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Thursday 13 May 2010

Jeudi 13 mai 2010

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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Hansard Reporting and Interpretation Services
Room 500, West Wing, Legislative Building
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Service du Journal des débats et d'interprétation
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 13 May 2010

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 13 mai 2010

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the aboriginal prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SECURITIES INDUSTRY

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 25, 2010, on the amendment to the motion by Mr. Duncan to locate the new common securities regulator in Toronto.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: The last time we spoke about this was on March 25, 2010: an amendment introduced to the motion by our finance minister to make sure Toronto is the centre of the financial system in the country.

I listened to my colleague the member from Pickering–Scarborough East speaking about many different things. I remember that he said, “When I go outside the province of Ontario, people ask me, ‘Where are you from?’ and I say I’m from Toronto. ‘Oh, yes, we know Toronto. Where exactly in Toronto?’” He would say, “From Pickering–Scarborough East,” which is adjacent to the city of Toronto. It’s the same thing when he goes outside the province of Ontario or outside the country. People ask him the same question, and he answers the same way, because everyone around the globe, especially in North America, recognizes the city of Toronto as the financial capital of the province of Ontario and for the whole country.

I’m a person from London, Ontario. Actually we’re proud to say that our city of London invests a lot in the financial industry. We are home to many insurance companies, strong banks and financial institutions. But the main issue here, as the finance minister mentioned, is to create one security system for the whole country, because it’s important for our financial institutions to be sound and in good condition.

Not long ago, I was speaking to my friend who owns Global Financial, which deals in education funds, mutual funds and other investments. In order to be a financial institution in Canada—to be a national company—you have to have an office in every province and territory. We have 13 provinces and territories in Canada, and you have to have an office in every one of them. Why? In order to get recognition as a national institution. The sad part is that every province and territory is a different jurisdiction with different regulations and a different sys-

tem, which makes it difficult for many financial institutions to have one system adopted across the nation. That’s why our finance minister is calling for one regulator across Canada. I know that when our minister, the Honourable Gerry Phillips, got elected in 2003, he set the tone and introduced a way to create one mechanism for the whole nation and for Toronto to be the capital of that system.

Why Toronto as the capital? Because all the analysis by all the financial institutions recognizes its role in the financial system in the whole country and in all the provinces. We in Ontario employ almost 365,000 people in financial institutions across this beautiful province, and the majority of those people work in the city of Toronto. Since 2003, we have increased by almost 60,000 the number of people who work in financial institutions. If you want to add the people working in the legal departments, IT departments and many other sectors that support these financial institutions, you’d be talking about almost 700,000 people in the province of Ontario working in the financial system and in industries related to the financial system.

Therefore, I think it’s our obligation and duty to strengthen that system and give it the ability to maintain, flourish, expand and make a secure system, not just for the province of Ontario but for the whole nation. We are well recognized not just in the province of Ontario, not just in Canada, but in North America. Toronto is recognized as the third-largest financial centre after Chicago and New York. Also, we have very strong banks—five of the strongest banks in North America—situated here in Toronto in the province of Ontario.

I know that folks in London—my people in London—would say, “Why not London?” I know that the member from Simcoe–Grey mentioned that London should be the capital, not Toronto; we should separate Toronto from the province and create another capital, London, Ontario. Passionately, I agree with him, but when I think about it, I think that our obligation and duty is to strengthen ourselves in the province of Ontario by creating unity between Toronto and the rural areas and between Toronto and other cities, because we are only strong when we are working together, from Toronto to London to Windsor to Sarnia to Ottawa, to small towns to big towns. All the communities will create a force—

Interjection.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Peterborough, too. Peterborough plays a pivotal role in our economy, and they have great representation here in the House. It’s important when we work together.

0910

In order to create that mechanism, we have to create one regulator to manage and control that system because a company that wants to come to Ontario or to Canada to open gets stuck with so many different rules. As I mentioned a few minutes ago, my friend who owns Global Financial manages almost \$3.5 billion of investments from across the province of Ontario, from across the nation, and sometimes faces difficulties because the rules we have in the province of Ontario are different than the rules in Alberta, British Columbia, Quebec or other provinces. So I think it makes it difficult to have many different systems. Could you imagine if we had one regulator, one system, adopted across the nation? It would make it easier for those financial institutions to flourish, to grow and to increase their capacity and their potential, and would also welcome other investment to come from around the globe to invest in Ontario and Canada. I think it's a very important step.

That's why I think the Minister of Finance, all the ministers of finance and all the people who work in the financial sector in the province of Ontario endorse this move. Also, especially when we had the difficult financial situations happen in North America and worldwide, people panicked. The people who invested in the mutual funds lost more than their investment. The people who had some kind of investment with different companies with no security lost their investments. Many names float around the globe because there was no security in many different nations; that is why people invested money heavily, to invest and secure the seniority in their life, and they lost it.

Therefore, I think it's important for all of us to create that regulator body, one system that would be managed across the whole nation, and we recommend, as the people from Ontario, Toronto to be the capital because Toronto naturally hosts, at the present time, most of the financial institutions and the strongest financial institutions in the whole country and is also ranked the third, maybe the second, in North America after the financial crisis in the United States and many different places. The bankers and the financial institutions in this province and this nation show how much we are able to manage our investments, how much we have security in our investments, because we took the right approach. We made sure that all the people who invested in our financial institutions were secure because we have a mechanism in place. So the only crippling obstacle facing those financial institutions is the many regulators across the nation, which makes it difficult to attract more business, to attract more financial institutions to come to this nation.

I was reading some things about how many commission tribunal investigations happen in the province of Ontario: almost 48%, up from 23%. I think the number increased as a result of the dilemma of many different institutions that didn't manage their assets or their financial systems very well. It also creates some kind of chaotic situations among the people who invest in those institutions. It's our Ontario Securities Commission which

plays a pivotal role in this area to make sure all the banks, all the financial institutions, follow the rules and regulations and make sure all the people who invest in those companies have some kind of security in place.

As we know, many companies in Ontario invest heavily in education financially, called RESPs. Many families across the province—and across the nation, as a matter of fact—like to invest in the future of their kids when they are born. They want to put something aside, and in the province of Ontario we contribute—and the government of Canada contributes—for some of those monies to support families who want to save some money so their kids, when they reach the age of 18 or older, when they want to go to university, have money set aside for them to use and be able to continue their education. We don't want to lose this money. Also, so many people, especially us here in this House, when we have no pension, put some money in mutual funds and many different assets so, for goodness' sake, when we grow up and we're not coming back to this place and have no source of income, we can rely on those savings.

But when you find out you lost most of your investments, especially as a result of the crisis that happened almost 16, 17, 18 months ago, you get panicked. What are we supposed to do? How can we make or create a safe security mechanism in order for our money, for our investments, for us and the rest of the people of this province, for the rest of the people in this country, to be safe so they can rely on investments they put away for when they grow up, when they become old or are not able to find a job?

The fragmented regulatory structure puts this province and our country at a competitive disadvantage. I think it's important to recognize that concern of the financial sector, because we cannot keep going without any security. Recently, in a survey that was conducted, almost 92% of the financial institutions in the province of Ontario and in Canada agreed that there should be one securities system, one regulatory body, for all financial institutions and all provinces. Then every province could follow and there could be easy mobility from province to province.

I still remember a gentleman who bought a company in Alberta and wanted to move it to Toronto. He faced a lot of different terms. The securities commission of Alberta gives companies whatever they want and makes it easy for them to transfer, but the securities commission in Toronto creates different obstacles, not because they want to create obstacles but because the rules and regulations are different from what they have in Alberta or British Columbia.

It would be important to have one system, and companies and financial institutions could move from province to province without any problems. I guess it would create a comfort zone for many different institutions and companies to come to this province and to Canada and invest. All the financial institutions, all the financial companies, all the bank systems and all the people who are interested in this subject are in favour of creating one regulator in Canada in order to control, manage and

oversee the conduct of financial institutions in this nation.

Also, the Canadian government agrees with this motion. In our government, under the leadership of our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, and under the leadership of our Chair of Cabinet, Minister Phillips, we've been talking about this since we were elected in 2003, in order to create one regulatory body and to invite that regulatory body to have offices in Toronto. It's a natural choice because we are the engine of the financial institutions in the whole nation; we are the financial engine of the whole country. It would be important. If we strengthen that financial system, that centre will pay back the whole nation, not just the province of Ontario.

As a result of that, the Canadian Securities Transition Office has been established to conduct a study of how we can put all the securities commissions together and how we can create one regulatory body. Most importantly, 10 of the 13 territories and provinces agreed and wanted to send representatives to this body. The federal government has named two appointees to create that transition office. Most importantly, there are two appointees from Ontario. One of them, Bryan Davies, is a former provincial Deputy Minister of Finance. The other, Larry Ritchie, is at present a vice-chair of the Ontario Securities Commission.

