealt with this issue, trying to deflect having those papers delivered. Clearly, your office doesn't want to deal with this in such a way that the papers be given.

Why should we have any confidence in this House that you have any ability to find a solution to this? Shouldn't this matter best be dealt with by a motion in the House today, forthwith?

Interjections.

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

Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Mr. Speaker, I know that the honourable member would never want to leave the impression that the debate and discussion in committee did not draw out the fact that this is an extremely complex matter because we're dealing with issues of commercial confidence as well as solicitor-client privilege.

I've shared with members of this Legislature earlier in question period the words of Jim McCarter, "My sense on the Oakville one … it could very well be that some of this information could be subject to client-solicitor privilege, or even if we were to get it, in my opinion, it could be damaging to the province's negotiating position."

Mr. Speaker, the member's own colleague the NDP Chair of the committee said this on May 16, "I would also advise—and I think the minister, being a lawyer himself, knows full well that he may choose to answer the question in such a way as not to prejudice the province in any way, and I would expect him to do so. That would be my ruling."

Mr. Speaker, this is a complex matter, and you've taken that into account in your ruling today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Members will know I have great respect for the government House leader, and I know that he's a very competent individual. He worked in the federal House of Commons as an assistant to Jean Chrétien in regard to legislative issues and understands well that the rights of the House trump everything. They trump prima facie—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The rights of the House trump everything. Those papers had to be delivered.

But what I just heard in your response is no change in direction. I hear you saying exactly what your committee members were saying back when estimates was dealing with this issue, and I don't get a sense that you're going to try to find any kind of solution other than trying to protect the Liberal Party.

So won't you agree with me that you haven't changed your mind and that we should deal with this matter forthwith, today in the House?

Interjections.

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

Government House leader.

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's contrary to the Speaker's ruling.

Hon. John Milloy: I fear—exactly, as my friend the deputy House leader says—that the NDP House leader is getting very close to challenging your ruling.

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I respect your ruling, Mr. Speaker. Those people who have examined the submissions that I made will know that your ruling did not favour the arguments that I put

forward, yet I respect it. At the same time, I have confidence that I can work with the other two House leaders to resolve this issue, as has been directed by the chair.

Mr. Speaker, I enter this with a spirit of co-operation and willingness to make sure that we can find a way to resolve this issue as House leaders and other bodies have, as you outlined today in your ruling.

CONDOMINIUM LEGISLATION

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. Minister, as you know, with 102 condo buildings in my riding, condo issues are a top priority for me. My office has gotten its share of calls from condo residents talking about how challenging it can be to navigate our Condominium Act. That's why, Minister, I am so pleased that you have decided to open the Condominium Act from top to bottom for a complete review.

Even more exciting is the fact that you are taking a very innovative approach to public engagement. Could you tell this House, Minister, what this innovative approach is?

Hon. Margarett R. Best: I want to take this opportunity to thank the member from Mississauga East–Cooksville for her question and also to state my appreciation for her interest in the Condominium Act review.

Our Condominium Act review is using an innovative public engagement process. It has three stages that will enable condominium stakeholders and residents to participate, identify issues and develop solutions and recommendations. This public engagement process is being led by the Public Policy Forum.

Stage 1, the public information session, is already under way, and the recruiting of members for a condominium residents' panel as well. Letters have been sent to 10,000 condominium residents across the province, inviting them to participate. The panel will discuss issues relating to the Condominium Act and provide advice on how to improve it. In stage 2, condominium experts will review the findings to bring forward recommendations to update the act. In stage 3, the residents' panel will reconvene to review the experts' report, which will then be built into an action plan.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. I'm excited to hear of the plan to address the issues affecting the overall sector review of the act.

I also want to say that I'm really pleased that instead of going for band-aid solutions, we are doing a complete overview of the Condominium Act. I'm also proud to be part of a government that is taking such innovative steps in public engagement before we complete the review.

Minister, I understand that you've already taken steps in this innovative approach. Could you tell this House how your first town hall on the condo issue went?

Hon. Margarett R. Best: It pleases me to inform the House that, indeed, I did hold an inaugural public information session last night in downtown Toronto. I had the opportunity to meet and participate in conversations with condo owners, residents, developers, property managers and other stakeholders. This provided an opportunity for the many condo stakeholders and for community to come together to share issues of concern and to have conversations about the sector overall.

I would certainly like to take this opportunity to thank my colleague the MPP from Don Valley West for facilitating the session.

I will be holding similar public information sessions across the province and listening to Ontarians. I look forward to attending the public information session that the member will be hosting in her riding and talking to her constituents as well.

The approach that we are taking will truly engage—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer?

Hon. Margarett R. Best: —owners and stakeholders so that we can further identify problems and develop solutions. Solutions created through this collaborative approach will benefit consumers and will result in a more efficient and effective marketplace, and will benefit Ontario consumers generally.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, I'm sure this is a tough day for you personally. I'm sure you're going to have resignations on your voice mail from members of your leadership team after today.

Minister, you could end this right now, but you don't want to. You want to conceal this scandal. Shame on you. You should be humiliated, sir.

Minister, do it now. Do the right thing. Hand it over. Hand all the documents over. Quit covering up your actions. What are you hiding?

Interjections.

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

The member will withdraw.

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I will withdraw.

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

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thank you very much, Speaker. You made a ruling, a very clear ruling. I'm going to be complying with the ruling. I look forward to the results of the discussions between the government House leaders and know full well that we're back here on the 24th respecting the ruling.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Well, today is an extremely sad day in the history of the Ontario Legislature. This minister has an opportunity to do the right thing, and yet he's choosing to conceal information from hard-working Ontario families who pay the bills.

Minister, watching your government flounder is like watching a dead animal gasp for air. You continue to duck your ministerial responsibilities. Put yourself out of your own misery, Minister. Hand over the documents. Do the right thing. Quit concealing information that Ontario families deserve to know.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I took from the ruling, Speaker, which was very clear in its outline of privileges—and the wording around the recommendation was that the recommendation was attached to some of the issues that had been raised. I won't go further than that. That's what I took from it. And I took from it that the government House leaders were encouraged to pursue the recommendation and to see, but I also took from it, its very clear terms, that we're back here on the 24th. So I will, of course, and this House will comply with the ruling in all of its terms for all of the reasons contained in the ruling, which means we're back here on the 24th if a resolution hasn't been found.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: You know, Ontarians watching this must be wondering, what in the world is in the documents?

Interjections.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: To the Minister of Energy; sorry, Mr. Speaker. Ontarians watching this must be wondering what in the world is in the documents that the Minister of Energy is refusing to table. For over a year, this government and this ministry have ducked and dodged, refusing to tell the public how much of their money—not the Liberal Party's; their money—was spent scrapping private power deals that they themselves signed. Will the minister now admit that he was wrong to hide these facts from the public?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I spoke to a number of the costs with respect to the relocation of the Mississauga plant the day before the final day of estimates actually, and the day I spoke to it was the day after the agreement to relocate had actually been signed.

We're going to comply, of course, with the ruling of the Speaker, which has a number of terms put in there to both respect the privileges of the House and to explore further issues. That's what's going to be done. I know we're back here on the 24th, and so I look forward to the discussions, the examination of the recommendation and obviously the ruling.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Back to the Minister of Energy: The question is, if he's going to comply, why the delay? Why not do it now? Ontarians are wondering. People struggling in tough times are tired of seeing this government and the Liberal campaign team leave them with the bill for their mistakes.

The government has admitted that this was a political decision. The government has admitted it was because they were down in the polls. Now it's time to admit that they were wrong and come clean with the facts. Don't delay. Table the documents. Do it now. Will the minister do that?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We're going to do exactly what the third party member has suggested, comply with the ruling—comply with the ruling—and that's what we're doing: complying with the ruling. And we're complying with the ruling in all of its context, not just the documents that have already been released. But we're complying with all of the terms of the ruling, about the gas plant in Oakville and the one in Mississauga, which all three parties said they wanted cancelled, which all three parties would have had to find a way to either relocate or pay for, and which all three parties would have dealt with the issues of. But the ruling had a number of terms, and we're complying with all of them—not just select ones, but all of the terms of the ruling. One of those is that we're back here on the 24th.

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PROTECTION OF GREAT LAKES

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question this morning is to my friend the Minister of the Environment. I'd like to ask a question about the Kawartha Lakes, but today I'll ask a question about the Great Lakes. The minister recently introduced important legislation that, if passed, will ensure Ontarians can enjoy healthy, vibrant Great Lakes that are drinkable, swimmable and fishable now and in the future.

Conserving our Great Lakes water supplies and protecting our water quality is essential to ensuring the health of our families, our communities, and indeed, our economy. Speaker, through you, I'm wondering if the minister could provide exact details to the House on our government's proposed Great Lakes Protection Act.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I think I can, and I know that all members of the House will be interested in this answer. I want to thank the member for the question.

The Great Lakes, as we all know, are vitally important to Ontarians and our drinking water and quality of life and even our prosperity. We need to restore them now to continue to enjoy their benefits for this and for future generations.

New challenges are overwhelming old solutions, and that's why we need new initiatives to help the Great Lakes. On June 6, I had the privilege of introducing the proposed Great Lakes Protection Act for first reading. The Great Lakes Protection Act would provide new tools to restore and protect the Great Lakes. The act would create a Great Lakes guardians' council to bring together government and interested parties to identify priorities and focus actions to address them. The act would enable targets to be set for Great Lakes improvements.

The Great Lakes are a global treasure. I look forward to support from my honourable opposition colleagues as we move forward with the proposed Great Lakes Protection Act.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: That was a full, detailed and outstanding answer from the minister. I'd like to thank the minister for providing the House with the details of this very important act that we all should be very interested in.

Ontario relies on the Great Lakes for our strength and success, and I'm pleased to see that our government is taking full action to protect our lakes and restore them to environmental health. I understand that in combination with the bill, the ministry is also doing the Great Lakes

guardian community fund, an historic event in the province of Ontario.

Speaker, through you, I'm wondering if the minister could explain to the House the Great Lakes guardian community program.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you very much to the member. The Great Lakes guardian community fund is a $1.5-million funding program that offers non-profit groups, such as service clubs, the opportunity to finance activities to support local community activities that restore and protect the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River basin. Funding is also available to First Nations and Métis communities and organizations in Ontario.

The funds will be distributed through modest grants valued up to about $25,000 per project for actions that contribute to cleaning up the Great Lakes one small step at a time. Applications for the first round of funding will continue to be accepted until October 12, 2012, and interested not-for-profit groups may apply online by visiting the Ministry of the Environment website.

We want to say to all Ontarians: Become Great Lakes guardians so we can continue to enjoy Great Lakes that are drinkable, swimmable and fishable.

SCHOOL SAFETY

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Acting Premier. On May 26, 2011, Eric Leighton, a grade 12 student at Mother Teresa High School in Barrhaven, was killed while doing school work in a classroom with a teacher. I know that the government is very aware of these circumstances, and I had the opportunity to speak with the Premier, the previous Minister of Labour and the previous education minister. I know that the Premier has spoken with Mrs. and Mr. Leighton, and I appreciate that. But Eric's parents, Sheri and Pat, are here today with their daughter, Kaitlyn, to ask for a coroner's inquest into his death. They're desperate for closure, for answers. They deserve to know all the facts. Will you work with the family today to ensure that a coroner's inquest is called immediately?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Let me start by saying to the family, our deepest condolences on the loss of your son, Eric. As a mom, I cannot even bear to think about the pain that you've gone through in this past period of time, and one of the most difficult days in my job as Minister of Education is the day I have to call schools and talk to the principals about a death of a child in those schools. On each and every incident, we try to look to what we could do more and what we could have done to prevent that situation.

A number of steps have been taken, and I can speak to those further in the supplementary, but I think it's important in Ontario that it is the coroner that makes the decisions. They have the expertise about whether and when a coroner's inquest should be called.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I want to thank the minister for her answer, but we have a bit of a problem, and I think she can help us address it. Presently, the coroner has neither accepted nor rejected the pleas from the Leighton family to undertake a coroner's inquest.

I must reiterate: Eric was at a school. He was under the supervision of a teacher when he died completing an assignment. The Leightons still have questions, and they're concerned about school safety for their daughter now and other students. They're heartbroken that they sent their boy to school, and he never came home.

The coroner can automatically call an inquest into a workplace death, but in this case the coroner says that Eric's death doesn't qualify or fit the criteria such as a death on the job. This is interesting, given the Ministry of Labour investigated his death because the school was considered a workplace, and it was the Ministry of Labour who fined the Ottawa Catholic District School Board $275,000 because it wasn't a safe environment. It makes no sense.

So I'm going to ask you, Minister, if you will undertake contacting the coroner to ask for this to happen, and will you change the rules so if, God forbid, another student dies at another Ontario school, that it will be grounds for an automatic inquest?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: As the member opposite said, the Ottawa Catholic District School Board has been charged under the health and safety act, and I can assure you, Speaker, that if the coroner determines that an inquest should be held, if it is conducted, the Ministry of Education and the school board would absolutely cooperate fully.

I understand the need of the parents to have answers, but I think it's important for them to know that here in Ontario the politics are out of these conversations. It is the coroner who has the expertise to determine when and if an inquest is necessary. We look to the coroner to take the lead on that. But in Ontario, the government, school boards and school staff—each and every one of them—are committed to delivering the best and safest educational experience.

We know that there remain steps to do, because one situation such as this is too many.

CHILD CARE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My question is to the Minister of Education. Today the Peel regional council will decide whether to close its 12 municipally run child care centres. Will the minister stand for the 760 children and their families who rely on these centres and work with the Peel region to keep these high-quality centres open, or will she stand by silently as more Ontario parents see their children denied good-quality child care services?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: The government is dedicated to early learning in Ontario, and that's why we're leading the way with the introduction of full-day kindergarten. We know that early learning is the best investment we can make in Ontario's future prosperity. That's why child care funding for Peel region has more than doubled since 2003, from $26.2 million to $53.4 million in 2012, and 1,400 new child care spaces were created in Peel region

since 2003, and 4,500 more children are now receiving fee subsidies every year. But it is the region of Peel that is responsible for managing child care service in the system, and we look to them to do just that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

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Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The problem is that some of the best child care centres in this province are closing down, despite this funding that the minister is speaking of. From Windsor to Welland to Kenora, child care centres are being shut down and are closing on a regular basis. The reason for this, the reason for these child care centres closing, to quote child care expert Martha Friendly, is that the McGuinty government has "no provincial plan, limited policy and too little public funding" for these centres.

When will the minister step up for families in Peel and across Ontario, to stop the loss of Ontario's best child care centres, the models which other child care centres look up to, and to ensure that every family—every family—gets the affordable, good-quality child care that they need?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I would encourage the member opposite to engage in the biggest conversation that we have had in child care in this province in decades. On June 27, we released a discussion paper called Modernizing Child Care in Ontario: Sharing Conversations, Strengthening Partnerships, Working Together. We are looking for the best advice. The paper outlines the government's long-term vision for child care, and we encourage partners and other interested parties to provide feedback.

But having a dialogue is not the only step that we've taken. In this past budget, an additional almost more than $200 million has been invested in child care. Since 2003, child care funding has increased from $532 million to more than $1 billion—a 90% increase—and this at the same time as we're rolling out full-day kindergarten right across this province.

We have very much focused on the education and learning of our youngest learners and look to continue to do just that.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation. The growth of tech companies is very important to southwestern Ontario. Many new tech companies have sprung up in the region, and several existing companies continue to expand and grow. It's very important that we do everything we can to create the right conditions for these businesses to thrive, grow and continue to create jobs for southwestern Ontarians. Speaker, through you to the minister, what is this government doing to ensure our information communication technology sector remains strong and does in fact create jobs in southwestern Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I've got to tell you, our information communication technology sector is the best in the country and in the top three in all North America. This sector contributed $28 billion towards Ontario's gross domestic product, and it employs 270,000 people.

This government believes in this industry, and that's why we've made investments in companies like Desire2-Learn in Waterloo. When governments show confidence in companies, the private sector often does too. I was pleased to learn recently that Desire2Learn secured an $80-million investment from the private sector. This is the largest venture capital investment in a Canadian software company ever.

Our plan is working and we will continue to support businesses, continue to work to grow the economy and create jobs in the province of Ontario.

MEMBERS' PRIVILEGES

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

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I rise on a point of order related to your ruling earlier, and I'm seeking a bit of clarification. There have obviously been questions asked and other members have stated.

Your direction to the House leaders—and we will be meeting later today, as is our usual routine—is that we report by the end of the day on Monday, September 24. I guess I'm asking, seeking direction from you, as to how we are to communicate to you if we have reached an agreement. Are you looking for a submission in writing from us? Are you looking to meet with us? Does this have to be done by the end of day September 24, or are you saying you'd like it done prior to the date?

I'm also interested—typically, the member making a claim of privilege includes the motion they are planning to move. I'd like to ask, through you, Mr. Speaker, if the member could provide a copy of that motion, because it was not included in his submissions. So I'm searching for some direction.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): One moment, please.