Those appointments send a great indication about the talent and skills we have in the province of Ontario and also about the confidence in our province and in the people who work in our province to be elected and to lead the transition system in the nation to create one regulatory body.

I think it's important to continue to work in this direction. It's important to create that mechanism in order to create a financial system that is safe and sound for all people.

I know that many people spoke before me on this issue and voiced their concern about fly-by-night organizations from many nations which come to many provinces, establish themselves, grow and appear financially sound and able to give the people who invest with them some kind of great return. Then what happens? They leave, and people lose their money. They try to play on the differences between the provinces by moving from place to place, using the weaknesses in the securities commissions in the provinces to play that game, to establish themselves and, in their mind, not to grow and establish themselves in a professional manner but to take the money of the people who invested with them.

I think our direction is the right approach. I think that if we create that regulatory body, it would be important for the province of Ontario, for Canada and for all the people who invest in many different institutions in this nation.

0920

I think many other provinces would agree with us to have Toronto be the capital, the head office for the regulator body, the one system, because we proved ourselves over the years. We proved ourselves and we sent indications to many different nations around the globe.

I was listening to the finance minister the other day when they had a summit about the banking system and how we can tax the banking system. He stood firm and strong and said, "No. We cannot reward our banking system by imposing on them and forcing them to pay more taxes. We should reward them because they help us as a nation to maintain our financial system, to maintain our infrastructure and to maintain the value of our dollar, which is important for all of us."

Therefore, when they met, they said no. I guess Canada and Japan said no, because it's important to reward that financial system, which gives us stability and the support we need in difficult times, and proves not just to Canadians but to the whole globe that our financial system is strong and sound.

Recently, I went to Saudi Arabia. I was in Lebanon, and I was approached by many different people. A guy from Saudi Arabia, who owns a bank—it's called the Al Rajhi Bank. You know what he said to me? He said that Canada is the best place to invest; he said that the best place to move his institution is Canada. That Al Rajhi Bank is one of the oldest banks in Saudi Arabia, and it's one of the strongest in the Middle East. They have, under their management, billions of dollars, and they want to come to Ontario. They want to see how they can come, because they heard about this province.

Also, not a long time ago, I was speaking to a gentleman from Lebanon who owns the bank Fransabank, and you know what he said? He is an economist; he was a Minister of Finance in Lebanon for many, many years. He also wants to come to Ontario, because he heard about our economic system. He heard about our financial system. He heard about our security system. But how can we put the whole system together to create some kind of engine or mechanism to comfort not just Canadians, but all people around the globe?

I think the only approach is our approach, which creates one regulated system, one regulator body, and can be adopted not just in Ontario but across the nation, from the territories to the provinces. Also, we'll open it here in Toronto, because Toronto, especially Bay Street, sends a signal to many different nations around the globe about how important our financial institutions are for our nation, for our currency, for our infrastructure, for our health care and for our growth in this nation. Therefore, it's our obligation and duty to continue to be an advocate on behalf of all the people who are investing their savings in our financial institutions for them to be secure, and also to invite all the people who want to enjoy what we have to come and invest without any fear.

It would be important if we created that one regulator body. Also, it would be more important if that regulator body opens its office and is headquartered in the city of Toronto because Toronto, I believe, is the capital of this beautiful province, financially, and also the engine of the whole nation, financially. So it would be a great signal and great respect for the city that protected our economy and protected our financial institutions.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise this morning and speak to the motion. I will read it once again. The motion is "that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario endorses the need for a strong national securities regulator and endorses the Open Ontario plan to grow our financial services industry by calling on the federal government to recognize Toronto's role as the third-largest financial centre in North America and therefore locate the new common securities regulator in Toronto where it belongs."

That's what the motion calls for. There's a part of the motion that we can't agree with, of course, but overall, I wanted to point out that, yes, we would agree with a national securities regulator being located in the city of Toronto.

Right off the bat, we all recognize that Toronto is recognized as Canada's national financial services centre. We know that it is the headquarters of the five largest banks in our country and a number of branches of foreign banks, and over 1,700 financial services firms are located in the city as well. It's also the home of the Toronto Stock Exchange, one of the primary stock exchanges we have in North America. According to our data, the sector employs somewhere around 140,000 people. Employment by the financial services sector has consistently been around 9% to 12% of total employment in the province.

I think you can also say that part of the argument for this, of course, would be the fact that Toronto is fairly central in our country, as opposed to the far east or Vancouver, or wherever it may be. It's safe to say that with our transportation system, airports et cetera, it's fairly convenient for transportation around North America. All the large banks we have with their headquarters in the city of Toronto are actually actively pursuing business on international markets, both in America and throughout the world, and I think it's important that we remember that.

So I don't think it's any kind of genius thought to think of this motion as though it was a Liberal plan. The reality is that Toronto is already the national leader in financial services, and if we do come up with a national financial services regulator, I think we could assume that the federal government would very seriously consider the city of Toronto. The only place I can see that might be competition to that may be Montreal.

By the way, it's nice to see that we have a Canadian team in the Stanley Cup semifinals, and I hope the Canadiens go all the way to the Stanley Cup. I'm a Montreal fan, myself. My dad was an adamant Leaf fan, and of course he kind of made us argue back and forth to make the games more interesting in our household. So I became a Montreal fan many years ago, and I'm really happy to see the determination and excitement we see with that in Canada right now.

We, in our caucus, have a problem with one part of the resolution, and we want it removed and would like it removed; I know we're debating that part right now. I'll read the section: "... and endorses the Open Ontario plan

to grow our financial services industry." I'm disappointed that that would even be part of this resolution, because it's basically making it a kind of biased or partisan type of motion, in that this is part of what the Liberal Party has called the Open Ontario plan in their throne speech. Of course we on this side of the House, at least in our caucus, we do not agree with the throne speech for many, many reasons—we don't believe the province is going in the right direction—and I'm going to outline a number of those in the next couple of minutes.

I think it's safe to say that one of the key arguments we've had in the House over the last few weeks, dating back to the introduction of the harmonized sales tax, is that this caucus simply cannot agree with it, particularly at this time. There are a number of reasons why we don't agree with it. One is that in many provinces that have—I think four provinces have introduced the harmonized sales tax—it was a revenue-neutral tax. That means they dropped the provincial sales tax and didn't give everybody back a wad of money prior to the election—this sort of shenanigans. They actually used the provincial sales tax, dropped it, and all taxes were included on all items.

However, with the tax we have today, we all know that the government accepted around \$4 billion from the federal government, and we know it will accumulate at least another \$3 billion to \$4 billion on top of that, even in the first year. We don't think that's good planning in very difficult economic times. If any kind of tax was coming in, we would rather have seen that it definitely would be revenue-neutral, and we know this tax is not. It's going to be a fairly substantial tax, particularly on people who are low-income earners and seniors. Those are the people I fear most about in my riding.

0930

I can tell you that we have a high percentage of people in the riding of Simcoe North who are over the age of 70. They don't have any other sources of revenue, and when they get hit with a tax that might cost them another \$800, \$900, \$1,200, \$1,500 a year, whatever it may be—when those sorts of things happen, we know we've got some problems and we have to be very concerned about that.

The other thing is, the government, in its Open Ontario throne speech and in its budget, continues to talk about the creation of 591,000 jobs. We've heard all kinds of numbers tossed around the House, and we're still trying to get the math clear on exactly what the government refers to. We just don't see how the Green Energy Act can create 591,000 jobs. If some of the manufacturers were to relocate in Ontario and produce all of the solar panels here, all of the wind-generating turbines here, we can see how there may be a few thousand jobs. But 591,000 jobs is what the government is basing the throne speech on.

This budget shows a long-term plan forecasting up to the year 2017-18. They say at that point they will have the budget balanced using the harmonized sales tax and these 591,000 jobs. However, the 591,000 jobs right now is pie in the sky. They're assuming that these jobs will come. But if they don't come, the deficit will not be elim-

inated in the year 2017-18, and it may be 10 or 15 years after that before it's done. Who knows for sure?

We know this government has never really stuck close to a throne speech. A clear indication of that has been the way they've mismanaged the energy file. When the new government came in in 2003, they had a plan in their platform to eliminate coal-fired generators by 2007. Well, that was three years ago, and the only coal-fired generating plant that has ever been eliminated in the province of Ontario is the one that was set in plan by my colleague the member from Waterloo, Elizabeth Witmer, when she was the Minister of Energy. That plan did go through, and the government took the credit for it, of course, but I was with her the day she made that announcement at Lakeview generating plant. That's the only plant where we've actually seen it happen. So we're not able to have a lot of confidence in the government when it comes to forecasting exact dates.

So when someone tells me they're three years behind in closing down coal-fired generators—and now we know it won't be until 2015, 2016 or 2017 for those—how can we say that the debt that has been accumulated, the \$21 billion this year—and they say they'll eventually lower it to zero by 2017-18. How can we possibly say they have any kind of a clear forecast on that? I don't believe that number, and I certainly don't believe the 591,000 net new jobs that the government talks about.

I hope I'm wrong. I hope there are 590,000 jobs created in Ontario, and I hope that a lot of the young people who are looking for teaching or nursing positions now or the people who have graduated out of community colleges are finding jobs in Ontario and not having to move to Saskatchewan or Alberta or south of the border to find employment.

When we talk about keeping that section out of the motion—that's why our party, and I think myself in particular—I could never support a motion that has the Open Ontario plan as part of it. I know the government members believe that they should go along with the Premier's office and support this kind of a resolution, but we don't feel that way on this side of the House.

I wanted to talk a bit more on the energy file. When the announcements came a few weeks ago here about the 184 projects the government is planning to sign agreements on with the private sector companies to create new energy programs in the province of Ontario, we've already come up with some problems in my riding, and it's not to do with the wind turbines. We don't have any wind turbine projects in Simcoe North at this time. It doesn't really fit into the wind atlas, although we do have a lot of it on Georgian Bay.

However, what has really disturbed a lot of the residents are some of the locations of the new solar farms. Most of them are about 100 acres in size. We've got two of them in what we call the old township of Matchedash. Two of them in particular are on good farmland. Even this year, the farmland is under cultivation. The province of Ontario has supplied funding in the past to help put tile drainage on these farms. They've grown good crops over

the years. But suddenly, out of nowhere, somebody who has a bunch of Tim Hortons doughnut projects in Toronto has bought one of the farms. He has somehow found a fancy way to lease it to some company from California; it's a California energy company. Without any indication to the neighbours and without their knowledge, suddenly this plan is being approved on what we would call good farmland. Whether it would qualify under this Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs program as class 1, 2, 3 or 4, I don't know. However, it is farmland and it is growing good crops and, as I said earlier, it has been tile-drained accordingly. So it's difficult for us to support a plan like that.

I guess this argument goes on and on about the change in the government's plan and how involved the municipal governments are. The government likes to say they are so transparent and they like to say they work closely with their municipal neighbours. However, on this same piece of farmland that got approval for 100 acres of solar, if that same owner was to go to the municipality and say he'd like to put a welding shop on that property, he would need a very strict official plan amendment and a zoning bylaw to actually carry on with that. The neighbours would have full control. They would be able to voice their concerns at public meetings and follow the public process that we follow through all of our zoning and official plan amendments.

So I really think the plan to move ahead without the transparency and without the approval of the municipal governments has been a step backwards in terms of the transparency and the planning process that we've built up over the years in the province of Ontario. Yes, the planning process we have today in Ontario probably includes a lot of red tape, but it does give property rights to people who have bought property in good faith. They have an ability to move ahead and to actually voice concerns on issues around the planning matters in their municipalities. That's why people elect their municipal councils: to have an opportunity to go to their council members and voice their concerns on planning issues.

If we've gone in this direction, particularly with energy, then I'm very curious about what will happen down the road with things like gravel pits, asphalt plants and waste management facilities. At some point, will they be given approval without the input from the local municipal governments? We know they can be very, very controversial.

Before these solar farms and wind farms are all built, we're going to see a lot more demonstrations like we saw here a week ago out on the front lawn, when we had 300 or 400 people objecting to the manner in which this has been done.

The idea of making Toronto the national centre for the financial services regulator is a great idea. I'm sure most of the people in the House would have to agree with that. I think if you looked across the country and you talked to the people in Alberta, BC or Manitoba, a lot of those folks too—even the Parliaments there—would probably agree that this is not a bad move. But I don't think they

would agree that the Open Ontario plan is the plan for something that they wouldn't want to support in a resolution either.

As we look towards the approval of this resolution, I really wish the government would seriously consider the removal of that part of the motion because, as I said earlier, it's important to us. We, as members of this House, don't think the throne speech indicated a solid, good vision for the province of Ontario in the foreseeable future, and we certainly can't support it.

0940

I'd also like to talk a little bit, while I'm on it—if I've got a couple more minutes left, Mr. Speaker—about our health care system. We've gone through some amazing projects in the last 15, 20 years up in Simcoe county. One of the things I'm most proud of is the fact that we were able to plan and organize, getting through the planning process, the redevelopment and expansion of Soldiers' Memorial Hospital in Orillia. We had a lot of community input, a lot of community fundraising; the province put in their fair share. We're very, very proud of this hospital. You can imagine last week when it came to our attention through the board that in order to balance their books they're going to have to lay off or do away with 26 nursing positions and close 25 hospital beds—in a brand new facility. This has created an outrage in our community.

When we talk about Open Ontario and we talk about trying to come up with a good health and long-term-care system—here we have a hospital that is at capacity at all times, has an excellent reputation, has won awards for its efficiencies in the past, and now we're finding out that in order to be more efficient we have to come up with 26 full-time nursing positions being eliminated. That's unacceptable.

I've got to tell you, I'm going to the hospital tomorrow; I go each year during National Nursing Week. Tomorrow I have to face these nurses and I have to come up with answers as to, "Why does this work? Why does it not work?" They think they're working hard, they think they're efficient, they think they're effective, yet somehow the money is not there to pay them and they're going to be replaced with people who are part-timers.

In my opinion, it will have a negative impact on the hospital, but it has a very negative impact on the morale in the community toward our hospital, because we think it's been a phenomenal hospital. The province came through with the funding to redevelop it, and now, as we look forward, we don't know what the future of that hospital is.

How can you shut down 25 beds over a two-year period when the population is growing and when we need every bed available? We know that our community care access files have been cut by up to 30%, and we've got a lot of sad stories there.

An Open Ontario vision that the government brags about in the throne speech and in the budget does not fit into our plans as a caucus. We think that Ontarians deserve better than a province that is going to have an accumulated debt of a quarter of a trillion dollars by

2017-18. That's a debt that our children and our grandchildren will be paying down so we can have some fancy things today. Our grandchildren will be paying those debts off as we look towards their futures. On top of that, we've also got to be concerned about the number of jobs that this throne speech has tried to create. It's pie in the sky; it's Disney World; it's Wonderland. There are just not 591,000 jobs out there. It's amazing when you say that and you talk about Wonderland and Disney World to these folks. They actually believe it, because they wake up—they're there half the time. That's the reality: We are not going to create 591,000 jobs under this Open Ontario plan.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Just so those watching at home know what we're speaking about here, we're debating a motion that has been put forward by the Minister of Finance for a single national regulator based in Toronto. That, of course, we in the New Democratic Party support. The problem is that this motherhood motion, if I can call it that, comes with a bit of poison pie with it, too—no apple pie here, but poison pie—by also calling upon us to endorse their Open Ontario plan.

The Open Ontario plan is a very nice way of saying that this government has no plan: no plan in terms of moving forward for job creation, no plan in terms of moving forward for housing, no plan moving forward for women, no plan moving forward for poverty reduction—

Mr. Paul Miller: Pensions.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: No plan moving forward for pensions, no plan moving forward for transit. That's what I'm going to talk about: the open plan that doesn't exist.

I also have to say, despite the fact that I've got 19 minutes now to say it, that this is an egregious waste of the House's time. This is a motion that a majority Liberal government is putting before the House, asking us to endorse them going to speak to Mr. Harper in Ottawa. Surely, they can do that without taking up the House's time; surely there's more pressing business in the province of Ontario, having lost hundreds of thousands of jobs, coming out of a recession, than to simply tie up the House's time to endorse or not to endorse, as the case may be, something they can do without us. Come on, are they incapable of doing anything without bringing it to the House? That's the problem.

Let's look at Toronto. I'm happy to look at Toronto. I live in Toronto. I love Toronto. I am a born-and-bred Torontonionian. Do we want the national securities regulator here in Toronto? Sure, why not? It's a good thing. We'd also actually like to see the report that came out of this committee looking at regulations, a report that a lot of hard work of a lot of deputants went into, that still isn't forthcoming. I have had constituents calling saying, "Where's the report about the securities regulation?"

But first to Toronto. Toronto the centre of financial regulation—not a problem. Toronto, however, is also the centre of poverty and homelessness. That's something I'm concerned about. Toronto is also the centre of grid-

lock and greenhouse gas emissions. That's something I'm extremely concerned about. Do we want Bay Street to do well? We don't have a problem with Bay Street doing well, but quite frankly we'd like to see Main Street doing well as well.

We've had a record number of bankruptcies of small businesses in Toronto. The HST isn't going to help them. In fact, when the Toronto Association of Business Improvement Areas came to Queen's Park, this government wouldn't even meet with them. They've dispensed with small business as even something that a cabinet minister needs to look at. Where's the small business portfolio? It's gone. It doesn't exist. No longer is small business represented around the cabinet table. Small business came here with one purpose: Representing 30,000 small businesses across the GTA, they wanted to tell this government that 85% of their membership was opposed to the HST—opposed to it—because they know, like we know, that for every dollar that's raised by the HST on the backs of small business and consumers, who can afford it least, \$1.16 goes to big corporations. That's really what the HST is about. That's what small business knows. This government doesn't get it.