I thank the member for the point of order. For clarity purposes, if the three House leaders, at any time up to the 24th, come to some kind of conclusion that they wish to report, that all three agree upon, they may transmit that to me in any form, preferably in writing, and if not, electronically. As for the member from Cambridge, it is his purview to decide to provide that for you if he wishes to do so.

Further clarification on this point of order? The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Same point of order, Mr. Speaker: It's pretty clear at this point that the government is trying to figure out how they can contrive to write the member's motion, and I find that, quite frankly, somewhat offensive.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I don't find that to be a point of order, so I'll entertain the member from Cambridge.

Mr. Rob Leone: As the government House leader has sought some clarification on that direction, I would hope

that the government House leader and the House leaders, when they convene, are going to be able to provide not only a copy of the letter to you, but also to copy all members of this House, as this is a matter before the House, and we would like to know what happened at the House leaders' meeting, and if minutes could be provided in those documents.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have provided the directions to the House leaders, and what they choose to do is what is inside of the ruling.

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

The House recessed from 1217 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: We'll have some guests joining us, but I just wanted to take the opportunity to say their names now, in case I don't get the opportunity to later: Adam Diamond, who's the provincial program coordinator for YouthCAN, a program of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies; Tim Sond, a second-year Master of Social Work student at the University of Toronto, completing a practicum at the Ontario Association of CASs; and Brian Van-Du, a coordinator on the YouthCAN team, as well as a first-year Bachelor of Social Work student at Ryerson, will be joining us and will be here to watch the second reading of Bill 90.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. We will welcome our guests.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'd like to welcome our guests from Denmark. They came to visit one of my schools earlier this week, Sir William Osler. I want to welcome them to the Legislature. Thank you for visiting us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introduction of guests—and asking the member from Scarborough–Agincourt not to step on my special gift of introducing my guests. I want to take this moment: In the Speaker's gallery today is the Committee on Children and Education of the Parliament of Denmark, including all members from all parties. The total number is about 27 on the committee. The delegation is here to meet with MPPs, ministries and myself to discuss education models and legislation in both Ontario and Denmark.

Please give our guests a warm welcome and bid them adieu. They're leaving this evening.

Thank you.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED PERSONS

Ms. Laurie Scott: Today marks the founding of the newest chapter of CARP, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons. Haliburton Chapter 54 is being officially launched this afternoon at the Royal Canadian Legion in Haliburton.

CARP is a national organization with over 660,000 members, advocating on issues related to aging, providing benefits like travel insurance and creating a social space for like-minded people.

Since the focus of CARP's advocacy is on aging issues, its membership is not confined to actual retired people. In fact, many young members are equally committed to ensuring that these issues are adequately addressed.

CARP's vision is for a society in which everyone can live active, independent, purposeful lives as they age. CARP advocates for social changes that will bring financial security, equitable and timely access to health care, and freedom from discrimination for an aging population. It is also committed to ensuring that our aging citizens are protected from excessive tax burdens and restrictions, which would impair their quality of life.

CARP's Chapter 54 in Haliburton is a welcome addition to our community. I want to congratulate Bob Stinson and the steering committee for all the work they have done to ensuring the successful establishment of this chapter.

I also want to wish Chapter 54 the very best in all of its future endeavours. I'm sorry I can't be with you there this afternoon in the Haliburton Legion, but I'm sure you're having a great time.

CORDUKES/WEBER 12-SIDED BARN

Mr. Michael Mantha: Over the course of the summer, I had the opportunity to attend the twine-cutting ceremony—one that I'm proudly wearing today as my bow tie—at the historic Cordukes/Weber 12-sided barn in the town of Sowerby in Algoma–Manitoulin.

In 1919, Thomas Priestman Cordukes, a pioneer and first reeve of Thessalon township, built Ontario's first and Canada's second-known 12-sided barn, the first being in Mystic, Quebec, which was likely modeled after the12-sided railroad roundhouse in West Virginia.

Between 1919 and 1990, this barn housed livestock and crops for a succession of farmers, including the Cordukes, the Canns, the Seabrooks and, most recently, since 1976, the Webers. It has stood vacant since 1990 and it was in danger of collapse.

In 2004, some community members, with the owner's assistance, decided to try and save it. The work, partly supported by a provincial grant, took several years and many, many days of volunteer time and tremendous support from all sectors of the community. I am delighted to say that the barn is now fully restored and ready to serve and strengthen that same community. This unique 12-sided barn is now available for rent for private functions, and is available free of cost for any community event.

They say it takes a community to raise a child, but in Sowerby I saw that it took a community with drive, passion and pride to take on and complete something of this scale, of this magnitude. While many in the community dedicated their time, I would like to especially acknowledge the efforts of Will Samis and David Ratz

for their tireless efforts towards the completion of this project.

I am proud to see what can happen when a community unites, works hard and accomplishes such projects that will truly be of benefit to all and strengthen relationships in their community and their region.

AGINCOURT COMMUNITY SERVICES ASSOCIATION

Ms. Soo Wong: Today I would like to recognize Agincourt Community Services Association, a fantastic association located in my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt. For nearly 35 years, better known as ACSA, it has worked within the Scarborough area to address a variety of issues, including systemic poverty, hunger, housing, homelessness and unemployment. Its main objective is to act as a bridge between people who need help and those who can provide it.

Recently, ACSA has developed a civic awareness project, a three-year program developed to address a gap in involvement of Scarborough immigrant communities in civic activities. The civic awareness project, better known as CAP, works with newcomers in Scarborough to gain awareness, knowledge and skills for civic engagement and to develop strategies on how to resolve issues impacting their community. CAP benefits newcomers by increasing their connections to the community through finding ways to make the world around them a better place.

The rewards of CAP can already be seen. One graduate stated, "Before now, I didn't have the knowledge and confidence to bring community issues to light and speak up as a contributing member of society. Now I know how to gather information about issues that are affecting members of my community and how to engage our fellow community members so together we can support each other and advocate for needed change."

As a community, as a multicultural province, it is important that all of our newcomers have the ability to make a difference in our society, and I'm proud to have an organization like ACSA in my riding which works to achieve this goal.

NORTHERN ONTARIO RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm very concerned that northern Ontario is at the tipping point, thanks to policies of this government. The uncertainty over the future of Ontario Northland, coupled with the Far North Act, will have very adverse effects for exploration in the north. The Far North Act puts almost half of the north, 225,000 square miles, off limits to exploration. Indeed, if this legislation had been passed sooner, we would never have seen the Ring of Fire discovered. That's the world's largest mining find of this century.

Three of the world's largest exploration companies, several smaller exploration companies and 70 mining and manufacturing companies are located in the riding of Nipissing. Any further instability could have adverse effects on our industry. Having this government cut exploration in half will certainly have a negative effect on these businesses.

On my recent tour of northern Ontario with MPP Norm Miller from Muskoka–Parry Sound, one customer of Ontario Northland told me that they've delayed a $10-million expansion simply due to uncertainty caused by the government's lack of a plan in its fire sale of Ontario Northland. We need a new direction from this government, and soon. We heard just this week that we used to be number 1 in the world in mining, and today we've fallen to number 13. We need to continue to stave off this economic fallout.

PATHWAY OF FAME

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'd like to take a moment to pay tribute to Sean Eyre, Johnny Driscoll, Graham Hart, Ada Lee, Barb Bell, Father Bernie Heffernan and John Morris for recognizing the need in our community to acknowledge in a definitive manner those who contribute significantly to the betterment of Peterborough.

Under the direction of Mr. Ken Doherty, in 1997 this group came together to establish the Pathway of Fame. The first stone was laid on Saturday, July 18, 1998, in Del Crary Park.

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Residents of Peterborough are nominated by community members for various reasons. Some contribute in the arts and culture, others for humanitarian reasons, but everyone whose name appears on the Pathway of Fame is a worthy recipient, even including former Prime Minister Lester Pearson. These individuals have given of themselves to their communities. They have used their talents and donated their time to develop and grow Peterborough into the great community it is today. Their names as part of the Pathway of Fame will ensure that their efforts and contributions are never forgotten.

Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, September 8, 2012, I had the great pleasure of attending the Pathway of Fame ceremony in Peterborough where this year's inductees were announced. I'd like to offer my personal congratulations to each and every one of them and to all those whose names already pave this historical pathway.

PARKINSON SUPERWALK

Mr. Jim McDonell: Last Saturday, I was able to attend the first Parkinson SuperWalk fundraising event in Cornwall. The Parkinson Society volunteers, families and supporters not only raised the awareness of this terrible disease but they also raised close to $10,000 to help in the expansion of services provided by the Parkinson Society in eastern Ontario. These are dedicated residents of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry who care about their community and those afflicted by this terrible disease.

Community fundraising is an important avenue for local charities and not-for-profits to obtain the necessary funds to operate and deliver services to those in need with efficiency and compassion. When local volunteers and activists initiate a community fundraising event and manage to raise close to $10,000, they are to be commended and recognized. They're an example and an inspiration to many.

In the upcoming years, as baby boomers age, we are likely to experience an increase in the incidence of neurodegenerative conditions, such as Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases, in our communities. This comes at a time when our focus on health care is being driven towards efficiencies and a greater reliance on community care. I cannot emphasize enough how important research and support groups such as the Parkinson Society of Canada will be to Ontarians affected by these conditions and their families.

I wish all these volunteers the best and look forward to future Parkinson SuperWalks.

OMBUDSMAN OF ONTARIO

Mme France Gélinas: In a few minutes, I will be introducing a private member's bill to expand the oversight of the Ombudsman to the health care sector. Ontarians need access to an independent investigator who can get to the bottom of their issues with our health system. Currently, the only oversight mechanisms at most health care organizations are internal or left to the Ministry of Health, and we frankly know that this is not cutting it.

Ombudsman oversight of hospitals has been shown to reduce outbreaks of hospital-acquired infection; in retirement homes and long-term-care homes, they protect vulnerable seniors from abuse; in the ambulance service, it could have prevented the never-ending Ornge fiasco—and the list goes on.

Many Ontarians have tried and demanded this change. After the death of her mother, Maria Daskalos collected 5,400 signatures on a petition that my colleague from Toronto–Danforth presented. Members on all sides of the House have presented petitions, from Niagara to Owen Sound, London, Peterborough, Guelph and many more.

As I speak, hundreds of people on Facebook groups, like Cause for Concern and Fair Care Canada, are asking for Ombudsman oversight of health facilities. The Ombudsman himself spent a third of his report last year calling for the mandate to oversee health facilities because he received so many complaints.

Mr. Speaker, it's time—time to recognize the need for oversight of our health care system, time to listen to the many, many Ontarians who need closure.

FOOD PROCESSING INDUSTRY

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: I rise today to speak about Ontario's food processing sector. I'm proud to be part of a government that fully supports investments in Ontario's food processing sector that will create new jobs, introduce innovative processing technology and use locally produced inputs.

Yesterday, as we know, the Alliance of Ontario Food Processors was at the Legislature and released a report which reaffirms that the Ontario food and beverage industry is the province's second-largest manufacturing sector after the auto sector, generating $34.8 billion in revenue from goods manufactured and employing more than 94,000 people.

Members of this House will be interested to note that programs and services from the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs led to investments of $490 million in the food processing sector in 2011-12 and created and retained more than 7,300 jobs in the province. As members of this House are aware, Ontario's food sector supports and impacts rural communities and primary agriculture. Nearly 25% of the province's processors are located in rural areas, and processors purchase almost 65% of Ontario food-related farm production.

I'm glad to see the government determined to continue to help this important part of our economy to succeed in global markets and create jobs here at home.

QUEEN'S DIAMOND JUBILEE MEDAL RECIPIENTS

Mr. John O'Toole: It was my privilege to join our federal member, the Honourable Bev Oda, to present medals to distinguished citizens in my riding of Durham. The medals were honouring the Diamond Jubilee of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the Queen of Canada. The citizens have distinguished themselves in initiatives such as business, culture, fundraising, environment, education, public service, outstanding leadership and volunteerism in service to their community, their province and their country.

I am pleased to introduce the following Diamond Jubilee Medal recipients: Brian Callery, Dr. William Cohoon, Mary Ann Found, Hannu Halminen, Harold Hammond, Kirk Kemp, Rev. Frank Lockhart, Mayor Gerri Lynn O'Connor, Don Simmonds, Joan Randall, Heather Rutherford, Anna Strike, George Van Dyk, Edmond Vanhaverbeke, Dr. Anthony Brown, Dan Carter, Hazel Coates, Eleanor Colwell, James Connell, Dr. Jack Cottrell, Lieutenant-Colonel John Conrad, Rodine Egan, Kent Farndale, John Greenfield, William Hine, Sid Ikeda, Robert Kirvan, Rose Kuipers, Margaret Maskell, Frank Moore, Erin O'Toole, Dr. Paul Puckrin, Elva Reid, Gail Rickard, Marion Saunders, Jillian Smigielski, Alan Strike, Charles Taws, Mary Taylor, William Tomlinson, Benjamin Voss, Kathleen Wasylenky, Sandra Will and Anne Wright.

I would ask all members to recognize these citizens for service to their community and to our country, Canada.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

OMBUDSMAN AMENDMENT ACT (INVESTIGATION OF HEALTH CARE SERVICES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'OMBUDSMAN (ENQUÊTES SUR LES SERVICES DE SOINS DE SANTÉ)

Mme Gélinas moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act to amend the Ombudsman Act with respect to investigating specified health care services / Projet de loi 122, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'ombudsman en ce qui a trait aux enquêtes sur des services de soins de santé précisés.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Mme France Gélinas: Le projet de loi modifie la Loi sur l'ombudsman pour qu'il soit capable d'investiguer des plaintes qui proviennent des maisons de soins de longue durée, des centres d'accès aux soins communautaires, des hôpitaux, des services ambulanciers, des services de santé publique, ainsi que les services dans les maisons de retraite.

The bill amends the Ombudsman Act to give power to the Ombudsman to do anything under the Ombudsman Act to a home for special care, a long-term-care home, a community care access centre, a hospital, an ambulance service, a board of health, as well as the care services provided at retirement homes.

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PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"Petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Premier McGuinty has imposed fee schedule cuts to family physicians and proposed wage freezes unilaterally, he has therefore alienated the province's family doctors. These actions threaten the future of health care in Ontario and will compound the existing family physician shortage. As wait times for primary care will inevitably increase, so will the frustration of millions of Ontarians;

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

"We ask that the Premier reconsider his decision and return to the negotiating table with the Ontario Medical Association and the province's doctors, thereby working alongside patients," working together, moving forward, "and their primary care providers" in the province of Ontario.

I'm pleased to support it, sign it and present it to Katherine, one of the new pages here.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mme France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas there are a growing number of reported cases of abuse, neglect and substandard care for our seniors in long-term-care homes; and

"Whereas people with complaints have limited options, and frequently don't complain because they fear repercussions, which suggests too many seniors are being left in vulnerable situations without independent oversight; and

"Whereas Ontario is one of only two provinces in Canada where the Ombudsman does not have independent oversight of long-term-care homes. We need accountability, transparency and consistency in our long-term-care home system;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly "to expand the Ombudsman's mandate to include Ontario's long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors."

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

ELECTORAL REFORM

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas it is the right of every Canadian to vote once in each election for the candidate of his or her choice and have their vote fairly counted and not offset by faulty voter registration or any sort of illegal practices; and

"Whereas credible allegations of voting irregularities exist for the most recent election, including non-citizens voting, persons voting multiple times at various voting stations and errors on the permanent register of electors list; and

"Whereas the practice of 'vouching' has been practised in polling stations where it is not permitted, such as non-rural polling stations, and does not require verified proof of a person's age, citizenship and residence in a riding;

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

"To support Bill 106, Prevention of Electoral Fraud Act, 2012, by Bas Balkissoon, the member for Scarborough–Rouge River, that would require that voters present proof of Canadian citizenship; require the Chief Electoral Officer of Ontario to appoint an independent party to conduct a review of the permanent register of electors within six months after the bill passes and subse-

quently every five years; allow scrutineers to monitor the process by which voters add their names to the voters list on election day; and forbid vouching, which currently excludes the requirement for legitimate identification."

I agree with this petition, will sign it and send it to the table with page Zakhar.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mrs. Julia Munro: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas citizens are concerned that contaminants in materials used as fill for pits and quarries may endanger water quality and the natural environment of the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt;

"Whereas the Ministry of the Environment has a responsibility and a duty to protect the sensitive areas of the greenbelt and Oak Ridges moraine;

"Whereas the government of Ontario has the lead responsibility to provide the tools to lower-tier government to plan, protect and enforce clear, effective policies governing the application and permitting process for the placement of fill in abandoned pits and quarries;

"Whereas this process requires clarification regarding rules respecting what materials may be used to rehabilitate or fill abandoned pits and quarries;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Minister of the Environment initiate a moratorium on the clean fill application and permit process on the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt until there are clear rules; and we further ask that the provincial government take all necessary actions to protect our water and prevent contamination of the Oak Ridges moraine and the greenbelt."

As I am in agreement with this, I've affixed my signature to the petition to give it to page Sashin.

SOINS DE LONGUE DURÉE

Mme France Gélinas: J'ai une pétition qui me vient d'un peu partout en Ontario.

« Attendu qu'il existe un nombre croissant de cas signalés d'abus, de négligence et de soins de qualité inférieure pour nos personnes âgées dans les foyers de soins de longue durée;

« Attendu que les personnes ayant des plaintes ont peu d'options, et souvent ne le font pas parce qu'ils craignent des répercussions, ce qui suggère qu'un trop grand nombre de personnes âgées sont laissées dans des situations vulnérables, sans surveillance indépendante;

« Attendu que l'Ontario est une de seulement deux provinces au Canada où l'ombudsman n'a pas de contrôle indépendant de nos foyers de soins de longue durée. Nous avons besoin de la responsabilité, de la transparence et de la cohérence dans notre système de soins de longue durée. »

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario « d'élargir le mandat de l'ombudsman afin d'inclure les foyers de soins de longue durée de l'Ontario, afin de protéger nos aînés les plus vulnérables. »

Je suis en accord avec cette pétition, monsieur le Président. Je vais la signer et demander à Leo de l'amener aux greffiers.

TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Phil McNeely: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is presently an interprovincial crossings environmental assessment study under way to locate a new bridge across the Ottawa River east of the downtown of Ottawa;

"Whereas the province of Ontario is improving the 174/417 split and widening Highway 417 from the split to Nicholas at an estimated cost of $220 million;

"Whereas that improvement was promised to and is urgently needed by the community of Orléans and surrounding areas;

"Whereas the federal government has moved almost 5,000 RCMP jobs from the downtown to Barrhaven;

"Whereas the federal government is moving 10,000 Department of National Defence jobs from the downtown to Kanata;

"Whereas over half these jobs were held by residents of Orléans and surrounding communities;

"Whereas the economy of Orléans will be drastically impacted by the movement of these jobs westerly;

"Whereas additional capacity will be required for residents who will have to commute across our city to those jobs;

"We, the undersigned, call on the province of Ontario and the Ministry of Transportation to do their part to stop this environmental assessment; and further, that the new road capacity being built on 174 and 417 be kept for Orléans and surrounding communities in Ontario; and further, that the province of Ontario assist the city of Ottawa in convincing the federal government to fund the light rail from Blair Road to Trim Road, which is much more needed now that 15,000 jobs accessible to residents of Orléans are moved out of reach to the west.

"We, the undersigned, support this petition and affix our names hereunder."

I support this and I send it up with Jasper.

PET GROOMERS

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the public is seeking to have all animal pet groomers registered and licensed for the safety and protection of our animals and adhere to a strict code of conduct and ethics,

"It is requested that the groomer act be law and that a public register is available online for the public to verify the qualifications of the groomer they are entrusting their pet to.

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

"For the groomer act to become law, thus bringing all groomers under one governing body, allowing for universal testing to occur, and for all groomers and pet grooming businesses to be registered as practitioners, thus elevating the education of groomers to a higher level in animal safety, hygiene and grooming skills. This will offer the public and all pet owners increased consumer confidence and, above all, animal safety and care when they are entrusted to a groomer/business for animal pet grooming."

I'm glad to pass this to Zakhar.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

Mme France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Sudbury:

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

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

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

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

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

RADIATION SAFETY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a petition here signed by some people from Ontario. It says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) is in serious need of modernization;

"Whereas the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) is not in harmony with all the following acts, regulations, guidelines and codes: the Occupational Health and Safety Act of Ontario, the radiation protection regulations of the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, the safety codes of Health Canada and the radiation protection guidelines of the International Commission on Radiological Protection;

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"Whereas dental hygienists need to be able to prescribe X-rays and to be designated as radiation protection officers in order to provide their clients with safe and convenient access to a medically necessary procedure, as is already the case in many comparable jurisdictions;

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

"To express support for the motion filed on April 17, 2012, by ... Reza Moridi, the member from Richmond Hill, that asks the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to establish a committee consisting of experts to review the Healing Arts Radiation Protection Act (1990) and its regulations, make recommendations on how to modernize this act, and bring it to 21st-century standards, so that it becomes responsive to the safety of patients and the public and to include all forms of radiation that are currently used in the health care sector for diagnostic and therapeutic purposes."

Speaker, I agree with this and will send it to you with Maya.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Hydro One Networks Inc. (Hydro One) is proposing construction of a new transformer station on a 100-acre site in Clarington, near the Oshawa-Clarington boundary;

"Whereas the site is on the Oak Ridges moraine/greenbelt;

"Whereas concerns have been raised about the environmental impacts of this development, including harm to wildlife as well as contamination of ponds, streams and the underground water supply"—aquifers;

"Whereas sites zoned for industrial and/or commercial use are the best locations for large electricity transformer stations;

"Whereas most, if not all, residents do not agree this project is needed and that, if proven to be necessary, it could be best accommodated at alternative locations such as Cherrywood or Wesleyville;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, ask that the Ontario Legislature" and the Minister of Energy, Mr. Bentley, to "support the preservation of the Oak Ridges moraine, the greenbelt and the natural environment at this site. We also ask that the Ontario Legislature require the Clarington transformer station to be built at an alternative location zoned for an industrial facility and selected in accordance with the" Environmental Protection Act and the best planning possible.

I'm please to sign and support this petition and present it to Sashin.

LITS DE BRONZAGE

Mme France Gélinas: J'ai une pétition qui me vient des gens de Nickel Belt.

« Attendu qu'il y a des preuves qui relient l'usage des lits de bronzage à l'augmentation des risques de cancer, que l'Organisation mondiale de la Santé considère les lits

de bronzage comme un cancérogène du groupe 1 et que l'usage des lits de bronzage avant l'âge de 30 ans augmente le risque de mélanome par 75 %;

« Attendu que plusieurs groupes, incluant la Société canadienne du cancer et l'Association médicale de l'Ontario, appuient l'interdiction de l'usage des lits de bronzage par les jeunes de moins de 18 ans;

« Attendu que les provinces de la Colombie-Britannique et de la Nouvelle-Écosse ont adopté des lois qui interdisent aux jeunes d'utiliser des lits de bronzage, et des gouvernements au travers le monde considèrent des lois similaires;

« Attendu qu'une grande partie de la population appuie l'augmentation de la réglementation de cette industrie, avec 83 % qui appuient l'interdiction du bronzage artificiel au moins de 18 ans »,

Ils demandent à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario « de passer une loi pour interdire l'usage des lits de bronzage aux jeunes de moins de 18 ans, sauf pour des raisons médicales ».

J'appuie cette pétition. Je vais la signer et je demande à Zakhar de l'amener aux greffiers.

SENIORS' HEALTH SERVICES

Mr. Jim McDonell: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Residential Tenancies Act protects tenants in dwellings and long-term-care homes from sudden and unfair increases to their rent; and

"Whereas ancillary costs such as the provision of meals and other services in a long-term-care facility are not subject to the jurisdiction of said act; and

"Whereas there have been episodes of repeated, large and unjustified increases to the stated costs of meal provision in long-term-care facilities in Cornwall and area; and

"Whereas residents do not have a say in the procurement and administration of meals and other services provided by the facility, nor can they opt out of such services when notified of an increase in charges, being thus committed to a 'take it or leave it' choice;

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

"(1) To instruct the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing to enact regulations ensuring fairness, protection and choice for residents of long-term-care facilities that provide any other necessary service such as, but not limited to, meals and personal assistance at extra cost to their residents;

"(2) To instruct the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care to undertake a comprehensive review of the administration of long-term-care facilities with respect to the provision of services other than lodging that involve an extra charge to residents."

I agree with the petition and will be signing it. I'm passing it off to page Leo.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

TRANSPARENCY IN GOVERNMENT BILLS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE DES PROJETS DE LOI ÉMANANT DU GOUVERNEMENT

Mr. Harris moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 109, An Act respecting government bills / Projet de loi 109, Loi concernant les projets de loi émanant du gouvernement.

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

Mr. Michael Harris: I must say, it's quite an honour to have the opportunity to debate my first private member's bill in this House.

I'd like to start where I left off at my press conference this morning, by talking a little bit about why I believe in this House. We need to work together to make government more accountable to the people of Ontario.

I'm sure all members have heard from their constituents before, that government needs to be more transparent. It's something I hear from my constituents in Kitchener–Conestoga and from Ontarians across the province all the time. After I first talked about my bill on 570 News in Waterloo region back in June, I had many residents come to me and say that they are fed up with the lack of openness in government decision-making. Unfortunately, the current accountability deficit with the Liberal government has even caused some Ontarians to give up on the political system altogether. In fact, recently I had a gentleman tell me that he stopped voting because he feels that, no matter what he or other members of the community do, the government will continue to spend money with no forethought and withhold critical information to assessing the financial impact that new laws will have on the public.

I think it's really important to note that these comments aren't just idle grumblings; they're legitimate concerns that have been developing over the last nine years. Unfortunately, since 2003, Ontarians have witnessed the Liberal government waste billions of dollars on scandals and pet projects like Ornge, eHealth, the feed-in tariff program and cancelled gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville. With all this waste and corruption, many Ontarians now believe our political system is broken. And with voter turnout at less than 50% in the general election last year, I hope you all can agree that we need to change the way we do things here at Queen's Park.

I know there are some people who are comfortable just keeping business as usual, and some may even feel it's unnecessary to provide more information online, analyzing the costs and benefits of government legis-

lation. In fact, when I first introduced Bill 109 in June, I had some members of the media tell me that the public already has opposition parties, reporters and columnists to analyze and assess government legislation in order to determine what's important and what's not.

Don't get me wrong; I'm flattered and pleased that the media has so much faith in the opposition MPPs, and themselves, to hold the government to account. But I utterly reject the notion that it's somehow unnecessary to provide Ontarians with greater access to information about government decision-making. Just because your car is running doesn't mean you don't take it in for a tune-up, and just because we already have checks on government authority doesn't mean we don't need any more.

As elected representatives, we all know that a major part of building a robust democracy consists of providing everyone with a meaningful opportunity to contribute to the political process in a society. We know that an educated, engaged and politically active public is the best protection against waste, corruption, incompetence and scandal in government. But this goal is difficult to achieve when a large portion of the population doesn't have the tools necessary to effectively assess the costs and benefits of proposed government legislation. That's why I tabled the Transparency in Government Bills Act: because I believe this bill takes the critical first steps to re-engage Ontarians in the political process by requiring the government to provide accessible information online about each government bill. My bill, if passed, would require the government to explain to the Ontario public the financial, economic, social and environmental implications of its bills.

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We also have to start acknowledging that we live in a technological age where people are relying less on traditional sources of information and turning more to the Web to do their own research before making big decisions like sending a son or daughter to school, purchasing a new home or starting a new business. Unfortunately, though, they'll find very little information online about proposed laws that will affect the livelihood of their families and businesses, either because the government hasn't released its own research, or it hasn't actually conducted a proper analysis.

You know, before I was elected, I worked in the private sector at Honeywell. I can tell you that we didn't make a single business decision without first carefully examining the costs and benefits. Whether we were hiring new employees, purchasing new equipment or investing in new markets, we took the time to make sure that every decision was sound and would benefit the company. Since I got to Queen's Park, I have to say that I've been surprised to see that the government doesn't do a similar analysis when enacting new laws that will cost Ontario families and businesses billions of dollars.

Take the Green Energy Act, for example. The Liberal government was in such a panic to rush this particular bill through the House that it neglected to do any due diligence whatsoever. And you don't have to take just my word for it. Last year, the Auditor General found that under the Green Energy Act, "billions of dollars were committed to renewable energy without fully evaluating the impact, the trade-offs, and the alternatives through a comprehensive business-case analysis."

Do you know what else the Auditor General found? That every green job that's created results in the loss of two to four jobs in other industries.

These problems stem from the Green Energy Act itself. As the Auditor General points out, "the minister essentially had the authority to direct the OPA, which minimized the need for an analysis of different policy options and an assessment of the cost-effectiveness of alternative approaches."

Mr. Speaker, I do more cost-benefit analysis looking at the menu at Swiss Chalet than the government does on significant pieces of legislation like the Green Energy Act. Clearly, the Liberal government didn't weigh the costs and benefits of this act, and now Ontarians have been left with billions of dollars of waste, thousands of outstanding FIT contracts and a green energy sector built on unrealistic and unsustainable expectations.

A thorough cost-benefit assessment should have been conducted before the Green Energy Act was ever tabled, so that opposition parties, businesses, municipalities and the public could have helped troubleshoot some of the potential problems right from the start. Let's just be honest: We know full well that if there's no requirement to assess how new laws will affect Ontarians, the Liberal government won't do it.

But I'm not finished, Mr. Speaker. Let's take a look at another example of Liberal legislation that underwent absolutely no cost-benefit analysis. Three years ago, when the Premier and practically the entire Liberal caucus were planning to impose a needless carbon tax on Ontarians, the Liberal government backtracked and chose to use a much more covert way of introducing carbon pricing in Ontario by laying the foundation for a cap-and-trade scheme.

After signing on to a binational agreement, called the Western Climate Initiative, with several American states, the Liberal government established a cap-and-trade system when it amended the Environmental Protection Act to authorize the "making of regulations relating to emissions trading." It didn't take long for the government to create a new regulation that specifies that certain industries must annually report their emissions to the government if they release 25,000 tonnes or more of greenhouse gases each year.

Just in April, in fact, the environment minister confirmed that the Liberals are forging ahead with their cap-and-trade scheme even after every US state except California pulled out of their carbon pricing plans under the WCI due to concerns that carbon pricing would impede economic growth and kill job creation.

That hasn't stopped Ontario and Quebec from moving forward, though. In fact, Quebec has already begun to fully implement its cap-and-trade scheme, and it plans to

raise $2.7 billion in new revenue from businesses in the province. Despite the financial gravity and potential economic consequences of this plan, when I asked the finance minister during estimates committee in July if he's ever evaluated the cost of the Liberals' cap-and-trade scheme, he said no. In fact, he wasn't even aware that cap and trade was part of the Liberal government's policy.

I have to be honest: I find it absolutely crazy that the Liberal government would table and pass legislation that would cost Ontario businesses billions of dollars without conducting a proper cost-benefit assessment.

My bill would provide Ontarians with the additional protection against bad government policy. Bill 109 would require that the government assess how its laws would also affect Ontario's competitiveness. Let me tell you, the Liberal government wouldn't have had to go very far to hear from businesses who believe the cap and trade would cripple their profitability and send more jobs overseas.

I know I don't have too much time, but I also want to talk a little about two other important provisions in the bill.

First, Bill 109 would require the government to also assess how new legislation would overlap or conflict with municipal bylaws and federal laws. If you read Don Drummond's report, you'll have seen the part dealing with the legislation and regulatory overlap of the provincial and federal environmental assessment processes, as we all want to protect the environment for our generation and generations to come. If my bill were in effect, we would have caught the duplications between the provincial and federal EA processes before they even happened, and protected our environment in a way that doesn't inhibit economic growth.

Finally, my bill requires that government policy be science-based. For far too long, the Liberal government has pushed science aside to pass ideological legislation that appeases certain interest groups but isn't in the collective interests of Ontarians. If my bill were in effect, this would stop too.

The bottom line is, Ontarians want to know up front what the government has coming down the pike before they get hit with new taxes, regulations and other unintended consequences. That's why I'm calling on all members of this Legislature to take a stand with me today and vote in favour of greater transparency in government decision-making, so Ontarians can have a clear idea of how new government legislation will affect their health, their pocketbook, their businesses and their environment.

I look forward to hearing what the other members of this Legislature have to say.

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

Mr. Jonah Schein: First, I want to congratulate the member from Kitchener–Conestoga for his first private member's bill here today.

I will be supporting this bill, and I think that the member is speaking to aspirations of, I would assume, most people in the House, which is that we have good public policy that has proper scrutiny and transparency. I think this is the best element of a Progressive Conservative tradition, where people acknowledge that people want accountability with their tax dollars. We are responsible for that money within this House, and it's our duty to do that, and I think there's nothing at all wrong with that.

I think that, in some ways, it's a matter of how things actually go on in this House as opposed to legislating it, as this bill wants to do. I think that many of the parts of this bill actually already happen here. If you read the preamble of a bill, it already explains the purpose of the legislation. But nevertheless, I think that it's worthy to try to make this place work better and make it more accountable.

I think many new members in this House have real concerns about a lack of transparency here, and about, as the member said, a lack of faith within our communities on how this place works for them, so I think we owe it to ourselves and to our communities to make this place work better.

I do have somewhat of a concern, though. I think what we do see here in this House too often is short-sighted public policy, the kind of public policy that might take into account costs but only short-term costs, and I think we all pay the price for that in the long run. I think what we need to do, when we evaluate a bill, is look at the long-term cost implications. Those are health and environment implications, and ultimately those are dollar implications as well.

When I look around at some of the public policy that's made—sometimes we're told we don't have the resources to invest in public transit. I live in a city, Toronto, that's 20 years behind when it comes to public transit. An investment in public transit would pay for itself year after year. We hear that, whether that's health officials telling us that or the board of trade that says we lose $6 billion in productivity each year due to gridlock. We know that it will cost something in the short term to invest in something like public transit, but in the long term, we all benefit from that.