They also don't get transit—a \$4-billion cut from transit for the city of Toronto. Yesterday, it took me an hour and a half in gridlocked traffic to get from here to my constituency office in the west end of Toronto. As I drove, I passed people standing 30 and 40 deep at TTC stops. That's rush hour in Toronto right now. What is this government's response to that? To break a promise. To break a promise for transit. At the same time that they're posing as a green government, they break a promise to transit. Oh, they're building transit; they're building lines that will take only the wealthy up to the airport, with diesel trains through our neighbourhoods—not stopping to benefit our neighbourhoods—right from Union Station to the airport, burning diesel all the way. They're willing to do that but they're not willing to put \$4 billion into the lines they promised.

It would be really, really interesting to see the Liberal members—I know the member from Eglinton—Lawrence has stood up, at least in part; at least he's willing to come and table some motions on behalf of his constituents, even if he editorializes those motions and petitions. But he knows that his constituents want the Eglinton LRT line built. They've been waiting 20 years. Jane-Finch residents know, and their member should know, that they want the LRT built. They were promised it. The city of Toronto was promised it. But that's not going to happen.

When you go to other cities anywhere else in the world and compare their transit systems and the way their transit systems are financed by higher levels of government to Toronto's, you are sadly, sadly disappointed, and ashamed, I must say, of the inaction of this government on the transit portfolio.

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Poverty: Toronto is now the national capital of poverty in Canada. We are the national capital. We have one in six children in Ontario living in poverty. We should be

ashamed—ashamed—of that statistic. The 25 in 5: What happened to that? What happened to the poverty reduction plan? Obviously, not much. It doesn't get a lot of mention, does it, in the Open Ontario plan? This government knows it's failing on the poverty file. And, quite frankly, a 25% reduction in poverty isn't good enough. We shouldn't have poverty in the province of Ontario. We're one of the wealthiest jurisdictions in the world. Yet here we are looking at homelessness yet again, a national disaster—it's never been anything but—in the city of Toronto. We still step over bodies on the street sleeping on grates. Have we become so used to that that we don't care anymore? That, in fact, is the stance of this government. It doesn't care anymore about those people.

In—what?—seven years of government, they've promised 20,000 new-build units of housing and managed to roll out about 6,000, if that. We can't even spend the federal dollars that have been delivered to this government on housing. We can't even get those out the door. That's how inept this government has been on the housing file.

It's been so inept that when I put forward my bill on inclusionary zoning, which will be debated again in a couple of weeks, a bill that I must say has garnered incredible support from municipalities across this province—incredible support, a broad range of non-partisan support, I must say, from right to left of the political spectrum among councillors and among municipalities, because they all get that inclusionary zoning is a way of building housing, providing housing, that doesn't cost a tax dime. What it does is what jurisdictions across the United States and across the world are doing, and that is to require of our development community that they set aside at least, conservatively, let's say, 10% of the units that they build, whether housing or apartments, for affordable housing. This could be any number of options. It could be rent-to-own. It could be a myriad of options. My bill doesn't even specify. All it does is get the province out of the way. That is all it does. It gets the province out of the way so if municipalities want to go the inclusionary zoning route, they are able to. Now, my goodness, that's not asking a lot. It is not in any way prescriptive, my bill. All it does is allow municipalities, if they so choose, to bring in inclusionary zoning. My goodness, how revolutionary is that? Yet this government can't even act on that.

I was sorely disappointed to see in the speech from the throne, in this government's so-called Open Ontario plan, not one mention of housing—not one mention. I was hoping at least inclusionary zoning would come from this government. No—nothing. They voted for it and they let it go, they let it die, as they always do: Voted for it, let it go, let it die. I'm going to bring it back. I hope they vote for it again.

Quite frankly, the joy of inclusionary zoning is that in a down market, it's even good for developers, because when you can't sell those units, at least you can get some return on them if you go the affordable housing route. So, really, we should be on board with inclusionary zoning. That's the least we could do, never mind the govern-

ment's promises, dating back to 2003, to build new-build affordable housing, something that has long been forgotten.

Post-secondary education: In their Open Ontario plan, we have "increasing spaces in colleges and universities for 20,000 students." Nobody's going to argue, really, with that. We know why they're doing it: They are trying to get some money from foreign students into our university systems. But let's look at what this government has actually done with the post-secondary university file. What they've done is ignore it, quite frankly. They've ignored it to the tune of us being 10 out of 10 in terms of per capita funding for students. That is a sorry record indeed: 10 out of 10 in per capita funding for students.

We have the highest tuition fees in Canada. We have the highest student debt in Canada. Do you know how many students have talked to me and said, "I wish I had been born in Quebec"? Why can we not get our act together in terms of post-secondary education? This is something that Canada used to be famous for on the international scene. We had university tuition that was affordable. We had good education systems that could be afforded. We didn't graduate students like they do in the States with \$100,000 worth of debt for a BA.

A wonderful young woman who works for me and wants to go to medical school and is working on her masters in public health told me that when she finishes—listen to this. We should be shocked and appalled at this. In a province where half a million Ontarians don't have family doctors, here's a young woman who wants to go to medical school, is getting her masters in public health and has a BA. By the time she has finished medical school, her student debt will be—take in your breath, because here comes the figure. What do you think it is?

Mr. Paul Miller: A hundred and twenty thousand.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Do you think it's higher? Do I hear bids? Higher, higher.

Mr. Paul Miller: One hundred and fifty thousand.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Her total student debt will be \$300,000 to get a medical degree in the province of Ontario.

How many students can even afford to take on that kind of debt? And yet we're a province in a screaming need for GPs, for family doctors. This is outrageous. This is appalling. This leads, of course, to more money, not less expenditure, down the road. This is, as my granny and all of our grannies would say, penny-wise and pound-foolish. This leads to people in my riding going to the emergency room to get primary medical care because they can't get a doctor's care in their community. They have to wait three or four weeks for an appointment. That's what happens. That's penny-wise and pound-foolish, because that's how much it costs to graduate a doctor in the province of Ontario. It's outrageous, disgusting and certainly putting us on the road of the American reality, not what we would hope on this side of the floor. The European reality is where post-secondary education in most countries is free. Imagine that—free. When I was in Sweden, the students were concerned that they weren't being paid enough to go to school. What a difference.

Talking about Sweden, their idea of an open country—and remember they're smaller than we are here, nine million versus 13 million—is not to force a large company with unionized staff, like Xstrata, away from the province. It is not to invite Samsung and other multinational companies where the profits, let's say, and we know, will flow from the province out to some other jurisdiction. That is not most European countries' idea of open for business. Their idea of open for business is to actually help their indigenous business, their own business, their small business become medium-sized business, their medium-sized business to become large business, and then to export to other jurisdictions. That is a planned, reasonable approach to growing an economy. That is not the Open Ontario plan to growing Ontario.

The Open Ontario plan to growing the province, in terms of jobs, is to invite large multinationals in and to give them every kind of corporate tax break on the backs of an anti-poverty file, on the backs of building housing, on the backs of saddling our students with debt, on the backs of any kind of money for environmental cleanup or green energy, because there's only a certain amount of tax dollars that we have to spend. If we give it away, if we don't collect it, we don't have it to spend on all of the initiatives that we desperately need.

What do they do in other jurisdictions to grow their economies? They invest in buying from that region, as we have suggested they do here—buy Ontario. We have suggested that what they do is invest in Ontario companies, give contracts to Ontario businesses, build Ontario jobs and build green Ontario jobs at that. That's what we need to do. But that's not in Open Ontario.

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So Open Ontario truly is one of those Orwellian doublespeaks. Because when they say "open," what they really mean is closed—closed to the poor; closed to the students; closed to women who still make 71 cents for every dollar for a man; closed to those increasingly trying to struggle into the middle class. Now we're going to hammer them with a flat regressive tax. But yes, there is some truth to Open Ontario. It's open to the multinationals: Come in, do what you want, and when the labour is not cheap enough or when the environmental regulations get too onerous, pick up and leave, take your jobs with you and owe nothing to the workers that you leave behind or the communities that you've pillaged. That's Open Ontario.

So again, in the few minutes that I've got left to go back to the financial regulations—do we need them? Do we need them in Toronto? We would love them in Toronto, this national regulator. By all means, you have our blessing; go speak to Mr. Harper—as if you need our blessing, on this side of the floor, to speak to the federal government. I mean, surely and hopefully Ontarians are expecting that their government at Queen's Park does that without the say-so of the entire House and hours worth of debate on the issue.

Do we need tighter securities regulations? Oh, yes; excuse me, yes. But this is a government, remember, that

is taking its financial advice from Goldman Sachs. Come on; I mean, incompetent at best, criminal at worst. That's where they go when they need financial advice, and then they're talking about securities regulation? It is to laugh. Our own financial criminals, i.e., Conrad Black, have to be persecuted and prosecuted somewhere else: in the United States. It never would have happened here, because, you know, traditionally in the past we have been an open market. Open market—that's another truism about Open Ontario, for anyone who wants to rip off investors, and now not only rip off investors, but maybe rip off taxpayers too, if we're getting financial advice about selling our precious assets from some institution like Goldman Sachs. Again, thank goodness for the Americans on that file, because they prosecute. We don't; we seek out for financial advice the same companies they're prosecuting. That's how incompetent this government is, and that's how sad it is to be an Ontarian these days.

So should Toronto be the head office? Sure; why not? Is Open Ontario a fallacy? It's worse than that. And should Toronto also be a place where housing is being built, where inclusionary zoning is the law of the land, where poverty is something that is a distant memory, where women make the same amount of money as men, where daycare is accessible for everyone, where children's aid societies are funded to do the work they need to, where nurses are being hired and not let go? Yes. Toronto should also be the capital for all of that as well. And where students can graduate with a degree without being saddled with a mortgage-sized debt for the rest of their lives—yes, Ontario should also be that, and so should Toronto.

Just finally, on the transit file, where a government doesn't cut \$4 billion out of a promise they made to build transit in a city that's desperate—desperate—for a better transit system—that's what would make an open Ontario and that's what would make Toronto a real financial player on the world stage, with an economy that is good for everyone: Main Street as well as Bay Street.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I'm really pleased to enter into the debate on the motion. I think, as we've heard from a number of members, there are certain components of this motion that are absolutely unequivocal, that we can all support. The motion is made up essentially of three parts: the need for a strong national securities regulator, as opposed to the patchwork that we have at the moment; the point that we want to grow our financial services industry—and I cannot believe that my colleagues from the other two parties do not want to actually do that. They may be quibbling over references to the Open Ontario plan, but surely we all intend to have the strongest financial services industry here in Ontario that we possibly can. The third element of the motion refers to the fact that we all know that Toronto is the most suitable place for the location of this new national securities regulator.

First of all, I'd just like to address the issue of the need for a national securities regulator. We can understand why we do have the 13 regulators across Canada, one for each province and one for each territory: This country is a very vast geographic area, and it was natural, as we were emerging from our pioneer communities, that investment would be local and financial services would be local, but those days are now long gone. Of course, we live in a global economy, and amongst developed nations, we're really the only one that still has subnational levels of regulation.

I remember, some 15 years ago, when I was doing my masters in business administration at York, we were looking at our financial institutions—something that I had very little knowledge of or, frankly, interest in before that time—and being absolutely astonished that there were 13 regulators. It was certainly self-evident to us that there was a need for a national securities regulator. That was some 15 years ago. I would argue that debating the need for a national securities regulator is clearly long overdue, and if we're doing it now, we should do it for some length of time. It is worthy of that effort, and it is something that we've really seen a glacial pace of progress towards.

It is certainly good that the federal government has put in place a transitional structure looking at the movement towards a national securities regulator, but the kind of motion that we have before us today, hopefully, will prod them to get their business done in as expeditious a manner as possible.

I think we all know that having a strong national regulator will mean that we will eliminate some duplication and some restrictions on information-sharing. This kind of fragmented regulatory structure obviously makes it hard for businesses, certainly coming from overseas, to fathom all the various differences in the regulations from province to province. That leads us to know that any strong national securities regulator will be a competitive advantage for us, and we'll be able to attract more international investment. It will make things much easier for those investors to come to our country.

It will reinforce our reputation internationally. During our winter break, I was down in Florida, and I talked to many people down there. They were so envious of the very strong regulatory framework that we have as it relates to our financial institutions here in Canada. Clearly, we escaped the worst of the recession because of those kinds of restrictions, and that is very well recognized. Having the national securities regulator, one place to go, will reinforce and add to our already very strong reputation in this particular regard.

Having said all that, we do know that the Ontario Securities Commission has been working very hard over the last couple of years to really promote their mandate. In other words, they have worked hard to promote the integrity and compliance in Ontario's capital markets. During the past year, in response to the upheavals in the markets, the OSC has even increased the degree of vigilance that it normally proceeds with.

This was a matter of considerable interest for many residents in my riding. Oak Ridges–Markham is a particularly diverse community, and we have a number of people who were following the Ontario Securities Commission's regulatory process very, very closely, including a federal deputy minister from a finance-related portfolio who was updating me constantly on how the OSC was proceeding.

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When you look at the adjudication area, the number of hearing days for matters heard by the commission's tribunal rose by 48% in the last fiscal year. Investigations increased as well, with investigations of alleged breaches of securities law increasing by 23%.

Of course, enforcement is only part of what the OSC does to maintain market integrity. Preventing economic crimes from occurring is a far more effective way in which to deal with these issues, so prevention is certainly much better than punishment. So the OSC has been making really excellent efforts in terms of compliance there, monitoring disclosure filings by public companies. They've conducted compliance reviews of major segments of the investment funds market, including a number of fund managers of money market funds and non-conventional investment funds. This is all to protect investors, of course. So we certainly do have a wonderful base on which to build here in Toronto.

In 2009, our government also made changes to the Securities Act and the Commodity Futures Act to ensure that the province and the OSC have the necessary tools to take immediate action to protect the public interest in the event of extraordinary circumstances involving major market disruption. I think this was certainly a comfort to investors, and a very good step forward.

The OSC just recently, in the last couple of months, created an investor advisory panel that will provide input on the work of the commission, including proposed OSC rules and policies, the OSC's annual statement of priorities, concept papers and specific issues. In other words, they are developing policies that, again, will better protect investors. We have an excellent base to build upon.

Turning to the fact that our Open Ontario plan is clearly working—including, of course, our very courageous decision to move to the HST on July 1 of this year—I noticed in the *Star* today how well we're doing in terms of Canada scoring well in terms of competitiveness:

"Canada ranks second to Mexico and far ahead of the US on a list of tax-friendly countries for business, according to a new report....

"Lower corporate tax rates can be a huge competitive advantage when companies decide where to set up shop....

"The introduction of the HST in Ontario and British Columbia is likely to enhance Canada's standing in the coming years...."

This is all part of our government's move to make the financial services industry in Ontario as strong as we possibly can.

Many people have very clearly stated that they believe Toronto is the right place for a national securities regu-

lator. I think it's worth repeating because this is something that we really should be proud of, knowing that Toronto is a world-class city. Toronto is the business and financial capital of Canada, it is the centre of the nationwide capital market, and it is Canada's link to international capital markets, which are becoming increasingly global in nature. Toronto is the securities industry capital of Canada, employing more people than in Canada's next five largest cities combined. Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, Ottawa and Winnipeg—Toronto's industry is larger than all those combined. So though there may be some talk of a move to London as the right place for the home of the regulator on a sentimental basis, it is clear that Toronto is the logical conclusion for the home of this national securities regulator.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I'm partial to Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Markham obviously would be an excellent choice, too, for the precise venue. We have lots of places to build, and of course within such easy access to Toronto.

The TSX is the eighth-largest equity market in the world based on market capitalization. Toronto is home to Canada's five largest banks. Actually, just yesterday evening, I was talking to an executive with the National Bank of Canada, and they're looking at their expansion into the Ontario market with great interest as well. I think we all know that it's very important to have competition between our banks, and Ontario seems to be attracting that market as well. Two of the largest 10 global life insurers, plus three of the four largest Canadian property and casualty insurers, also make Toronto their home; 58 pension fund managers, including the CPP Investment Board, and 119 securities firms also call Toronto home. It really goes on and on.

It is the logical conclusion. I believe that this motion addresses three important components, three messages, that we wish to give to the federal government: first of all, finally, a national securities regulator; the fact that we in Ontario want to grow our financial services industry, building on the incredible strong base that we have; and, thirdly, that the logical location is clearly Toronto, or perhaps, I might say, the greater Toronto area, not to leave Markham out of the running as the home for this.

I know that many others want to enter into this very important debate, including members, obviously, from our side of the House. In conclusion, I am totally in favour of this important motion, and I hope that all colleagues from all three parties will support it.

Debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30, at which time we'll have question period.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I would like to welcome from the Certified Management Accountants of Ontario a few representatives here today: John Hsu, Merv Hillier,

who's the president and CEO, Aina DeViet, John Forester, Ted Ballantyne, Sharon Armstrong and Lindsay Mack. They are also hosting a reception at 11:45 in room 230, and I would request all members to attend.