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With this bill, I would like to see that we add that element in here, that we look at the long-term costs. There are other regions that are doing this, that are taking in the health impacts of legislation. When we look at something like welfare in this province, which is abysmal, where we expect people—who are out of work due to no fault of their own because they cannot find employment—to live off of $600 a month, we know that we're paying that back in health costs. We know that people are getting sick. We should know that investing in the first place in our social programs will save us in the long run in terms of health costs. So I do hope that, going forward, when we look at this bill, we'll be trying to

make an effort to look at both the short-term costs and the long-term costs.

I'm going to share the time with my friends over here, but again I want to congratulate the member and express my support for the bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Etobicoke North.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

At the outset, of course, it's a privilege and responsibility to rise to speak on Bill 109, tentatively titled the Transparency in Government Bills Act. I would congratulate and commend my colleague on the opposition bench there, Mr. Harris, MPP for Kitchener–Conestoga, for his presentation of his first private member's bill.

I've had the opportunity to study the bill. I must say that it was a somewhat rapid event, since the letter that was distributed by my colleague was actually longer than the bill itself. Having said that, I would just like to note that the bill actually calls for a lot of additional information, and I'll speak a little bit about that in detail.

I'd also like to commend my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga, because I know that his desire for transparency in government is something that he espoused when he ran for the Liberal nomination in 2007 against one Leeanna Pendergast. I know that these are the types of issues that you've espoused for quite some time. And at the outset, as he mentioned himself, I'd also just like to congratulate him on his time well spent at Honeywell—as you'll know, Speaker, the manufacturers of Ontario's smart meters.

In any case, a lot of information that Mr. Harris's bill seeks to unearth, I believe, Speaker, as you'll know and as members of this Legislature will know, is already available through committee and public disclosure processes, as well as, of course, during the legislative debate. I appreciate that the member is a recent acquisition of Queen's Park and may not be entirely familiar with all the various policies and procedures. For example, any member of this Legislature can ask for technical briefing on emerging and certainly important legislation, and I must say that our government, to its credit, has an extraordinary record of being very accommodative to these types of requests.

Peut-être qu'il n'est pas au courant de toutes les politiques et procédures du Parlement. Tout membre peut demander une séance d'information technique sur la législation émergente. Notre gouvernement a un grand record d'être très accommodant à ces demandes.

The bill would effectively create an extra layer of government and red tape. It does not account for the extra staff and resources that would be required for the extra layer of government.

Notre gouvernement est déterminé à la reddition des comptes et à la transparence. Nous avons élargi la portée de la liberté d'information et le gouvernement a déjà démontré un fort engagement envers la transparence et la responsabilité dans les domaines visés par ce projet de loi d'initiative parlementaire.

The member opposite has referred a number of times to various media scrums, media interviews and media availability sessions, that he's had with the press, and I'd like to just quote from some of those. He was asked, for example, directly about this bill by one of the members of the press, I believe from the Toronto Star, "Isn't assessing and analyzing the impact of legislation the opposition's job?" The initial response from the member from Kitchener–Conestoga was, "Absolutely, it is."

Yet here he is asking everyone else to do his research and consultation for him. He has presented us with a bill about costing future bills, but this bill, ironically, is itself uncosted. He's asking the government essentially, it seems, to prepare his arguments for and against the legislation rather than consulting with constituents, interest groups and affected organizations.

I'll be more specific, Speaker. On June 12, 2012, at a media availability at which were present CTV, the Toronto Star and other media, he was asked specifically, "Shouldn't you be analyzing [legislation]? I mean, if the government produced a report" saying that their legislation was great, "what would be the purpose of that?" This is a transcript of the recording, not a direct verbatim printout. But in any case, my colleague opposite said, "In fact, a lot of the government bills—they always do this research, but they're not making it public. So we say it should be mandatory that the information is public, posted online—I mean, instead of filed away in the library downstairs where average, you know, citizens of Ontario don't have regular access to the information." And then the press replied, "Isn't it your job … to analyze this in committee? And doesn't this all come out at committee—the costs and everything else about the bill? Doesn't the legislation contain most of the information you need to know?" And so on.

Now, it's interesting as well, Speaker, that in my colleague's desire for accountability, of course, one cannot help but reflect a little bit about the accountability displayed by the PC caucus and the PC government over time. For example, the member recently, in a press release of his own in his riding, said, "The Liberals are moving too slowly on the public sector side. They're doing nothing at all to boost the rest of the economy…." Yet that of course was the focus of his particular press release, not this particular bill. But I would draw his attention to openly, publicly available information, that the Liberal government has created something over 120,000 new jobs in 2011. That, by the way, in terms of transparency and accountability, seemed to be a missing statistic from his particular press release.

But let's return specifically to Bill 109, the bill at hand, which, by the way, Speaker, has nothing to do with job creation or health care or education. Now, despite the focus here of this particular bill—as I say, it does not create a single private sector job. It doesn't open a single hospital bed or educate even one student.

So I move now, for example, to some of, let's say, the noble history of accountability in the PC caucus. I quote, Speaker, for example, from the Toronto Star, October

2003: "Outgoing Tories Outright"—and there's an "L" word, Speaker. I dare not use it, dare not name it here, because it's likely unparliamentary. But it's with reference to the $5.6-billion intransparent, opaque deficit that the Tories left Ontarians with.

In the St. Catharines Standard, more close to home: "Tories Slammed for Leaving $5.6-Billion Deficit"; in the Ottawa Sun, "Tories Left $5.6-Billion Deficit: Auditor Uncovers 'Shocking' Debt"; in the North Bay Nugget, "Province Faces $5.6-Billion Deficit," and "It exemplifies a history of mismanagement and misrepresentation" and non-transparent government.

Speaker, that's the Tory experience and demonstration of transparency and accountability. I would suggest respectfully, through you, to the people of Ontario and certainly to my colleagues opposite, that the Liberal government, on the other hand, is not only committed to accountability, but we have continuously improved where the previous governments have failed.

Le projet de loi d'initiative parlementaire obligerait le gouvernement à investir des sommes considérables dans la technologie de nouveaux rapports, de nouvelles ressources, et de créer de lourdes procédures bureaucratiques qui ne seraient pas d'améliorer la transparence et de reddition des comptes existants qui ont déjà été mis en oeuvre. Ce projet de loi sur les coûts pour les autres projets de loi non-financés et reniés.

I'll give you some examples, Speaker, in terms of the accountability and transparency record of this government over the past several years. We've broadened the scope of freedom-of-information legislation. We've brought publicly funded universities, colleges and hospitals under FOI legislation. We've brought the energy sector back into the fold—including Hydro One, Ontario Power Generation—under, again, access to privacy legislation in 2005, and local public utilities back in 2004. The previous PC government removed Hydro One and Ontario Power Generation from the domain of FOI legislation. That is their record of accountability.

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Specifically, as I mentioned, this bill is uncosted, which is of course particularly ironic as its very few sentences are regarding costing of other government bills. But this would require the government to invest considerable new funds in reporting technology, resources and bureaucratic processes that would not improve existing transparency and accountability measures that are already in effect. I would submit that this bill likely has little to do in the way of accountability and transparency.

Here's how this place is ideally supposed to work and how members are therefore invited to collect their thoughts, their research, their points with regard to particular legislation and not have the government itself spoon-feed: One has recourse to caucus research, the legislative library, legislative counsel, external agencies, the press, your own constituents, and stakeholders. All of these come together, generally speaking, at committee work. If that itself is not adequate in the opinion of the opposite members, then they are entitled, as members of Parliament according to parliamentary privilege, to ask the government of the day on emerging legislation to actually provide them with a ministerial briefing, and they can get into as technical detail as possible.

I would suggest that this is simply adding a new layer of bureaucracy to review and analyze proposed legislation, which ultimately is the responsibility of Her Majesty's loyal opposition.

Le gouvernement libéral a fait preuve d'une volonté de renforcer la responsabilisation et la transparence, tout en créant de bons emplois dans le secteur privé et un climat qui fait de l'Ontario le deuxième emplacement le plus souhaitable en Amérique du Nord pour les investissements. Nous allons continuer à ce tout en protégeant les gains que nous avons faits dans les soins de santé et l'éducation.

Our government has shown not only a willingness to enhance accountability and transparency, but with reference to Bill 109, I think that most, if not all, of these particular measures are already incorporated within the ebb and flow and the cut and thrust of parliamentary procedure.

Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Président.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: First, I want to acknowledge and congratulate the member from Kitchener–Conestoga on his first private member's bill. I'm sure it will be the first of many. I see him, on a daily basis, taking serious regard for his constituents, and this whole focus of his bill is to show respect to the taxpayer of Ontario.

I think it's important to also put some of the things in the context of what is actually going on in the Legislature today. There was a point raised today reminding all of us of what Premier McGuinty was elected on: that he will make government business your business. In fact, what he has done is make it more expensive for people to live in Ontario. That's the only thing he has done. He has increased spending by 70%, so we're paying more and getting less. It's not just on your electricity bill; it's on everything the government does. We often refer to it as government by regulation. People can't do so much today, as has been mentioned on the electricity file, as just one example.

I also think it's important, in the context of today, that this morning, the Speaker—and I'm reading the note—ruled, "I am therefore satisfied that a prima facie case of privilege has been established." In fact, you could say that he has accused the Minister of Energy of contempt of the Legislature. In the context of that, that doesn't refer specifically to Bill 109, but in fact, Bill 109 is all about accountability and respect for the Legislature and the process here.

That was about issues that were raised in committee. The Liberal government members in the committee of estimates did everything in their power to shield the minister, to block or form a wall or a barrier to having access to information about the closure of both the

Oakville and Mississauga gas-fired plants. The issue is out there. There's just one example, amongst others—I'm sure some of the other speakers here will speak to it—that would probably be closing in on $1 billion alone.

The numbers aren't in; they won't give them to us. But $300 million is one of the numbers; $190 million is another number and there are cases before the courts, so we won't see—those will come under the Attorney General's ministry engaging law firms to defend the government's position on the mishandling of the energy file completely. What the consumer sees today on their bill are the highest electricity costs in North America, right here in Ontario under Premier McGuinty's watch.

But there are four primary concerns on the bill that are not large but are imposing. It tries to clarify the problem that the legislation of the government is trying to resolve. Also, it requires the costs to implement, and it also outlines or encourages the government to outline who pays, and also and more importantly, how it is measured at the end of the day. How do we measure the success of the bill? That's clearly what accountability is, and it stems back to some of the other legislation that my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga, Mr. Michael Harris—I think we see it every day here, every week here. I think of some that aren't quite as popular. The Clean Water Act is one. The cosmetic pesticide ban is another one. I know this afternoon Mr. Klees will speak about Ornge, I'm sure. The Environmental Protection Act; the Transparency in Government Act, which really overwrote one of the protection acts that we had on transparency ourselves.

But one of the ones that affects my constituents more importantly than any is the Green Energy Act, Bill 150. The moratorium on wind that we suggested during the election—now the federal government has done that. The government is forging ahead, expunging the powers of municipal government to have no input whatsoever, ignoring the environment, ignoring everything and just forging ahead with unaffordable energy.

I'm just going to say a couple more things. The one that really affects me is the slots-at-racetracks program: 60,000 people in rural Ontario are being cut to pieces by this legislation. I commend the member from Kitchener–Conestoga on his effort to bring accountability to this Legislature.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I do want to commend the member from Kitchener–Conestoga on his attempt to try to bring a bill that would in effect legislate good legislation, and so it's laudable. I'm not sure we can do it, but it's laudable.

There are some goods and some negatives that flow out of this legislation. For example, his suggestion of having or moving towards an evidence-based decision-making process in law is a good one. The problem is the politics side of it. When I look at Mr. Harper at the federal level, he often cites evidence-based decision-making when it suits him, but when it doesn't, he disregards it. The problem with legislation is that you can use it to justify what you want or not use it when you don't want to do certain things. And the problem with politics is that it often gets in the way of good legislation. That's why I argue that it's difficult to legislate good legislation—because of politics.

An example: Quebec has had a law since 2002, the Public Health Act, requiring that health impact assessments be used to encourage collaboration among departments to maximize the positive health benefits of laws and regulations. However, in 2008 a review of the Quebec health impact assessments concluded that the assessments were largely ignored by governments in power. Do you understand what I'm getting at, member from Kitchener-Conestoga? You could pass a law requiring you to do something, and when the review was done, lo and behold, we realize, "Holy God, we're not abiding by our own laws." And so you can pass a law, but who makes us accountable? It's the citizens of Ontario that ultimately make us accountable to those laws, good or bad. In the end they put an X beside your name, affiliated to that party, and they finally say, "Nah, we don't like you anymore." That's how they do it. You generally have to rely on good citizens to make their wise decisions about bad governments, and they usually get it right. Usually after two terms, they get it right. Sometimes they fail and require three terms to get it right, but they get it right. Rarely does a government do it right for four terms—I dare say, three terms—rarely, unless they're really, really politically smart. But I don't find many politicians in this country that smart, or indeed anywhere in the world, although I used to be a great admirer of Bismarck. I loved the way he would cause crises to solve them and get re-elected each and every time—a very clever man. But not many politicians are that good.

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I raise the issues of evidence-based decision-making as sounding solidly good, but again, it depends on the politics of the government. Mr. Harper fired hundreds of good environmental scientists, the very people who would give us evidence-based reports on environmental effects that are taking place in this country and the world. He fired the very people who could collect the evidence. To me, it doesn't make any sense, but that's what he did. That's but one example that comes to mind quickly. The point is, politicians will do whatever they want to, to serve their own agenda.

Some of the failures of the bill, or at least the shortcomings, are that the bill focuses on negative impacts but doesn't talk about the potential benefits of a particular issue. For example, the Conservatives often talk about the economic impacts of the Green Energy Act, or indeed the cap and trade, as negative short-term impacts of that, while they ignore the long-term costs of not taking action, i.e., the health and environmental costs of failing to shift toward a renewable energy grid or the longer term costs of failing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. While you focus on the short-term economic impacts,

you don't look at the overall long term of not taking action, or the costs of not taking action. Your bill doesn't take that balance into account, as I believe it should.

The bill requires information on economic and financial impacts, but no information on other impacts—social or equity impacts. The member from Etobicoke North quite correctly makes the point that this bill would probably require additional staff—and therefore cost to government, and therefore cost to the public—to be able to do the very things the member from Kitchener–Conestoga speaks about. Some Conservatives say, no, the existing staff could do this. I understand your argument. There are a whole lot of people out there saying that as we cut staff, services are going to be reduced, and a whole lot of citizens say, "I can't get the service I used to be able to get 15, 20 years ago." The reason for that is that staff have been fired and the current staff that exists is overworked. That's an argument I make. I know the Tories will make theirs, obviously.

There are some positive things in the bill, but I really do believe it has to be balanced out by other arguments. That's why I don't mind this bill going to second reading and to committee debate, because then people like me can make certain arguments, others will make others and you'll have a healthy debate. I'm okay with that.

I do believe that the only way to make politicians accountable is to have informed, politicized—not necessarily in a way that is ideologically connected to a party, but politicized, informed citizenry who can make any political party accountable. An informed citizenry can demand accountability and can demand transparency of any political party in government. That's what we should be working toward: informing the public, making sure they're educated, making sure they're engaged and making sure they make us accountable.

Often my argument against the grade 10 course where you have a half-course on civics and the other half-course on careers is that it's simply not the way to get our young people to be politically informed. If you want an informed student body that become active citizen participants in the affairs of the state, we need to engage young people with more just a half-course in civics. How could they understand politics with a half-course and a half-course in careers? We've got to change that.

And they would be involved if we added to the curriculum not one full course of civics but indeed more, so that they would understand the political impacts of the decisions we make on their lives. Once they understand that, they will make us accountable, and it doesn't matter who's in power. That's what we should work on, is my suggestion to the member on how we bring about greater accountability and transparency in the affairs of the state.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I'm pleased to join in the debate on this important bill brought forward by my colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga. It's important at a number of levels. I hear some issues being raised by previous speakers, and I suppose my colleague will agree as well that the bill in its current form is probably not perfect. That's why we want to see it go to committee, where we can all participate in making it better.

Actually, the member from Trinity–Spadina makes reference to a very important point, and that is that the analysis of a bill should also include what the positive benefits are in the long term, so that we truly do have a full picture of what the long-term benefits and the short-term benefits—and perhaps the costs, short- as well as long-term—are related to any legislation that comes forward.

I would like to focus on a matter that I think is really perhaps at the heart of what my colleague is attempting to achieve through this. I'd like to read from a paper entitled Transparency in Government Operations. This is a paper that was put out by the International Monetary Fund, and it speaks specifically to the issue of transparency by government, or the lack thereof. I'd like to read just one paragraph here. And I recommend this document to my colleagues; I think we would all benefit from reading this paper. It says, "A deliberate lack of fiscal transparency is often attributable to a government's attempt to escape public scrutiny of its behaviour—especially in the run-up to elections—to avoid or postpone possible adverse reaction from the electorate and from financial markets, on which it depends for political support and deficit financing, respectively.

"Pressures to engage in non-transparent practices are likely to mount during periods of fiscal stress. Rather than take unpopular corrective action, governments may resort to such practices when facing difficulties in meeting near-term budget targets."