Mr. Michael A. Brown: On behalf of our fine page from Plummer Additional, which, as the Speaker would know, is a suburb of Bruce Mines, who's doing a fine job here in the Legislature, I'd like to introduce his friend Kathryn Laskaris.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It gives me great pleasure to introduce some people who are here to witness Stig Tripp, one of our pages, as he's page leader today. I have with us in the House in the Speaker's gallery: Harold Tripp, father; Christina Tripp, mother; Paul Tripp, granddad; Margaret Rosback, grandmother; Max Tripp, brother; Catherine Rosback, aunt; and Kelly Cluskey, a family friend. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to invite my colleagues to welcome Mr. Sergio Chiamparino, mayor of Turin, the first capital of Italy.

The city is preparing, together with the country, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the unification of Italy.

Mayor Chiamparino is accompanied by Evelina Christillin, president of the Teatro Stabile in Torino; Raffaella Scalisi, head of international affairs for the city of Torino; Anna Martina, manager of communications, tourism and international promotions for the city of Torino; Corrado Paina, executive director of the Italian Chamber of Commerce of Ontario; and Tiziana Tedesco, director of the trade department of the Italian Chamber of Commerce. I welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I would like to welcome to the Montreal Canadiens all their new fans. Go, Habs, go!

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I am absolutely delighted to introduce to you the delegation from the government of Valencia and from Labor Solis. They're here because they're convinced that Ontario is the place to be to promote partnership with government and partnership with business. They are Mr. Enrique Cosi, Mr. Julian Pascual, Mr. Baldemar Asencio, Mr. Luis Sospedra and Mr. Antonio Penja. Welcome.

Remarks in Spanish.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I would like to introduce, in the members' gallery, Ms. Marnie Cooper and Mr. John Crawford, both of who are here representing the Scleroderma Society of Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I would like to introduce members of the International Gas Union who are here today for a tour of the Legislature and some meetings. Joining us today are Mel Ydreos, from Union Gas and chair of the geopolitics and natural gas task force; Jeff Okrucky, from Union Gas; Ho Sook Wah, from Malaysia; Coby van der Linde, from the Netherlands; Dick de Jong, from the Netherlands; Roberto Gregori, from Italy; Abdul Rahim Mahmood, from Malaysia; Graham Moore, from the United States; Sheik Nadeem Shahryar, from Pakistan; Florijana Dedovic, from Norway; Torstein Indrebø, secretary general of the International Gas Union; Jennifer

Durham, from Union Gas; and Matthew Gibson, from Union Gas.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I've got some different delegations here. I want to say that they're not in the assembly yet, but a class from Couchiching Heights Public School in Orillia is here, along with John Winchester's class from Park Street Collegiate Institute.

I have my co-op student from Park Street Collegiate Institute in Orillia, Jessica Clark. She'll be joining us shortly. She's here to see Queen's Park today as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity, on behalf of the member from Thunder Bay—Atikokan and page Mary McPherson, to welcome her mother, Tracy Shields, and her sister Sarah McPherson, today to Queen's Park.

We have with us in the Speaker's gallery today the consul general of the Republic of Croatia in Toronto, Mr. Ljubinko Matešić.

Please join me in welcoming our guests to the Legislature today.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAXATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Acting Premier. Yesterday, Premier McGuinty said he expected businesses to lower prices as a result of his HST, but the businesses he runs won't.

Why would Premier McGuinty expect businesses to lower prices when he isn't willing to do so himself?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think we've been pretty clear about it. We announced in the 2009 budget the alcohol pricing, and then in the fall budget, in this book, on page 35, I'll remind the member what we laid out and what we said. We're getting rid of two sales taxes—harmonizing with the GST—which affects other outdated fees on alcohol. Therefore, we are bringing clarity to the system—this is right out of the book that was published and distributed in this House—with four policy objectives in mind:

(1) "Maintain the revenue that would be lost in lowering the ... rates on alcohol..."

(2) "Mirror the current system as closely as possible and" level the playing field across all distribution channels;

(3) "Generate no net new revenue for the province and ... minimize any changes to consumer prices; and

(4) "Create a structure that would continue to promote social responsibility."

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Ontario families are getting a very mixed message here because the Premier keeps saying that businesses will lower their prices when the HST is implemented. But the first test of what he's telling Ontario families is with the crown corporations he runs. At the same time he's pressuring businesses to

lower their prices, the Premier has directed the LCBO to mark up their prices when the HST comes in.

What makes the McGuinty Liberals think that businesses would lower their prices when they can just follow the Premier's lead and make consumers pay more?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have been very clear in the budget with respect to social reference pricing. We were very clear in the fall statement. We laid it out in this book. It's on page 35. There are four pages describing what we are doing with that.

Social reference pricing is an important part of helping to ensure that we maintain a system of health care and other supports in terms of financing the challenges associated with alcohol. I would remind the member that her party raised the social reference price some three times on alcohol.

1040

This is an appropriate and balanced policy. We also expect, by the way, that the bars and grills in Ontario that serve alcohol should see a tax cut of some \$24 million.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Once again, it always comes down to reading the fine print with this government. What you hear is not necessarily the way it is. Prices on wine and liquor should be coming down after July 1, but Steve Erwin of the LCBO is quoted as saying that you ordered a mark-up in prices to grab back the 4% difference in tax.

Why should Ontario families expect other businesses to do as you say and not as you do?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Pages 35, 36, 37 and 38 of the budget document outline it. Not only does it say what we're doing with respect to replacing alcohol fees, it details how it will break down by type; it details how it will break down by revenue change and distribution network.

But here we see the shifty Conservative Party. They try to criticize the HST, which their federal partners support, and then, when you ask them if they will repeal it, they kind of shift around and say, "Well, you know, no." They used to say that this was the right thing to do; now they say it's the wrong thing to do.

I'm with the federal member for Whitby—Oshawa, who recognizes the importance of this policy, and with the federal government in Ottawa, who have helped make it happen.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a moment. Order.

New question.

TAXATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Again to the Acting Premier: Yesterday, Dalton McGuinty said that businesses will lower prices when the HST is implemented. You know that can't be true because you're not legislating it as so, so I've got a quick question for you—I hope you can

answer: Was it the Premier, the Minister of Finance or the Minister of Revenue who called the LCBO to tell them that he was kidding and it did not apply to crown corporations?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No. We said very clearly in the budget what we are doing on pages 34, 35, 36 and 37. I'd invite the member to read that.

We believe that socially responsible pricing is important, as did the member's party opposite when they raised it three times. It's clear, it's unequivocal and it's the right public policy to pursue in Ontario. It remains revenue-neutral to the government of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: We know for a fact that this HST is not revenue-neutral; it's a \$3-billion tax grab that hurts seniors and small businesses the most.

But I think what's most confusing about all of this is that they are confusing businesses and consumers based on Dalton McGuinty's comments just yesterday. He's telling them to lower prices when he refuses to do so with the businesses that he runs. Those working with the LCBO say that based on the Premier's HST sales pitch, consumers "should be expecting a reduction" in prices. That is not forthcoming.

Why is the Premier trying to make families believe that the HST will lead to lower prices when this greedy \$3-billion tax grab will not?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'd invite the member to read the budget and see what we said about the pricing of alcohol in the spring and fall of 2009.

I would refer the member to the Conference Board of Canada, the C.D. Howe Institute and a range of independent organizations that have all said conclusively that the HST will result in lower prices on many goods and services. This is the right policy. Just today, KPMG is out with a report saying that Canada's competitive tax position in the world has now moved from third to second as a result of this government's policies.

It's the appropriate policy. I know the member wants to stick to the old ways and that shifty Tory way of saying one thing and not doing another. Accordingly, this is the right policy for Ontario's future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The finance minister used that term once, and the second time, on reflection, I don't think it is parliamentary. I would ask him to withdraw that comment.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'll withdraw it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: This Acting Premier, the real Premier and his revenue minister can continue to cite all the third party reports they want, but their own actions show that the prices will not come down after the HST is implemented. They know the truth. They should tell this chamber the truth.

Industry insiders say the McGuinty Liberals want to "preserve government revenue ... it's not about social responsibility; it's all about revenue." The HST is a greedy tax grab after all.

My final question: Why won't you give Ontario families another cleansing moment of truth and just admit that this is going to be a \$3-billion tax grab that seniors, small businesses and middle-class families are going to be hosed by?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I take the word of the C.D. Howe Institute. I take the word of a whole group of individuals who actually put their name on what they're saying, not some anonymous industry source.

If that member and her party are so interested in lowering prices, why won't they support us on lowering drug prices, instead of standing up for the big drug interests in Ontario?

This tax package is right for Ontario's future. It is right for the future of this country. That's why that member's federal party supports this. It is right for the people of Ontario. It will create jobs, raise incomes and raise capital investment. It's the right thing to do for a better future for Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There are a number of members who want to participate and it would be much more helpful to the Speaker if they were participating from their own seats.

New question.

TAXATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Acting Premier. Today, the Toronto Star reminded us that the LCBO will not be passing on a tax cut July 1. Consumers won't benefit from lower prices. If consumers won't see savings passed through at the government's own liquor store, why should they expect any other company to pass on HST savings?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, a point to the member: We spoke quite at length about this last November. It's right there. It outlines not only what the policy is, but our commitment to the social reference pricing for alcohol.