Speaker, I think that by bringing this bill forward my colleague has made a very important point to this government and to this Legislature, that when dealing with important legislation coming forward, members of the Legislature deserve to know what the implications of that legislation are. The public deserves to know what the cost of that legislation or the cost of that particular policy is going to be. One of the reasons that we have so much cynicism about what happens here and in other Parliaments is because of the lack of transparency and the lack of accountability, and so I think this bill will do much more than just simply give us better legislation and better public policy; I think, at the heart of it, it will restore confidence in policy, in politicians and in the institution of Parliament.

1420

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

Mr. Todd Smith: It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 109 put forward by my good friend from Kitchener–Conestoga and my seatmate as well, a very energetic new member of the PC caucus. We have 16 of them over here who are very energetic and trying to make changes in this government that's nine years too long in power.

As the PC critic for small business and red tape, I can't tell you how many meetings I've been at with businesses and trade organizations and others, and they've

told me about the levels of regulation that have been imposed by this government over the last nine years without any consideration on existing standards that are already in place.

Just from my conversations with business leaders—and I just had a meeting about an hour ago with members of the Ontario Home Builders' Association in my office upstairs—they say that this may be the single, most useful provision in this bill in that it will eliminate the overlap that currently exists if we can harmonize regulations across levels of government—that includes federal and municipal levels of government too—and end what they like to call "scope creep." That refers to ministries or agencies that exceed their initial scope of their regulatory authority, and that will drastically reduce the amount of red tape in the province.

I had the chance over the summer as well to meet with small business leaders in 15 different ridings across Ontario, and the message I got was really simple. We need a regulatory regime in the province that makes sense, because the current one is making it increasingly difficult for business—small businesses, home builders, forestry workers—you name it. It's just getting more and more difficult because of the regulation on their backs. It's like a 380,000-pound piano that people and the construction workers are carrying around. That's because there's 380,000 different pieces of provincial regulation on the books here. That doesn't include municipal and federal, and there's a lot of overlap that exists.

The other particularly strong provision in this bill is the detailed summary of the financial costs that new legislation will have on municipalities, individuals, businesses and our books here at Queen's Park. I take issue with what the member from Trinity–Spadina said, that it's going to create more red tape because we're going to have to hire more workers. There's been some 300,000 government workers who have been hired over the McGuinty government tenure, especially in the last few years, and I can tell you that a lot of them aren't doing anything over in their offices right now at the corner of Wellesley and Bay or wherever they might be scattered across the province. We need to put them to work, and we need to get them working on these types of things to ensure that we're not costing businesses money because, at the end of the day, it's these private sector businesses that are out there trying to do their work, trying to add to the economy, trying to create jobs in the province of Ontario, and because government is getting in the way and putting up barriers at every turn, it's impossible for them to do so.

I just want to take a second to mention the member from Etobicoke North as well. Hopefully, he has the time to do his homework and correct his record. I can't correct his record for him, but he should do a little bit of homework and maybe correct his record before the day is done.

I want to go back quickly to talk about the bill. These legislated measures exist in other provinces and jurisdictions around North America, and they have proven that when you do legislate these kinds of things, there's an overall decrease in the amount of red tape. Again, that's how we can grow businesses and create jobs. We've lost hundreds of thousands over the last nine years because of scope creep in Ontario.

Thank you, Speaker. Congratulations to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga.

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

The member for Kitchener–Conestoga has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd first like to thank the member for Davenport for his support of the bill. Your comments about assessing the short- and long-term costs are duly noted.

To the member for Etobicoke North, thank you for your comments, but I would rather like to address a few of the things you had mentioned. I'm not sure if you were down at the MPAC Lego party this week and, unfortunately, unable to check your facts, but I in fact ran for the Ontario PC nomination back in 2007 and then again in 2011, and became an MPP—just a point on that.

Back to the bill, though. You talked about how the ministry provides technical information, but this doesn't address my point about accessibility. Not everyone has the ability to come to Toronto for a briefing like we do. That's why I'm calling for the information to be online, so let's take a step into the 21st century.

You also talked about how MPPs should be researching and analyzing government legislation. Well, we do, but you completely missed the point of this bill. In fact, Bill 109 is for Ontarians, not just for myself and the opposition parties. We want all Ontarians to have this information so they can engage in the province's political discourse.

I find the claim about bureaucracy quite interesting, considering that Management Board of Cabinet typically, but not in all cases—especially the ones I have outlined—conducts a thorough financial examination of government bills. So there shouldn't be any extra costs with posting that information online. You would prefer, obviously, to keep Ontarians in the dark, similar to what your energy minister has been trying to do, as was reaffirmed this morning, and was lambasted for doing.

I'd like to thank my colleague from Durham, Mr. Klees from Newmarket–Aurora and my seatmate and astute gent Mr. Todd Smith from Prince Edward–Hastings. Thank you for your time today.

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

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

Mr. Jim McDonell: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government should act to prevent a recurrence of the spending of $35.6 million paid to 8,700 of 8,900, or 98% of eligible managers and executives in Ontario's public service as a bonus on top of their salaries during a

period of fiscal restraint to avoid worsening Ontario's fiscal crises, through the implementation of an immediate, fair and reasonable across-the-board broader public sector wage freeze, including a freeze on all bonuses paid to all public service employees, including managers and executives, for a period of no less than two years, and that any employee in the broader public service who receives a bonus within the wage and bonus freeze period, as a result of contractual agreements or other reasons shall have an amount equal to said bonus reimbursed to the employer of record from their salary for the entire duration of the wage and bonus freeze.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. McDonell has moved private member's notice of motion number 26. Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation. Mr. McDonell.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Speaker, Ontario is in trouble after nine years of this Liberal government's spending frenzy that has created a record deficit, doubled the debt and raised taxes into the stratosphere. Policies have resulted in three credit downgrades. Ontario, which was once the economic envy of Canada and North America, is now no longer competitive as a destination for investment and new business growth.

The McGuinty reign of broken promises, bad economic policies and the return of favour-for-contribution legislation has resulted in the highest power rates, the highest income taxes and the highest property taxes in North America; and a debt for our children and grandchildren that is twice the per capita debt of California, which many say is bankrupt, and, as warned by their economist Don Drummond, is on the way to three times that, or $30,000 for every man, woman and child in this province. Truly strong action is required to save our future and right the mess this government has created.

Tim Hudak and the PC caucus have repeatedly called upon the McGuinty Liberals to implement an integrated and comprehensive plan to rein in reckless overspending and kick-start the economy to create private jobs. Today, I table a motion requesting the McGuinty government to immediately act to legislate a mandatory two-year public sector wage freeze, saving up to $2 billion annually. It's the most effective thing this government can do right now to start Ontario back on the road to recovery.

With over 4,000 collective agreements, it is the only sensible plan of action this government can take. The current action of dealing with public service contracts one by one gives raises to some while getting tough with others. It's not practical, it's not smart, it's not fair and it doesn't make sense.

1430

Every day, private sector businesses are sacrificing just to stay afloat, with many of them not making it through the worst recession since the Great Depression. And those that are still here must navigate through minefields of the McGuinty government's failed policies on high energy costs, high taxes and a sea of red tape: barriers to prosperity. Adding to their woes, the world's largest economies are continuing to slow. We must take bold steps to protect our economy and the social programs that we hold so dearly.

A public sector freeze will allow this government to direct our scarce resources to key strategic areas that will help Ontario weather the economic uncertainty. The public sector has escaped the downturn relatively unscathed and enjoyed healthy increases not seen by the private sector. It must be part of the solution or face the same consequences as businesses continue to fail and government revenues continue to plummet.

Let's remember that more than 55% of the massive tax increases instituted by this McGuinty government—the largest increases in Ontario's proud history—have not gone to new transit systems, new roads, new hospitals, new long-term beds or any other badly needed infrastructure. They've not gone to economic development or health care or to the municipalities that desperately need help. They're not even part of the dollars we've seen wasted on scandals like eHealth, the green energy projects, Ornge or the two cancelled power plants in Mississauga and Oakville—we saw today how this government is still trying to refuse to give these documents back to the people of Ontario so they can see just how much was spent in these seat-saving decisions—or any other government waste that the McGuinty Liberals are now famous for. No, this 55% in tax increases has gone to public service wages. So the public sector needs to be part of the solution.

Under our plan, a PC government would take immediate and fair action in stopping the picking of winners and losers. There would be no exceptions. Without this legislation, we continue to see wage increases and bonuses handed out to the so-called winners, such as the CUPE power workers, who recently received almost a 9% increase. Then there's the 98%, or 8,700, of government bureaucrats who got bonuses of up to 14% of their salaries. Just the bonuses, which added up to $35.6 million, would pay for over 17,000 MRIs in a health care system where people are waiting up to eight months for such tests.

Truly, we see a lack of commitment by this McGuinty government. Then we see the Liberal government pick on the teachers and the college professors with a newfound conviction. Coincidentally, it was just in time for the recent by-elections, when they wanted to change the page and start to look tough. It's not fair and it's not right. As we must all share in the solution, the Liberals refuse to stand up to union bosses who helped bankroll their re-election campaigns using compulsory union dues.

Dalton McGuinty claimed there was a wage freeze in the March budget, but clearly we see that there is no such thing, as he continues to give out increases ad hoc.

These are bold and controversial ideas, but under the status quo, 600,000 Ontarians are unemployed. We've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs in nine years while adding 300,000 bureaucratic government jobs. Last month we lost another 57,000 net new jobs, and the Premier still has no plan. Our unemployment rate has been higher than the national average for almost six

years. It's time for a new path forward with new and bold ideas to make Ontario competitive and a target for new and growing businesses once again, just like we used to be. We need a growing economy across Ontario to drive local prosperity, private sector job creation and growth.

The Auditor General showed how this Premier's pet green energy projects and outrageous subsidies are driving up the cost of energy for every Ontario family, including the 600,000 unemployed, who can least afford it, and including those on social assistance, who see their social payments evaporate into higher and higher energy costs, costs that they have no choice but to pay.

Following that, the government's hand-picked economist, Don Drummond, delivered the final blow to the Liberal delusion of an unlimited spending bonanza. The numbers spell out the depth of the trouble that this government has dug this province into. We're on the way to a $30-billion deficit, $411 billion in debt, and the Liberals have no plan to change the course.

If you can envision water going down the drain, it goes around in circles. Around and around it goes until it disappears in a black hole. That's what's happening to our tax dollars. And this is their position, which can be summarized as, "Steady as she goes."

Let's put it into perspective. This government is borrowing today at such a rate that in the time it takes the Premier to stand up in question period and claim that we're on the right track, an Ontarian has borrowed the equivalent of his average gross yearly salary or, to put it another way, $1.8 million an hour. When we reach that $411-billion cumulative debt, every man, woman and child in this province will owe our creditors $30,000. That tally does not include the unfunded liabilities that they've also driven up, whether it be the WSIB, that is now at $19.7 billion, or the public service pensions that he's refused to address, the huge liabilities that—someday, and not too long in the future, the pensioners of this province are going to find out that the money is gone, and at 71 or older, I don't think they want to go back to work, but that would be their option.

When Moody's downgraded Ontario's credit rating, ridiculing this government's claims of good fiscal stewardship, one of their cited concerns was weak metrics. In layman's terms, this government doesn't know what it should measure or how it should measure it. Even if it does so, the measurements are not credible. In fact, this Minister of Finance welcomed the downgrade as a negotiating tool, as proof of the seriousness of Ontario's financial predicament, something that this McGuinty government adamantly denied just a few months before, during the general election. But I hope, for the sake of Ontario, that it wasn't because he didn't know.

We have an example of this sloppiness in the Auditor General's report on the green energy boondoggle. When the government did one of its rare cost-benefit assessments before rushing headlong into a policy bandwagon, the auditor dismissed every single one as too optimistic or built on assumptions that did not correspond to common sense.

On jobs, the government is buying time because it hasn't got a clue about job creation. They focused so long on killing jobs with their ill-thought-out policies, they've forgotten the real purpose of government.

But, Speaker, it shouldn't be this way. We are a province with immense resources in our ground, in our water and, most importantly, in our people, a qualified, industrious workforce that is the envy of the world. All they are expecting and demanding is a government that makes sound decisions based on the economic realities of the current global situation.

I ask this House to do the right thing, do what's right for the people of Ontario: Put the province and them first and support my resolution.

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

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to say from the outset that I like the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, but I disagree with him in the way that he's trying to achieve the savings. I disagree with him in the way his party is trying to achieve these savings.

1440

I also want to correct him on one particular matter, because the Liberals, through Bill 115, have done exactly what you want them to do, and when you say they refuse to go after the union bosses, they did with Bill 115. Give them some credit, for God's sake. It's just not fair that they should finally do something that you admire, and then you say they're not going after the unions.

I really wanted to do the Liberals some justice and be fair to them when they do what Tories normally love to do, and that is to whack unions and union members and union leaders, who they call bosses. So God bless; you finally did what you've been wanting to do in a hurry for a long, long time: trying to achieve the balance between the right and the left. I understand.

My criticism of your party was that you had such a love-love relationship with the teachers, the teacher unions, and then you just gave it all away. You terminated that love affair when it was going so well for so long. It could have gone on, in my view, for a longer period of time, if you had but held on a little longer, held on to that love that you had. But when you decided to go after the unions—oh, my God.

And you noticed what happened in Kitchener–Waterloo. I know some of you are sad, sunken a little—politically, morally. I know that most of you walk with a Linus blanket—you know Linus with the blanket? I can see most of you guys dragging your heels in this Legislature, a bit despondent, unhappy—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Except the troopers, of course, like the member from Ottawa Centre, who's unflappable. He thinks he's going to win the election, no problemo, no matter how hard they've gone after the teachers and unions, but he's unflappable. God bless, member from Ottawa Centre.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Are you off topic now?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, I'm on topic. I was just trying to make the point that he's being unfair to the Liberals because he says that you guys refused to go after the union bosses, and I pointed out that you have done so with Bill 115.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Certainly the NDP did with the social contract.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But I would have thought that the Minister of the Environment, who has been here longer than I, would have been able to learn the lessons of so many errors that other governments have made, and clearly, I think you have; I don't know about the others, however, in terms of learning the lessons of.

So that was one correction that I wanted to make. I didn't want to be too wayward, as you might imagine. But that was one.

The other is that the member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry accuses the Liberals of being in a spending frenzy. I don't know about that. And I don't want to be too unfair, but where fairness is due—and that's where they're much closer to the Tories on this one—they have been cutting corporate taxes as well. God bless. Because I think they really want to be as close as they possibly can to the Conservatives. So they've done that.

If they have been in some frenzied activity of sorts, it's in their desire to cut corporate taxes willy-nilly, and they've done that as well as you guys. They're just as good; I can guarantee that. With that, billions of dollars have disappeared from the provincial coffers that would have allowed them, in some measured way, to keep tuition fees down that are the highest in the land. Tuition fees are the highest in the land. To be in a regular program in the humanities costs $6,300 in tuition fees—

Mr. Jim McDonell: What's the cost in engineering?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Engineering, way up.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Is it $8,000 or $9,000?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: At least. To be a doctor or a lawyer costs $20,000 in tuition fees alone—alone, I say.

And the Liberals think it's okay, because they had the advice of Premier Bob Rae on this, who did a study for the Liberals, who said, "Nah. Students gotta pay more." God bless. Students gotta pay more. Okay, then. They are. Each and every year, for the last eight years, they've been paying 5% more, whacking men and women in universities and colleges with fees they cannot afford.

So when you say they have been spending in a frenzied manner, I don't know about that. I think they've been supporting corporations in a big, big, frenzied way, and with that, they've taken so much of the supports that our young men and women desperately need—and not to talk of the seniors, who are doing so badly, with 60% of them facing poverty levels, and most of those are women.

What are we doing about that? We've introduced a renovation tax credit that allows the one-percenters to get a little tax credit for any expenditures made up to—$10,000, is it, or $15,000? That's how we help our seniors. That's the Liberal way.

I just wanted to make some corrections by way of some of the comments you've made. With respect to your motion, the NDP, through our member from Timmins–James Bay, introduced a bill last week which passed on second reading. The idea was that we wanted to deal with the bonuses that the Tories introduced a long time ago. God bless. They might have had the good intention to honour people in management who were actually excelling in their field. But I don't believe the intent of most of the Tories who were there at the time was that we should give bonuses to every manager each and every year. Surely not every manager excels to the tune of 3.3%., 3.5% or 3.6% salary increases, literally on a yearly basis. Something is not right with that. Surely Tories never intended for bonuses to be given to 98% of management in the civil service.

We recognize that some people do great work, and in that regard, some bonuses are right, fair and justifiable. But when it becomes an underhanded way of giving salary increases to everyone who's a manager, New Democrats believe that that is wrong, that it's not fair or right to so many other workers who work hard in the civil service.

We introduced a bill that we felt was the right approach to how we deal with bonuses. But a legislated, across-the-board, broader public sector wage freeze, as proposed in the motion, would, in our minds, be found clearly to be unconstitutional and would face a legal challenge. My sense is that the Tories don't mind a legal challenge, because then they could go and say to the public, "You see what's wrong with the court system? It's these judges that are appointed by Liberals and the like, that simply will not do the correct Conservative thing." That's what I suspect they would do. They would accept a legal challenge, because then they could go to their visceral-minded people who would say, "Yeah, these courts. We've got to get rid of these courts, because they're not doing the right thing."

I don't know. I tend to think courts are, generally speaking, very good in the way they make decisions, and they tend to be, in my mind, very fair, generally speaking. I think if you had a broader public sector wage freeze in the way that they propose, it would face a court challenge. When you propose to eliminate bonuses in existing employment contracts, that too is challengeable in the courts, and you would be taken to court. I know you don't care about that, but we think it's just the wrong way to do it.

That's why we proposed a well-thought-out, we think, reasonable private member's bill that would respect existing employment contracts but eliminate bonuses in all renewed or altered public sector management employment relationships. That's the way to do it.

That has gone to a legislative committee. Once we set up our committees, we hope that the government and the official opposition will work with us to make sure that that bill gets passed.

1450

It achieves, in my mind, what many are seeking: fairness in the public sector, fairness at a time when we know we are dealing with some financial difficulties, but

we're doing it respectfully and in a way that is manageable, in a way that allows for greater support within the public sector workforce and within the general public as well.

We have to be careful here. We have to do this right, and doing it right means we have to go to the people who have a little more money, as we did with our proposal, to ask those who earn over $500,000 to pay a little more. We know that some of them will try to avoid the tax; we know that. But that is the fair way to go, because when you tax people who have $500,000, they still have a whole lot of money left over to go and spend, and that's where we have to get that money. From people who get $20,000, it will not affect, overall, their spending desires.

You don't want to go after the little guy. The little guy needs each and every penny to pay the mortgage and pay rent. If we want them to spend, which is what capitalism is all about, because that consumerism contributes 60% to 70% of our overall economy—if we want them to spend, we just can't go after everyone willy-nilly; not just because it's unconstitutional, but because in some sectors, if we take away that little they have, it would affect our economies in ways that you can't imagine.

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

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: I'm very happy to get up to speak in opposition to ballot item number 55 regarding performance pay for management.

I think it's important to provide a little historical context in terms of what has happened in government, first, under the PC leadership—and I'm not here to defend their policies; that's their job. But we should really examine what has historically happened and what the record is, quite frankly, on pay for performance.

Pay for performance has been in place in the Ontario public service since the PCs created that in 1996. They implemented that for 2,000 senior managers, and then they went on to expand it for all Ontario public service managers in 2001-02, for 8,900 managers. This is when the Leader of the Opposition, Tim Hudak, was at the cabinet table. At that time, what was going on in government? The PCs were paying these bonuses and rewarding managers for closing 28 hospitals, firing 6,200 nurses, closing 5,000 hospital beds and losing six million school days.

The emergency rooms were shutting their doors to ambulances—even, in one case I know, sending a pregnant woman to deliver her baby in Buffalo.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Oh, my goodness.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Horrible. On the other hand, since the Liberals have been in government, when we have judiciously used pay for performance, it's to reward managers to do good things for the people of Ontario, such as building 23 new hospitals, hiring 11,000 nurses, building almost 600 new schools, implementing full-day kindergarten and creating—and this is very important, Speaker—121,300 new jobs in 2011.

The PCs are outraged, even though they implemented the program in the first place and expanded it. That's just a little historical context.

Moving on to the third party, I would like to quote the leader of the third party, who said, on August 30, 2012, "In tough times, everyone needs to do their share. We will completely eliminate performance pay"—not freeze—"and bonus…. This is about fairness and transparency."

The NDP has introduced a bill similar to what we're talking about from the PCs today, similar to ballot item number 56. We've been accused of doing things to win by-elections, but I think the timing of the NDP bill clearly coincided with the timing of the Kitchener–Waterloo by-election. So I just offer that up.

We already know that the Premier and the Deputy Premier, the Minister of Finance, and our side in government have already committed to reviewing pay-for-performance programs. The NDP wanted to cancel—not freeze, I believe; cancel completely—bonuses for OPS managers, the hard-working men and women who deliver our services and things that matter to Ontarians: health care, education, environment and so on. Yet the NDP opposed freezes on teachers' sick days. Which is it, Speaker?

I'm left confused when I look at the record of the PCs.

In terms of our position, the government has a more balanced approach; it always has. We've extended the existing freeze of salaries for MPPs from one to five years, which I think resonates very well with everyone in Ontario. We froze compensation structures for non-bargaining political and Legislative Assembly staff for two years, and froze compensation structures for broader public sector and Ontario public service employees for two years for non-bargaining employees.

Ontario public service managers do not get regular merit or cost-of-living increases, so it's important, when we look at pay for performance, to look at it in that context. It's not automatic. It's based on performance and ensures commitments are met. Only eligible managers will receive performance awards for 2010-11. We've reduced the total cost of pay for performance by 30%, saving $34 million since the PC government managed this program in, most recently—sorry. Savings have been $34 million since 2008-09.

We're balancing cost reductions while—and this is very important; I don't hear the opposition talking about this—attracting and retaining employees in government to lead our complex programs and deliver those services to the public.

It's important to note that there's no additional money in the budget for pay for performance. All the ministries are expected to continue to live within their means.

I hope I've clarified some of the historical context in terms of the PCs, the confusion I'm hearing from the NDP, and, I think, our very solid and balanced track record on this.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My colleague from Don Valley East and I were having a good conversation on a matter that I raised earlier in this House today on behalf of a

family from my constituency, and I want to publicly thank the member from Don Valley East for his graciousness and just all-around class. Thank you very much.

It is a pleasure to rise and to debate and support my colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. As you know, his riding is adjacent to mine. We share a boundary, we share a community, and I'm really proud to support him. I think he's been a tremendous member since coming to this assembly.

Of course, I want to reiterate what we have all been talking about in this House for the past number of weeks, which is the need for us to have some fiscal restraint here at a time of a very difficult economic nature.

I am supporting this legislated, across-the-board wage freeze, and it's no surprise to you, Speaker. Our leader, Tim Hudak, has been very clear over the past year that that's required, and he met with Dalton McGuinty, the Ontario Premier, last November to discuss this.

We know, for example, that our colleague Jeffrey Yurek put forward legislation calling for an across-the-board broader public sector wage freeze. That failed at the time. But we were heartened to know that the Ontario Liberal government was actually starting to think the same way we were thinking when they brought in Bill 115 to talk about a legislated wage freeze. Although it was a partial measure—we still know we need to deal with the broader public sector as a whole—we felt that that was a step in the right direction.

Now, you know, Speaker, we did support that bill earlier this week, and I thought I would provide a small update to the assembly on some of the feedback that I've been receiving. In fact, I received from a union leader today a Twitter that I was a puppy killer because I supported Bill 115. I think we know that when you talk about issues of wage freezes with the broader public sector, rhetoric and some very colourful and inventive language can be used toward members who advocate for fiscal restraint.

I want to congratulate my colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry for having the courage to put this idea forward because he will probably be on the receiving end of some of those same insults from people.

1500

Look, I won't take too much time of the assembly's time, only to say this: With Bill 115, we made some progress with one very small sector in the broader public sector. The challenge we have before us is that there are about 4,000 more collective agreements coming to pass. That means we can't continue to do this as a one-off or piecemeal arrangement anymore; we need a comprehensive plan that applies equally across the board to all of the broader public service. That is what this motion is about, and that is what this member is talking about.

We are going to continue to pursue this avenue. We believe it is the right way to go, and we feel the only way to actually achieve what the government is now suggesting needs to be done is to bring forward legislation that puts this in place once and for all. I encourage members to support this legislation in good faith. This member has put forward this motion, continuing on the work of Bill 115 and others.

I must say to those in the public who want to intimidate members of the government and the official opposition for supporting Bill 115, you're not going to intimidate me, and I don't think you're going to intimidate anybody else. That kind of language is not to be used in the public against public officials who are doing the right thing. I was quite shocked at some of the language that has been directed at myself and my colleagues.

I think that we have to rise to the occasion, be there for that challenge and make sure that we have public services that are viable well into the future. The only way to do that is to curb our costs. This is a great way to do it. Congratulations, Jim McDonell.

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

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: I'm pleased to rise and to have an opportunity to speak to this motion. As my colleague from Pickering–Scarborough East said, there is some complexity here. It's interesting. Back in 1996, this was initiated by a former government, the Tories, and then it was fully implemented in the year 2001. Currently, about 98% of all employees—the managers—are participating in this particular process. So it is complex. When you really look at that, it actually is base pay. It is pay that has been separated into base pay and incentive pay.

The Premier was very clear that this needs to be addressed. I think we have been very steadfast in our approach. First of all, we brought out a budget that was a tough budget, that actually put forward an agenda that we would have to accomplish in order to bring down that deficit by 2017. Interestingly enough, I thought maybe if this was such an issue, it should have been proposed as an amendment within that budget, but I don't believe either party ever did that. However, having said that, I think the spirit is here that we all recognize there's a challenge ahead of us, and we need to deal with something that's very complex.

But in doing so, I think we also need to recognize that what has been proposed earlier by the member, I think from Timmins-North Bay, Mr. Bisson, was actually a bill that didn't address the issue in its entirety. In fact, it left out the base pay, which would be quite problematic. Then as we look at what the motion is saying, it's virtually the same as well in that it doesn't really get into the details. That's why I'm saying it really is the spirit of moving forward on how we deal with a very complex problem. We said that we would address that issue.

As I said, we started out in 1996. It was extended in 2001. It is a combination of the salary and the base pay, and it is something that we need to have an overall review of. But I think also you need to remember that we've done, I believe my colleague said, some 30% reduction in this as well.

In fairness, it is confusing when I have the member from Trinity stand up and speak to the complexity but I

have the leader of the third party say, "We'll just eliminate it entirely." The same, I must admit, is a little confusing on the Progressive Conservative side, because in their platform of 2011, it actually said that they would have performance pay as part of their platform. So it is confusing.

What we have said all along is that we need to review this. The Premier asked the minister to do this. The minister has that review under way.

We all recognize in this House that there's a challenge. People must be and should be treated fairly, equitably and in an open and transparent fashion so that we can solve a problem that's been going on for a number of years. I'm going to say it was put in place with the best of intentions by a previous party, but we now know it isn't working. So how do we do this so that we recognize and respect those managers for the work that they do?

We need those folks. Government is made up of both the political side and the bureaucratic side. They're the folks that help us implement the policies we've put forward, and we work together as a team. So it's particularly important that we respect and are respectful of the issues that they bring forward, and they certainly will be very much, I'm sure, a part of this review.

When we look at the whole issue around the application of the bonuses and its perspective, we know it's far, it's broad and it's wide, and that it has so many different perspectives to it that we need to give this a full, comprehensive and timely review.

It's one thing to just sort of snap your fingers and say, "Well, we'll just do this and freeze everything, and the world will be perfect." It doesn't work that way. We are talking about people's livelihoods. We're talking about people themselves—

Interjection: Compensation.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: We're talking about compensation. We're talking about respectfulness of the process. So we need to be able to do this in a thoughtful, comprehensive, thorough and respectful way so that we end up with a solution that is not problematic, that in fact is a solution that we can build consensus with our partners on. I think this is particularly important these days.

People throw around $30 billion. The fact of the matter is that we have a very significant deficit. We were in a worldwide recession. The world is not out of that recession. If you read the papers, you know how tenuous it is and how closely we are entwined with the United States and its economy, because they are our greatest trading partner. So we need to be really mindful of the work that we're doing to ensure that, as we move forward, we eliminate that deficit so that it's not here for our children. But at the same time, we must do it, Mr. Speaker, in a way that is not thoughtless. It must be done so that we protect the public services we believe in—health and education—and at the same time respect the people who deliver those programs.

These are difficult times in terms of making some very difficult decisions. But it's our responsibility as members of this assembly to work together to find ways and means to be able to do this. So I think that, in spirit, we're all there. Where the difference is is in implementation and how we go about it. So I suggest that, in spirit, we can agree, but we need to allow the Minister of Finance to be able to do his work, to do it comprehensively, thoroughly, and in such a way that we come back with a solution that is livable by all.

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this particular motion.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, it's no secret we continue to press for an across-the-board wage freeze for the broader public sector. Given that we're staring down the barrel of a $411.4-billion debt, we're obviously asking the public sector to take a pass on bonuses. The last thing that the taxpayer would have wanted to see is a $35.6-million payout to 98% of the managers and executives in the Ontario public service. There's 8,900 of them; 8,700 received a merit pay bonus. During these times, that's a bit of a slap in the face to the taxpayer, hence the motion from the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry calling for an immediate but fair across-the-board wage freeze for the next two years, and that includes bonuses as well.

But having said that, it is important to understand the value of work done by our executives, the value of pay-for-performance, concepts that were inculcated in the legislation, the Excellent Care for All Act. All three parties voted for that. That's understandable. Nobody favours mediocrity, let alone rewarding mediocrity.

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Down in my area, our local hospitals—Norfolk General, Tillsonburg, Brantford General, West Haldimand and War Memorial—are continually under pressure. They do a good job, by and large. They do balance their budgets.

I had a meeting recently with a board rep from West Haldimand. Again, we discussed the fact that one size does not fit all. The smaller hospitals don't have the wiggle room as far as finding savings within administration.

We discussed the fact that over the last two years, hospitals have seen seven major changes to their executive compensation programs. The OHA, the Ontario Hospital Association, laid out a list. Time permitting, I'll run through this quickly:

(1) freeze on all non-unionized compensation structures—that was in Bill 16;

(2) legislated introduction of pay for performance—as I mentioned, the Excellent Care for All Act;

(3) the 2011 budget—a mandatory two-year 10% decrease in executive office expenses;

(4) elimination of perquisites—I think that's the long term for perks—through the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act;

(5) extension of the wage freeze on senior executives for two additional years—that was in the original 2012 budget;

(6) introduction by the government of a long-term hard cap on the total amount available for pay for performance within an organization.

Speaker, these were amendments to the 2012 budget. And the last major change:

(7) extension of the wage freeze until a minimum of 2017-18.

I just wanted to put that out there for the information of members present.

I understand that at our small West Haldimand hospital—I don't know whether they refer to it as a bonus—they hold back 10% of executive salaries. Depending on the budget, depending on wiggle room, as I indicated earlier, that 10% is paid out. I guess there's a bit of an argument whether that's a bonus or not. I can't speak for administration at the hospital.

One thing I can address: People in my area understand the meaning of restraint. Government austerity, economic austerity, is not something to be sniffed at. They understand working within their means and essentially operating on a lean budget. We're rural people. People work hard for what they have, and the last thing they'd do is take any measure that would sacrifice economic activity in the future or sacrifice their children's future for a present, short-term gain.

There is a place for incentive pay within the public sector—I think everyone in this Legislature agrees with that—but not when you're staring down the barrel of a $411.4-billion debt. For that reason alone, I support this motion.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure to rise this afternoon in support of my eastern Ontario PC colleague, the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, Mr. McDonell.

We had the opportunity to spend quite a lot of time together last fall. I have to tell you that it's bold action like he's proposing in his excellent motion that has earned him the resounding support of his constituents. He certainly puts the people of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry first.

We come from eastern Ontario, a part of this province where people really don't want to hear you talk about solving a problem. They want to make sure you're actually doing something about it. I think this motion is taking real action to turn Ontario away from a $30-billion deficit that we're rushing toward under the McGuinty government. The reason we're headed there is because this government simply refuses to make tough decisions like implementing an across-the-board public sector wage freeze. I know the members opposite will say that the Premier and the finance minister are talking about it. Quite frankly, it's too late for talk.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, met with the Premier last fall, and one of the items he said that our party would cooperate on was a wage freeze for all public employees. The Premier rejected that idea; in fact, he actually mocked that idea.

What has happened since then? For starters, we're over halfway through a year in which we could have saved $2 billion had it been implemented on January 1. That's over $1 billion worth of savings that they've squandered already. What's worse: We learned that 98% of public sector managers got a bonus, and today the Globe and Mail reports that pay increases for the public sector averaged 1.7% in the second quarter of this year alone. Those are just a couple of examples.

I know that the member has worked very hard on this motion, and I know that we're going to get—at least I feel we're going to get—broad support this afternoon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, you've got two minutes for a response.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. I want to thank the speakers to my bill. My colleague from Trinity–Spadina, when he talked about Bill 115—the issue with that is that we're picking winners and losers. Why are we so tough on them, one might wonder, when they were so much a big part of this government's election platform but turning around and the power workers—or the bonuses? They talk about pay for performance, and I'm a believer in that as well, but when you're talking about 98%, that's not pay for performance; that's just another way of hiding money.

It was interesting when he talked about the Charlie Brown fiscal policy. I hope that he wasn't talking about his own policy, but it's just interesting to hear that. But he did mention the corporate taxes. Big business or small business is easy to attack, but really, it's all a matter of being competitive. When you add up the taxes, you add up the hydro, you add up the property taxes, that's what we're talking about. We're not talking about letting somebody off with a break they don't deserve.