I'm delighted to participate in the debate around this, and that's why we spelled it out very clearly last November. If you and your party haven't had a chance to read the details—and it's in the front end of the book—that's unfortunate, because if you look at the whole package, if you look at what the independent sources say, if you look at what anybody without a partisan hat on says, this is the right policy to pursue for Ontario, the right policy to pursue for Canada. It will create jobs, raise capital investment and raise family incomes.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a shame that the minister missed the question. The thing is, Minister, I've been listening to the response of the government for a while about this issue. Time after time, we're told that, in fact, prices will come down. That's one of the saving graces of the HST. You can wrap yourself in the budget flag as much as you want, but why should consumers believe that oil, gas and hydro companies will pass their savings on to the public if you don't do it yourself?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I remind the member again that it's actually the C.D. Howe Institute that says that. TD Economics, the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, Hugh Mackenzie and Mothers Against Drunk Driving support this policy. It was clearly defined in the budget. It is the right policy, just as the HST is the right policy for Ontario. It's backed up by independent analysis. Independent analysts universally agree that it will create jobs, raise incomes and raise capital investment. It's the right policy for a better future for Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: What's really happening here? The government says families won't pay more because of the HST, but it turns out the average Ontario family will pay \$800 a year more. The government says its tax cuts and credits will make the HST pain go away magically, but it turns out that families will end up \$470 a year behind. The government says businesses will pass on savings, but it turns out that even the system that you own, the LCBO, won't be passing on those savings. Your claims are falling apart on the affordability part of your program. Why should we believe anything you say about the HST when you can't deliver on your own government-owned system?

1050

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We chose a deliberate policy with respect to the social reference pricing of alcohol. It's clearly detailed.

I would remind the member what TD Bank's economists reported: About 80% of the expected total cost savings will be passed along immediately in the first year that the HST comes into effect, with that ratio eventually reaching 95% by year three, and with the full cost savings of these firms to take up to six years to feed through to consumers.

This policy is absolutely the right policy for the future of this province. It is about creating new jobs. It is about raising capital investment. It is about raising family incomes. That's why we're proceeding with it. It's right for Ontario today, but, more importantly, for a better future for all Ontarians.

HOSPITAL GOVERNANCE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Yesterday the Minister of Health said that her ministry had no role in the Ontario Hospital Association's development of new, somewhat controversial bylaws, yet this morning media reports quote insiders saying that she did. Can the minister clear the air and tell Ontarians who is telling the truth?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me be very clear: The OHA is an association of hospital organizations. They draft bylaws that are a template for hospitals to accept or modify as they wish. It is the hospital board that determines the bylaws of that hospital. This is a conversation

that's happening among the hospital sector, and I think that's where the conversation belongs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France G elinas: I guess from this answer that the ministry had nothing to do.

When I travelled across the province with the Ontario Health Coalition, attending health care town halls in many of the communities hardest hit by service reductions, I frequently heard from physicians. Physicians talked about the impact of emergency room, physiotherapy and surgery closures and cutbacks. Physicians saw first-hand how these cuts were impacting their patients, and they felt they had an obligation to speak out for their patients.

Under these new bylaws, physicians may no longer have a voice. Does the minister think that muzzling physicians will benefit Ontario's patients?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me repeat: In Ontario we have a system of hospitals where local boards govern the hospitals. We are expanding the role of those boards with our new Excellent Care for All Act. We will add the responsibility for ensuring ever-improving quality in our hospitals through that legislation. But it is up to the boards to determine what is included in their bylaws. The Ontario Hospital Association is an association of those member hospitals.

What I can say, though, is that when I announced the Excellent Care for All bill, I was joined at the podium by representatives from the Ontario Medical Association, the Registered Nurses' Association, and the Ontario Hospital Association. We are at our best when we all work together, and that is the culture that we are building within the health care sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

M^{me} France G elinas: It is concerning that the government seems to have no problem when a new system of regulation limits the free speech of physicians, physicians who want to speak up for quality care for their patients, but when it comes to bringing full transparency and accountability to our hospitals, then the same ministry stalls.

Privacy Commissioner Cavoukian urged this government to bring the hospitals under freedom-of-information requests. She did that in 2004, but the ministry is not moving. The NDP has long told the government that this must happen. Even the Ontario Hospital Association wants this to happen.

So here we have a minister who's prepared to let physicians be silenced and who refuses to bring hospitals under freedom of information. What happened to this minister's quest for transparency and accountability?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Make no mistake about it: We are absolutely committed to improving transparency and accountability throughout government and in the health care sector.

I'm pleased that the Ontario Hospital Association has suggested that we take a look at allowing freedom of information for hospitals, but it's very important we get

this right. That's why we're working with our partner organizations: the Information and Privacy Commissioner, the Ontario Hospital Association and their member organizations. We need to work together to get this right. There are nearly 160 hospitals in this province. They have very sensitive personal health information, and it's very important to me, as we move forward in improving accountability and transparency, that we are very cognizant of the privacy issues.

TAXATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is for the Minister of Revenue. Yesterday, we cited a May 2009 KPMG Canada report that says Dalton McGuinty's HST will make Ontario patients pay more to get less health care. When the Premier struggled for the answer on his HST, he handed the question off to Minister Wilkinson, who said he had read the KPMG report. I'm glad he's got it in his hand right now because then he can answer this question: Why would you make up that the KPMG report said the net impact of the HST on doctors will be small when the report says no such thing?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend for the question.

I do have the report, and I say to the member from Whitby-Oshawa—she was talking about an analysis done by someone who worked for KPMG, and I was referring to the report prepared by KPMG dated June 29, 2009, which I read when it came out, I might add. What it says is that for a typical, unincorporated family physician, the tax costs of operating a practice will increase by \$1,488 when the income that they report for taxes of that practice—that's just their income, the profit to the doctor; not the total cost—was \$157,000. On \$157,000, if we're talking about \$1,400, that doesn't seem to be a large increase to me.

So what it says here is that there is an impact—because we don't charge HST, GST or PST on health services that are provided by the public system, that are funded by the public system—and that doctors understand we need to do something to ensure that we have the revenue base to afford the finest—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'll stick with the analysis that was given to the member for Whitby-Oshawa than the analysis given by the Minister of Revenue any day. He should stick to the report.

Minister Wilkinson has been hanging around with Dalton McGuinty a little too long. The Premier's bad habits are starting to rub off on you, my friend.

You said—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Minister of Community and Social Services.

Please continue.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I apologize, Mr. Speaker, for getting under their skin so early on a Thursday morning.

You said KPMG reported on the net impact of the HST for doctors when they did not. You said the report is dated; it is less than a year old. You said KPMG found that the overall impact of the HST will be “somewhere in the neighbourhood of 1.6%,” but the report did not say that.

No wonder the Liberal caucus is worried over there. If Dalton McGuinty and his top HST salesmen are making up KPMG findings on the HST, the big question is, what else are they making up?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to correct the record. I thought yesterday it was 1.6%; it's actually less than 1%. So, absolutely, I thought I'd be a bit conservative in my estimate and make sure I was a bit on the high side when I had to remember something that I had read in July of last year.

You have to understand, on this side of the House we have a plan to attract \$47 billion worth of more investment and get 591,000 people back to work. On the other side, they have no plan. Their plan is, don't change—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Oxford will please come to order. The member from Renfrew knows the rules.

Minister.

Hon. John Wilkinson: We reject the twins of the status quo over there who say that we should just hang on to the status quo though the world has changed. We reject your leader, who I've said is “Two-tax Tim.” He believes there should be two taxes in this province when it comes to sales tax. There should just be one.

1100

I want to thank John Baird, Prime Minister Harper, Jim Flaherty and so many Conservatives who understand that this is the right thing to do—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE

Mr. Peter Kormos: My question is to the Attorney General. Why has the Ministry of the Attorney General instructed its lawyers to withdraw from their representation of SIU director Ian Scott in the Minty and Schaeffer application?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As I believe I said the other day, it is common practice for lawyers employed by the government to assist in the representation of independent agencies when they are before courts and tribunals. There arose an issue in this particular case about the lawyers representing that party, and rather than have the issue focus on the lawyers, the lawyers are withdrawing. SIU will retain independent representation so

the issues before the court can be the issues that should be before the court, not the lawyers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Kormos: The SIU is an agency of the Ministry of the Attorney General. The Ontario Provincial Police Association has blasted the Ministry of the Attorney General for its legal assistance to Director Scott. Is that why the AG lawyers have been pulled from the case, but only with respect to Mr. Scott and not Fantino?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: No. As I indicated, I believe, in answer to my friend's question a few days ago, the government has taken no position on the matter before the court involving the SIU and the other parties. The lawyers were there to assist the independent agency. The SIU is independent. It makes its decisions independently. It does not take instructions from the Ministry of the Attorney General or the government.