I want to thank the member from Pickering–Scarborough East and her discussion with the 97 new hospitals, but I just bring back—if you look at the money wasted on eHealth, $2 billion, that's six new hospitals. If you look at Ornge, there are another two hospitals. The power plants we're talking about—they've gone so far to make sure we can't find out the details—we're probably talking about another six hospitals. And that's without raising taxes. If you add some of the others, the $1 billion this year that we wasted by delaying this bill, there are another three hospitals.

I also wanted to thank the members from Nepean–Carleton, Haldimand–Norfolk and Leeds–Grenville. They're colleagues of mine who have been a big help, and I look up to them in the work they've done with me in helping me out.

I didn't want to leave off my colleague from Etobicoke Centre in the spirit of working together. I think that's what we want to do: be working together and coming out with something that the people of Ontario are expecting.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. We'll take the vote on the motion at the end of regular business.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE DAY ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE JOUR DES ENFANTS ET DES JEUNES PRIS EN CHARGE

Mrs. Piruzza moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 90, An Act to proclaim Children and Youth in Care Day / Projet de loi 90, Loi proclamant le Jour des enfants et des jeunes pris en charge.

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

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you, Speaker.

I'd like to start off by saying what a privilege it is to stand before the House this afternoon for the over 8,000 children and youth living under the care of the crown and of children's aid societies in Ontario and for those who walked in their footsteps before them.

As my colleagues on both sides of this House will recall, on November 18 and 25 of last year, young people in and from care held their own public hearings here at Queen's Park—a first at any provincial Legislature in Canada. These hearings, titled the Youth Leaving Care hearings, were attended by over 300 people on the first day and by over 500 people on the second. As my colleagues in this House who were present for the hearings can attest, the hearings were often tough to listen to at times as youth in and from care shared stories and songs about their experiences growing up as wards in the province.

The hearings team even came up with youth-friendly ways to submit their submissions, such as by audio, video, art and poetry—which was truly inspiring. This outstanding team effort brought in all together a total of 183 submissions from across the province. The submissions were reviewed and organized into six broader themes to form a report. That was not an easy task for the team.

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Speaker, true to the authenticity that characterized the hearings, a report titled My Real Life Book was written by the youth hearings team. The team was supported by the provincial advocate's office and the report was tabled here, in the Ontario Legislature, to the Minister of Children and Youth Services, the Honourable Dr. Eric Hoskins, on May 14 of this year.

I read the report from cover to cover, and while I will admit it was hard to read at times, I strongly urge my colleagues on both sides of this House to do the same. The bravery and thought put into this report is nothing short of remarkable, and I commend the youth hearings team for their hard work. As a mom, these stories truly struck me and tugged at my heartstrings.

Speaker, the My Real Life Book report, which is meant to resemble life books which are created and given to children and youth to help them know their stories and to mark significant events in their lives, is uniquely organized into six themes, as mentioned, which are represented by quotes that were commonly characterized throughout the hearings. These themes include "We are vulnerable," "We are isolated," "We are left out of our lives," "No one is really there for us," "Care is unpredictable" and "Care ends and we struggle."

As part of the recommendations tabled in the report, I'm pleased to point out to this House that Minister Hoskins immediately put into action the number one recommendation: the creation of a working group made up of youth with experience living in care, along with partners from across the province, with the direction of determining how best to ensure a stronger voice for the youth themselves as we move forward with improvements to the child welfare system.

Speaker, it's my understanding that the 15-person working group, which includes eight youth members, who provide expertise, and seven members with strong knowledge of the needs of children and youth, has met three times already since the report was tabled and will continue to meet twice per month from September through November of this year.

Another important recommendation that came out of the report was to declare Children and Youth in Care Day in the province of Ontario, which is what this bill, Bill 90, does. By declaring May 14 of each year as Children and Youth in Care Day in the province of Ontario, we would move one step further towards helping raise awareness, reduce stigma and recognize children and youth in care. As the report points out, it would also help keep the issues affecting the lives of children and youth in care in the public spotlight and provide for regular updates on the action plan for fundamental change.

Let me share with my colleagues what Bill Bevan, CEO of the Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society, has to say about this bill:

"We are pleased to see a day specifically dedicated to youth in care and look forward to seeing that the action plan for fundamental change is a government priority…that this plan reflects what youth are saying…they need to not only survive…but thrive.

"We have heard from our youth, and they are particularly concerned with having to age out of care at 21 years before they are ready. We want to continue to parent them but require the government's support. If Bill 90 is enacted, we are committed to ensuring that the voices of our youth, locally and provincially, continue to be heard and guide the necessary changes needed to support them and their growth and success as young adults."

I've gotten to know Mr. Bevan well over the years, in my current role as MPP for Windsor West as well as during my time as executive director of employment and social services with the city of Windsor. Mr. Bevan and his team at the Windsor-Essex CAS have been true champions for the well-being of children and youth under care in the Windsor-Essex region. I thank them for all their support, and I hope that all my colleagues in this House will do the same.

Speaker, as elected officials in this House, we all owe the utmost respect and support to these children and youth to ensure they reach their full potential. We know that youth in care are at a disadvantage when it comes to successfully transitioning to adulthood in terms of acquiring higher education, employment and emotional support. I'm proud that our government has taken a number of steps to address this, and let me share with this House just some of the steps we have taken to date.

We're now allowing for 16- or 17-year-olds who have left care to return to a CAS and be eligible for financial and other supports until the age of 21. Children's aid societies are continuing to provide supports to youth, both emotionally and financially, from ages 18 to 21, through the extended care and maintenance program, as they make their transition to adulthood. We're providing a range of supports to encourage more youth in and leaving care to pursue and complete post-secondary studies, including grants for tuition, reimbursements for application fees, champion teams and OSAP exemptions. We've increased access to educational, social, cultural and recreational opportunities and savings when they leave care through the Ontario child benefit equivalent. We're introducing RESPs for the children and youth in care to support planning for the pursuit of post-secondary education, and we're helping more kids to be adopted and find permanent homes.

Speaker, we know that because of the work that has been done, fewer kids are coming into care, and more kids are being placed in permanent homes because of legislative and policy changes that have been made in the last few years. But we also know there is still more to be done. I hope that by proclaiming May 14 of each year as Children and Youth in Care Day, we will continue to help raise awareness and keep issues that affect their lives in the public spotlight, as this bill is designed to do.

When I first introduced Bill 90, I had the opportunity of presenting it back in Windsor. I was at the Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society. There are many examples of the success of our system, but unfortunately, there are also examples of the limitations of our system. I met many youth who either directly or indirectly took part in the hearings, showing great strength and courage in coming forward to tell their stories and share their experiences, their memories, their achievements and their hopes for the future. Speaker, I also met adults who grew up in the system and are now community leaders.

I was taken aback by the excitement and thankfulness of those who I met to know that we're listening, that we seriously consider the recommendations of the hearings. We cannot underestimate the importance of providing our children and youth in care with recognition, of letting them know that we are listening when they feel all too often not listened to.

As I begin to wrap up my speech, I wanted to share with my colleagues in this House about Almost Home: Helping Kids Move from Homelessness to Hope, a book written by Covenant House president Kevin Ryan and former New York Times writer Tina Kelley. This well-written book tells the story of six young people as they struggle to find a home and use the services of Covenant House to help them along the way. Covenant House is the largest charitable institution serving homeless youth. The stories were striking in their honesty and the realism of what many youth go through, a journey that most of us could not begin to comprehend.

The term "homeless," to me, can be defined in many ways: living in a car, on the street, couch surfing or even between homes. To me, it's a state wherein there is no stability. As I read the testimonies from the Youth Leaving Care hearings, it's clear that these youth were looking for something essential to any household: stability.

As I conclude, I'd like to thank a number of individuals who have worked tirelessly to make this report become a reality. First, thanks to Irwin Elman, the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth, for his leadership. Irwin has worked for many years advocating on behalf of children and youth across the province. The office was established in October 2007. Since its inception, Irwin has been a true champion for children and youth in the province. Speaker, while Irwin's advocacy for children goes far beyond what I've briefly mentioned, it was made apparent to me that he will be in the hearts of many youth for years to come.

I would also like to thank the Ontario Association of CASs and YouthCAN team for their support.

Speaker, I'd also like to thank my colleague the Minister of Children and Youth Services, Dr. Eric Hoskins. Not only did the minister promptly advise his ministry to act on recommendations that came up from the hearings and to keep him updated regularly, but those of us who have had the privilege to know Dr. Hoskins know of the near decade he spent as a doctor and humanitarian in war-torn regions across the world, helping hundreds of children through his charity co-founded with his wife, War Child Canada.

Finally, Speaker, most importantly, I would like to thank all the children and youth from across the province, both in and from care, who courageously came together to share their stories for this report. As the minister stated in May, when the report was tabled, "We owe these kids our sustained action, yes. But most of all, we owe them respect."

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I will close by saying that the setting aside of May 14 goes a long way. It may not seem extraordinary to those who have not walked along their path, but to them it's a beacon, a starting point to continuing to work with them to improve our system, if not for them, then for those who will come after them.

I want to thank all of my honourable colleagues in this House. I look forward to support for this bill.

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

Ms. Sylvia Jones: It's a pleasure to speak to today's motion. I will support the motion brought forward. I was a former critic for children and youth. I'm happy to do it.

My only comment—and it comes back to my experience with the Select Committee on Mental Health and

Addictions: Absolutely, stigma and awareness need to be dealt with.

I've also read the report, Youth Leaving Care, as a result of their hearings, when it came out in the spring. I won't read the recommendations because you've ably covered that, but I would like to talk about the goals. There were eight goals that came out of the report: "We are safe, protected and respected as equal human beings. We have people in our lives who are there for us. We have stability and connections to family, roots and culture. We are part of our lives and have a say in what happens to us. We have access to the information, resources and options we need. We are supported throughout care to become successful adults. We are part of a strong and proud community of youth in and from care." And the last goal was, "That the best experiences from some children and youth and care become the standard for everyone in care."

They had some pretty moving hearings over the course of last fall and early winter. As I say, while I'm happy to support an awareness day, I think there's a lot more that we could be doing and we could be talking about. The awareness day is a small, non-controversial—let's be blunt: No financial resources will need to be attached to it. There are a lot of issues that need to be dealt with, with basically what are our collective children from youth and care. So I would have liked to have seen a little more substance, a little less PR. Enough said.

The recommendations touched on an awful lot of issues. Some of them certainly are attached with financial resources—or financial resources would need to be attached to them. This is when I get really frustrated with the wastefulness, because we can all talk about, we can all show examples of where we would love to have additional resources in our ridings, in our constituencies, in our critic areas, and I'm sure the ministers see it as well. If they only had that additional resource, what they would be able to do with some of the ideas that came out of the report.

So when I see some of the issues at Ornge, when I see some of the frustrations with the Oakville power plant and the Mississauga power plant, it is very frustrating to look at some of our most vulnerable children, our collective children, and say, "No, we can't extend your care," or "No, we can't give you additional help when you are leaving care because we don't have the money."

I will leave it at that. As I say, I'm happy to support it, but let's not stop here.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: Thank you to the member for Windsor West for bringing this motion forward.

I'm pleased to support this motion, as it is a recommendation by the Youth Leaving Care hearings team in the report, My Real Life Book. But that report also made it clear that much more needs to be done, other than simply declaring a day to recognize children and youth in care.

The report was a result of many months of outstanding work by a group of exceptional young people who themselves were youth in care or former youth in care. Over those months, the team heard from youth in care in ways that made sense for them. In addition to standard written submissions, they sought and received input by audio, video, art and poetry. And as the title suggests, their findings were suggested in a creative way using a format that had a deep meaning to children and youth in care.

Let me quote from the first page of the report:

"Life books are supposed to be created and given to children and youth in care to help them know the stories of their lives and mark significant events in their lives. Some are beautiful and treasured, and some youth don't even know about them.

"One youth told us that he received a file folder. Another youth said she was told she couldn't even have hers.

"In some ways this report is our collective life book, a way for us to document the stories presented at the hearings and inspire change."

I know I have been inspired by watching the Youth Leaving Care hearings team at work. I have marvelled at their enthusiasm and their ability to get at the root of the issues and present their findings in a way that is so hard to ignore.

I also want to offer my thanks and support for the Office of the Provincial Advocate for Children and Youth. While the work was definitely done mostly by the youth, they started by voicing their concerns to Irwin Elman, the provincial advocate. Irwin listened, and throughout the process offered the encouragement, guidance and support of his office.

I was inspired reading the report and truly hope it does inspire change, because change is badly needed. As the parents of these children—and that is what we must consider ourselves—we have a responsibility to make that change.

If anyone has any doubt that change is needed, read the report. It outlines some startling statistics:

There are almost 17,000 children in the care of the children's aid society, and of these, almost half, 8,300, are crown wards.

Six and a half per cent of children in care under the age of 18 are already living independently, while Canadian youth on average live at home until their mid-20s.

Just 44% of youth in care graduate from high school, compared to 81% of the general population.

Forty-three per cent of homeless youth have previous child welfare involvement.

Beyond the statistics, the report relates hundreds of jarring comments and observations from children and youth in care or adults who were in care.

I want to take some time to talk about those observations and comments, what I heard at the hearings and what I've read in the report. They display the vulnerability felt by youth in care.

Steven, a 20-year-old former youth in care said, "I'm very close to my grandma. Even up until today, I still talk to my grandma. And out of how many people in my

family, I think she's the only one that actually calls and checks up on me. But in that home, I wasn't allowed to go see my mom, my sister, my dad, none of them."

Ken, now 31, said, "As a child I received many labels: bi-racial, orphan, foster child, and crown ward. These labels profoundly affected my sense of identity."

The report points to the isolation they feel. Katelynn said, "So, I very much felt alone and it would have been so nice to have somebody, I guess, there to be able to say, we kind of get this and it's okay that you're feeling this way."

As 12-year-old Jessica put it so poetically, "There's no place like a spot in someone's heart."

Children, youth in care and former youth in care reported that they are left out of their own lives.

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Ashley, aged 20, said, "As a child, being taken from home and moved from family to family, I was never able to find home again. I was looked at differently by society, had words pushed into my mouth by workers, and as a child I never seen or had a say for my best interest." Or, as Nick put it more bluntly, "I'm a group home kid; I ain't got no rights."

They feel that no one is really there for them. Catherine said, "I have, since the age of three or four, been responsible for myself and my upkeep"—since the age of three or four.

The reports talk about the unpredictability of care. One youth reported, "I moved to a group home. I was very frustrated going there. I moved into another home; moved in with others who were not deaf. It's always been very frustrating, especially because I had to move around so much, and I moved quite a bit." Another says, "We have a lot of staff that are in and out. I don't always have the same people that I'm working with."

Then, there's the end of care, that time when the system says that the individual is no longer a youth and no longer entitled to our care. Currently, extended care maintenance ends at age 21, and that point comes as a shock to many youth. Most children these days don't leave home until their mid- to late 20s, and when they do leave, most always they have the knowledge that they can turn back to their parents if they need to. Youth in care don't have that option.

As Brandon, a 20-year-old, says, "I already had my family taken away once, and it was probably the hardest thing in my life. I didn't know where else to turn or what I was going to do, and when I turn 21 it's all going to happen again."

My Real Life Book also has some heartening stories, reflections from youth who had good experiences, successes that highlight what is possible. Unfortunately, they are few and far between. Earlier I noted that the province is the parent to the children and youth in care. Certainly, we are their legal guardians. If this report tells us anything, it's that we need to do better. One way we can do it is to provide oversight of children's aid societies through the Ombudsman, an avenue through which people's concerns and complaints can be heard and acted upon. That is why I have introduced a private member's bill to do just that. Bill 110 will come up for second reading on September 27, and I urge all members to support it.

Today, we take a step toward fulfilling one of the report's recommendations: the declaration of Children and Youth in Care Day, that day being May 14. Recognizing May 14 as Children and Youth in Care Day will help all Ontarians to recognize and appreciate children and youth in care. It will help raise awareness and reduce the stigma that often goes with that territory. It will help keep the bigger issues in the spotlight, and on May 14 each year it will remind us of the report and the various recommendations within it. It will give us a touch point and an opportunity to get an update on the progress that has been made, because progress must be made. The Youth in Care hearings team has given us some direction through their recommendations contained in the report. In fact, the declaration of Children and Youth in Care Day is just one of seven recommendations they have made. So let's talk about the others.

The number one recommendation was that the province, working with youth in and from care and other stakeholders, develop an action plan for fundamental change by November of this year. The government has reported that a working group has been established to develop strategies and an action plan, and I look forward to hearing what they have to say. In addition, the report made five other recommendations for change that could be made immediately.

First, raise the age of extended care maintenance to 25. I've already touched on the need for this measure, not the least of which is the fact that at 21, many are not ready to go it alone. Indeed, studies show that 20- to 24-year-olds now stay at home at three times the rate their counterparts did just two generations ago. But what is so important to understand is that such a move would actually save money. Members may remember the release last March of the report 25 Is the New 21. That report contained a cost-benefit analysis of changing the ECM age limit to 25. That analysis estimated that for every dollar spent, governments could save or earn an estimated $1.36 for the working lifetime of that person. This recommendation makes social and fiscal sense, and it can be acted on.

The report recommended that we allow youth to stay in foster care and group homes until they're prepared for independence, to provide all needed supports to help children and youth in care succeed. The report recommends that the government commit to ensuring that every child in care has ongoing health and education services in order to monitor and improve experiences in care and beyond. The report recommends that the government commit to collecting and publishing information on how children and youth in care are doing.

Finally, it has recommended that an online resource for children and youth in care be created. This resource would provide information about rights, jobs, volunteer opportunities, scholarships, extracurricular activities and

advocacy opportunities, and it would be easily accessed directly by those who need it.

I stand here today in support of Bill 90 and look forward to the declaration of May 14 as Children and Youth in Care Day. I also stand in support and admiration of the work that has been done to bring us to this point, but it is clear that much more lies ahead if we are to meet the expectations, the desires and, more importantly, the needs of children and youth in care.

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

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I want to thank the member from Windsor West for her outspoken advocacy on behalf of children and youth in care in the province.

I want to say that like a number of others in this Legislature, prior to getting into politics, I spent my entire professional career working with and on behalf of vulnerable children. As the member from Windsor West had mentioned, much of that was in war zones in Africa and the Middle East and around the world. I have to admit, despite seeing the devastation wrought by civil war and the impact it has on children and youth, I was not myself prepared for what I heard and what I saw and the discussions that I had, both in the two days of consultations last fall, here at Queen's Park, but subsequently in the many discussions that I've had with children and youth both in care and those who have left care. These are individuals that in many cases—well, in all cases—have been through extraordinarily difficult and tragic and challenging circumstances. The results of them migrating into adulthood have been extremely varied.

At these hearings and subsequently, I met many, many extraordinary, courageous, articulate, accomplished individuals who were so well spoken in talking to me and to others in government and beyond about what needs to be done. I have to say that the work that they put into preparing this report, My Real Life Book, was without precedent, courageous and truly inspirational to many of us.

This work that they've done, this impressive and inspiring account of what we heard at those hearings—the members opposite are correct; it's now time for us to implement their recommendations. I was proud that actually the first top-priority recommendation was to strike a working group in my ministry to look at transforming how we approach this complicated but tremendously important issue. Within the 60 days that the report asked for it, that working group was named and up and running. I'm proud to say as well that the majority of individuals on that working group are in fact youth themselves—children and youth who are either in care or who have subsequently left care.

I know others in the Liberal caucus want to speak to this important bill, which I commend the member for introducing.

Some, including cynics, might think that the relevance of introducing a bill that calls for and declares a Children and Youth in Care Day is perhaps not all that important. All I have to do is suggest that you talk to children and youth in and out of care to understand from them, to hear from them, just how important this is. Because this bill—this modest declaration and creation of a day—speaks to them and says, "We see you. We hear you. We acknowledge you. We respect you. What you say is important. We commend you for your courage and we want to work with you to create a better system" that will help them and those that come after them.

1550

This is about recognizing the amazing contributions of youth and young people in the care of our province. It's about saying to them, in no uncertain terms, "You are valued." I'm proud to be supporting this bill today, and I encourage all my colleagues on both sides of the House to join with me and others in recognizing current and former youth in care.

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

Mr. Rod Jackson: It's my pleasure today to speak in full support of a bill which reaffirms this province's ongoing, staunch commitment to the youth of Ontario, and especially those who face extraordinary life challenges. Bill 90, the Children and Youth in Care Day Act, will celebrate the achievements, reduce the stigma, and recognize children and youth in care by proclaiming May 14 of each year Children and Youth in Care Day.

Children's aid affects many families' lives in Ontario. There are over 8,300 crown wards and another 17,000 kids in care. In my riding alone, in Barrie, the agency serves approximately 10,000 families per year. I was proud just this past fall to have hosted and chaired the CAS Foundation fundraiser to raise money for post-secondary education for children in care. We raised $70,000 at that one event.

Last November, youth in care organized hearings, as we've heard, at Queen's Park to discuss the challenges of being in care, like the isolation, invisibility, anonymity they feel throughout this experience. As Ontario's policymakers, we have a duty to ensure all youth feel that they matter and that they have every opportunity to reach their full potential.

We still have a long way to go, as many have noted today, to fulfill this commitment. Studies show, and young people tell us, that when crown wards transition out of care, they don't do as well as other adults. They're less likely to finish high school, pursue post-secondary education or even earn a living wage. They're more likely than their peers to spiral into homelessness, poverty, mental health issues and challenges with the justice system. This is unacceptable, and we must work to change this any way we can.

It's time we addressed these changes head-on. Bill 90 is one important step in creating a dialogue with youth and fostering awareness that can change the lives of some of the most vulnerable Ontarians that we represent. Creating a day to recognize these youth affirms our commitment to them, recognizes the additional struggles they go through to achieve things we sometimes take for granted, and celebrates their achievements.

Youth are the future of Ontario. Their well-being should be the utmost priority for all of us in here and to this government. We must ensure that every youth has the advantage to succeed in life and every opportunity to reach their full potential.

Irwin Elman and the former youth in care had great hearings and had a great report that was very touching.

Mr. Speaker, many people in here know I have a very personal experience with how well these kids can do when the right opportunities are placed in front of them, whether it's by chance or whether it's by design. Right now, we have an opportunity to not let chance take over and to actually do it by design. Let's seize that opportunity. This is a great starting point and a great bill, but we have a lot further to go to make sure these kids get an equal opportunity to excel and be productive members of our community. They can do it. They need our help to do it.

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

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: This is one of the moments in my political career where I am just so happy and honoured to speak to such an important bill that my colleague has brought forward and that I believe that everybody is going to support. Many have spoken already about the youth-in-care hearings.

I want to talk a bit about the YouthCAN conference I was at recently, where there were many of the authors from the Youth Leaving Care hearings; they were the authors of the My Real Life Book report. Not only was the YouthCAN conference a great conference, but I was just so impressed with the youth-in-care folks who were involved in organizing the conference, and the passion, the conviction they brought to that, the determination. There were many great workshops they organized—career workshops, talent shows—and of course, they had some fun.

But the thing that really touched me was that when I talked to one of the people at the conference, one of the youth-in-care authors involved in the Youth Leaving Care hearings, she told me that she would like to think about becoming a politician. She would like to be involved in public service. I was just so touched and so moved. It reminded me that when it comes to important matters like vulnerable youth, like children in care, this is where we all need to work together—and I believe we are going to continue to work together—to do what we can for our children in care. By proclaiming May 14 every year as Children and Youth in Care Day, the province of Ontario and everybody here at the Legislature will recognize the important contributions that the current and former crown and society wards make.

Again, it's a complete pleasure to speak to this. I am mindful of the young woman who spoke to me about wanting to become a politician. She's looking to us to work together in a non-partisan way on things that are very important to children and youth in Ontario.

Congratulations to my colleague for bringing the bill forward. I want to congratulate the opposition members who are supporting this as well.

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

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Thank you to the member from Windsor West for bringing this legislation forward in the spirit of and in tribute to the Youth Leaving Care hearings that took place here at Queen's Park in November.

As opposition critic for children and youth services, I would also like to express my deepest gratitude to the youth in care whose voices, vision and energy are contained in the report from those hearings and who have enriched this conversation over much of the last year. That process is ongoing and has yet to reach a conclusion, but it is a valuable conversation and an important one, and I'm encouraged that we find ourselves continuing the dialogue today to move forward.

As I remarked earlier this year when the report was first delivered, these young people are inspiring and possess uncommon strength and ambition. I am honoured to rise in this Legislature today to speak to Bill 90, the Children and Youth in Care Day Act, which names May 14 of each year in recognition of the experience and contributions of Ontario's roughly 8,300 children and youth in care.

The report that inspired this legislation was drawn from first-hand front-line experience, and it doesn't always paint a comforting portrait of the state of children and youth care in Ontario today. Immediately apparent are the barriers in a system that can be impersonal and at some times dehumanizing. These young people move around so often they're unable to undergo the emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual growth that most young Ontarians take for granted.

It is, of course, important to acknowledge and celebrate the achievements of all Ontario's children and youth, but especially those who face extraordinary challenges. When crown wards transition out of care, they don't do as well as other young adults. They're less likely to finish high school, pursue post-secondary education or even earn a living wage. They're most likely to spiral into poverty, homelessness, mental health issues and situations in the justice system.

During November's Youth Leaving Care hearings, we heard youth tell the province's policy-makers that they felt invisible, isolated and anonymous. This day offers us all a chance to address those failings and have conversations that can change the lives of some of the most vulnerable Ontarians. I am pleased to support Bill 90.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Oak Ridges–Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I also am very pleased to rise in the House and support Bill 90, brought by our colleague from Windsor West.

I'm going to focus a little bit on the mental health issues related to children and youth in care. Much as my colleague from Dufferin–Caledon and I learned through our deliberations in the select committee, when we hear individuals such as these children in their report, My Real Life Book, saying that they are vulnerable, they are

isolated, there's really no one there for them, we know that this type of plea for help will clearly lead to mental health issues.

1600

Children's Mental Health Ontario tells us that there are many factors that contribute to mental health disorders, and negative early life experiences such as abuse, neglect, death of a relative, other losses and trauma can severely affect an individual. So it's no surprise—in fact, I have some statistics from the Ministry of Children and Youth—that they are disproportionately affected by mental health issues. Based on a review of some 5,194 crown ward files in 2010, approximately 53% of the crown wards were identified as having some type of mental health diagnosis, and these include some 27% who actually had an attention deficit disorder/attention deficit-hyperactivity disorder, but other syndromes did include fetal alcohol syndrome, psychiatric disorders, eating disorders, dual diagnosis, depression and anxiety.

So even though this is a recommendation that we acknowledge May 14 as Children and Youth in Care Day, it is the first step to what I understand from the ministry is a very comprehensive look at child welfare in this province in a comprehensive way, and I think we all look forward to the recommendations that will come forward in the next few months from the group that the minister has appointed to look at this issue.

I commend the member for bringing this forward, and of course we'll be supporting this bill.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: The first thing I want to do, as a parent and grandparent, is to commend the member from Windsor West for bringing this item forward. We should all know that the children's aid society that we work with in our communities—there are 8,000 children who are crown wards with children's aid in Ontario today, and the studies that we have been briefed on here today have shown that crown wards transition out of care but many of them are at high risk, as has been said. Few of them finish high school and pursue secondary education and even earn a living wage. They are more likely to spiral into poverty, homelessness, mental health and issues challenging and entangled in the justice system.

I think what we're doing here in supporting you in this legislation is recognizing that we need to celebrate them and that youth deserve a second chance. Often they didn't inflict these conditions on themselves; it's through conditions that may have been beyond their control.

I commend you for having compassion for those young children who need to be encouraged and supported, and indeed celebrated. We will all look forward to celebrating. I believe May 14 is the day that you've put forward, and indeed that's the appropriate month. I believe that's the month we celebrate Mother's Day and Parent Day. It's now going to be a time when we celebrate children and children at risk in our society today.

I just want to leave one more thing on the table. I am very privileged to have nine grandchildren, and my grandchildren are as important to me—I think that all children need a caring adult, and that's the statement here, that in this Legislature we are caring adults and we're going to support this bill, Bill 90, celebrating children in care. I thank those who have made this an important issue and have worked to educate us on the conditions that surround these children in care.

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

Mr. Michael Coteau: It's my pleasure today to speak in support of Bill 90. This bill really supports my personal belief that when we're making decisions on behalf of young people in this province, it's imperative that we have their voices contribute to that process.

I'm proud to speak on behalf of this bill, the Children and Youth in Care Day Act, because it supports over 8,000 young people who live in the care of crown or children's aid societies across this great province. This bill recognizes the contributions that young people have made to this province. It also recognizes the resilience that current and former youth in care show in everyday life.

I'm proud of the panel that came from right across this great province of Ontario and those who showed the courage to convey to the committee their experiences with respect to the challenges of living under the care of the province.

I want to commend the work of my esteemed colleague from Windsor West, who has put a great deal of thought and work into this bill, which will significantly raise awareness for children and youth in care.

Growing up, I personally knew a few young individuals who were crown wards, and I know about the difficulty they faced in life. They didn't have the same support that I had at home. I grew up, and I noticed the challenges they faced on a daily basis.

I wish that all Ontarians would have an opportunity to read My Real Life Book, the report from the leaving care hearings. I encourage all of my colleagues in the Legislative Assembly, if they haven't done so, to pick up the publication and give it a read. The report contains extremely powerful and profoundly moving insights into people who made submissions to the Youth Leaving Care hearings, and it illustrates how important it is that we include young people and their conversations about how we can improve this government and the programs and services we offer.

As a parent, reading through that report, I took a few moments last night to really reflect and to think about how it would be if my children were placed in that type of situation. It was quite tough for me.

As a former school board trustee, as a former youth worker in Malvern—a community you know quite well, Mr. Speaker—and as an MPP, I've worked with young people often. To have them included in the process to make better decisions, to drive the policy we make as a government and to be agents of change is an important thing. I'm really proud of this initiative. It's the exact same model we used for the anti-youth-violence action committee. We're going to bring young people in to form

a committee, to advise the Ministry of Children and Youth Services. I'm proud of the steps that we're taking as a government to really engage young people and bring them in the process so we can move forward as a government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Windsor West, you have two minutes for a response.

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you to all my colleagues in this House for the support that we're receiving for Bill 90, for this declaration of Child and Youth in Care Day for May 14. I'd like to thank—hopefully I got all of them down here—the members for Dufferin–Caledon and Hamilton Mountain, Minister Hoskins, and the members from Barrie, from Pickering–Scarborough East, Burlington, Oak Ridges–Markham, Durham and Don Valley East. Thank you to all of you for coming forward and supporting this bill.

Some of the comments that were made that I'd like to reflect on that I agree with: That is, every child deserves to feel safe and protected. I agree everyone should read this report, if you haven't already. You really get the feel for this if you read this.

Minister Hoskins, thank you for your support and action on this file and your dedication to the children and youth of Ontario.

There are good stories, as we've heard, but unfortunately they're not all good stories. It's up to us to make them all good stories. We have to get rid of all the labels and recognize all children and youth for their potential. It's not "those kids over there" and labelling them, but they're individuals, each with unique abilities and skills. As the member from Durham stated in his comments, we need to celebrate all children and youth, we need to encourage all children and youth, and we need to ensure that all youth are given all the supports that they require to succeed.

This bill, to summarize, recognizes the enormous contributions that children and youth in care make to the province, as well as the strength, bravery and resilience shown by these children and youth in the face of adversity.

Thank you to everyone who spoke to this bill. Thank you, everyone, for your support, and I, too, look forward to May 14, when we can first celebrate our Child and Youth in Care Day.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

TRANSPARENCY IN GOVERNMENT BILLS ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA TRANSPARENCE DES PROJETS DE LOI ÉMANANT DU GOUVERNEMENT

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We will deal first with ballot item number 55, standing in the name of Mr. Harris.

Mr. Harris has moved second reading of Bill 109. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), the bill is being referred to committee. Mr. Harris?

Mr. Michael Harris: Finance.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. Harris requests that the bill be referred to the finance committee. Agreed? Agreed.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mr. McDonell has moved private members' notice of motion number 26. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard noes.

All those in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

We'll deal with the vote at the end of regular business.

CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN CARE DAY ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LE JOUR DES ENFANTS ET DES JEUNES PRIS EN CHARGE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Mrs. Piruzza has moved second reading of Bill 90. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98(j), Mrs. Piruzza.

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: To the Standing Committee on Social Policy, please.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member has requested that the bill be referred to social policy. Agreed? Agreed.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1611 to 1616.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Would members please take their seats.

Mr. McDonell has moved private members' notice of motion number 26.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Jackson, Rod	Nicholls, Rick
Bailey, Robert	Jones, Sylvia	O'Toole, John
Barrett, Toby	Klees, Frank	Pettapiece, Randy
Chudleigh, Ted	Leone, Rob	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Elliott, Christine	McDonell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
Fedeli, Victor	McKenna, Jane	Walker, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Harris, Michael	Miller, Norm	Yakabuski, John
Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing.

Nays

Best, Margarett	DiNovo, Cheri	Naqvi, Yasir
Bisson, Gilles	Duguid, Brad	Natyshak, Taras
Bradley, James J.	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Piruzza, Teresa
Broten, Laurel C.	Hoskins, Eric	Qaadri, Shafiq
Campbell, Sarah	Jaczek, Helena	Schein, Jonah
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Chan, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Singh, Jagmeet
Coteau, Michael	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Damerla, Dipika	Mantha, Michael	Takhar, Harinder S.
Delaney, Bob	Marchese, Rosario	Taylor, Monique
Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil	Wong, Soo
Dickson, Joe	Miller, Paul	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 30; the nays are 35.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Orders of the day.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: No further business for today. I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The Minister of Education has moved adjournment of this House. Agreed? Agreed.

This House stands adjourned until Monday, 10:30 a.m.—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): — Wednesday at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1620.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.
Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac
Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller
Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Tonia Grannum, Trevor Day, Anne Stokes
Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
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	
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
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margarett R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre de Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Innovation / Ministre du Développement économique et de l'Innovation
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
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 Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Orazietti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	
Vacant	Kitchener–Waterloo	
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