In order for the issues before the court to remain the focus of the court's proceedings, the government lawyers are withdrawing. The SIU will retain its independent counsel so the focus can remain on the issues and the proceedings can continue in that fashion.

NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATIONS

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is for the Minister of Consumer Services. Yesterday, the minister introduced the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act. I understand that this act, if passed, would provide a modern legal framework for not-for-profit corporations.

The minister said yesterday that the not-for-profit sector is vibrant. I know first-hand that in my riding of Mississauga South there are several not-for-profit organizations doing great work. Just recently, the Compass drop-in centre in my riding joined forces with the Mississauga Food Bank to provide even greater services for residents, and the Lakeshore Corridor Community Team does incredible work connecting people who need help with those who can provide help in goods and services.

Why is the minister introducing new legislation to govern these organizations? What's in it for them?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Thank you very much to the honourable member for the question. He's right: The not-for-profit corporations in Ontario really are a vibrant sector, and they told us that the act was out of date and that it wasn't useful to them. In fact, it was very old. The last time that this act was even worked on was in 1953, which is 57 years ago.

If this act is passed, it will help our not-for-profit sector. There's 46,000 of them all across Ontario. They're worth \$50 billion in revenue each and every year, and they employ almost one million people in this sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Charles Sousa: Again, to the Minister of Consumer Services: I'm interested to hear how the Ministry of Consumer Services came to the conclusion that the

legislation needed to be revised. Not-for-profit corporations have limited resources, and I'm concerned that this will create more administration for the not-for-profit sector.

As a past president of the Federation of Portuguese Canadian Business and Professionals, I know the challenges that not-for-profits face. In south Mississauga, in my office, we're working with a group called Windfall, which collects new clothing from manufacturers and then distributes it to the most vulnerable. They are currently working on expanding into my community, and we look forward to welcoming them.

Can the minister tell the House how the proposed legislation would affect the administration burden of not-for-profits, and did the minister seek their feedback before introducing the bill?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Thank you again to the member for the question.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Members will please come to order.

Minister?

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: Thank you very much to the member for Mississauga South for the question. In fact, we are seeking more feedback from different sectors for the new act.

The new act, if passed, would simplify and lighten administrative burdens for many not-for-profit organizations. In fact, it will do three things. It will simplify the incorporation process, it will enhance corporate governance and accountability, and it will become consistent with other jurisdictions like the province of Saskatchewan and the federal government.

If passed, it will help not-for-profit corporations, and we really look forward to working with all of them.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Health. Three years ago, Premier McGuinty launched the aging-at-home strategy to take pressure off emergency rooms, alternative level of care beds and long-term-care waiting lists by helping Ontario seniors live in their own homes. But after three years and a quarter of a billion dollars spent, pressure on emergency rooms is up 12% and there's been no improvement in alternative level of care beds. Wait-lists for long-term-care beds have doubled since the McGuinty Liberals took office.

How did you manage to spend a quarter of a billion dollars on an aging-at-home strategy with no results?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me tell you that supporting increased access to urgent care, bringing down wait times in emergency departments and making sure that people who are in hospital but should be and could be in the community are all very high priorities and pressing problems in our health care system.

There's no mistaking the reality that we have currently. Approximately 17% of people in our hospitals don't

need to be in hospitals; they could be better served in the community. The aging-at-home strategy has been a resounding success in that it has allowed community organizations to be supported to keep people in their homes longer. It proves to be a stubborn problem, but having that local flexibility through aging-at-home dollars—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: This is a huge problem. The McGuinty Liberals like to boast about how much more they're spending, but when it comes to the actual results they're getting, they are pretty quiet about that because the fact is that nothing is happening.

An order paper question signed by the former health minister, David Caplan, proves that 97% of the long-term-care beds opened on your watch were actually created by the Ontario Progressive Conservatives under our term. Under the McGuinty Liberals' watch, here are some stats: The number of Ontario seniors waiting for a long-term-care bed has doubled from 12,846 people in 2003, to 25,206 people in 2010.

So if the money you have invested didn't go to improving results, where has it gone?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are very focused on improving care for people who are at the stage in life where they need extra supports. We are of the firm belief that, while long-term-care homes are the right choice for many people, there are many others who could, with the right supports, stay in their own community.

I can tell you that our community care access centres, our LHINs and our hospitals are all working together to tackle this difficult problem. The aging-at-home strategy is an important part but not the total part of the solution when it comes to finding the right continuum of supports, the right range of supports in our communities. As I say, this is a problem that we are tackling head on.

LABOUR DISPUTE

M^{me} France G linas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre adjoint. I want to quote from a letter from Ken Lewenza, the president of the Canadian Auto Workers, to the Premier about the labour dispute in Sudbury:

"I urge you to work with the United Steelworkers union and this employer to get back to the bargaining table to reach a fair and equitable settlement. I would also urge your government that if Vale Inco continues in their attempts to put replacement workers in this community, you must immediately bring in anti-scab legislation to prevent these types of actions."

I want to know if the Deputy Premier agrees with Ken Lewenza. Does he support anti-scab legislation?

1110

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Our government believes that we need to find a solution to the ongoing labour dispute. I know that the member for Sudbury, Mr. Bartolucci, the Premier and the Minister of Labour have all been very active. The Ministry of Labour continues to have

available and ready the resources needed to help bring those parties together.

I think we all agree that the sooner this labour dispute is resolved at the bargaining table, the better it will be for the community of Sudbury, for the workers involved directly in the strike and, indeed, for all Ontarians.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'll remind the members once again that interjections are often healthy to the debate, but it's much more acceptable to the Speaker that those interjections come from the members' own seats.

Supplementary.

M^{me} France Gélinas: My question was about anti-scab legislation, and this answer was what I would say is as clear as mud.

I'd like to read another quote to the Deputy Premier, and it goes as follows: "Obviously, the government is saying that it advocates and supports the use of scabs in Ontario, an absolutely terrible, extreme position that thoughtful commentators and thoughtful jurisdictions anywhere cannot agree to."

Do you want to know who said that? It was the Deputy Premier, Mr. Dwight Duncan, while sitting in opposition.

Does the Deputy Premier still support anti-scab legislation?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: With respect to the very difficult situation in Sudbury, we are bringing all the resources of the government to bear to try to get the two parties to resolve this very difficult circumstance. That's what's first and foremost in our minds: getting a resolution to this situation as quickly as possible. It is a difficult situation which we continue to monitor very carefully.

As I, again, remind the House, the member for Sudbury, Mr. Bartolucci, the Premier and others—the Minister of Labour—are all working hard to find a solution to this difficult situation, which has been going on for far too long.

PHARMACISTS

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Recently, the pharmacy associations said they agreed with our reforms and the need to eliminate professional allowances, although this week in my riding, they continue to target seniors with misinformation and drop flyers at every home. However, my constituents are hoping they will agree, especially after hearing that we pay up to five times more for drugs in this province compared to the US. It's clear that about 70% of the \$750 million paid in so-called "professional allowances" does not go toward direct patient services. This money would be much better spent on more health services, specifically more low-cost drugs for Ontarians.

Could the minister please tell this House how the money saved through our drug reforms will benefit pharmacies and patients?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: While others are putting their energy into a multi-million-dollar American-style campaign of fearmongering and misinformation, we are putting our energy into getting lower drug prices for the people of Ontario. Every penny we save will go back into the health care system, providing better front-line care and providing access to more drugs for more people.

We are also committed to supporting pharmacists. That's why we propose to increase dispensing fees to pharmacists for the prescriptions they provide under the Ontario drug benefit plan by up to \$4 for those in rural and underserved areas; \$1 for all pharmacies. We're also going to be compensating pharmacies directly for those vital services that front-line pharmacists provide.

This is the right thing to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My constituents will be very happy to hear about the steps that we're taking to deliver the best care to Ontarians. I'm also happy to hear that drug cost savings will eventually lead to access to more drugs.

I know we often send out notices to pharmacists about new drugs being added to the formulary, and I know that Ontarians look forward to more of these updates adding drugs going out. I understand that there's also a special drug access program that patients can apply for in exceptional circumstances. This often occurs for serious illnesses that require very expensive drugs, and all of us deal with these requests in our constituency offices.

I understand the government's new plan includes lower costs for drugs and an end to professional allowances, but can the minister please provide more details?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It is our proposed reforms that will make more formulary updates possible. Just last month, we announced a number of new drugs that would be added to the formulary, drugs that treat people with hypertension, high blood pressure, Parkinson's disease, HIV, and other conditions.

The exceptional access program is a program that allows physicians to apply for drug funding for patients in exceptional circumstances. Last year, Remicade was the most frequently requested drug in the exceptional access program. Over 2,000 people with Crohn's disease or other conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis benefited, at a cost to the government of \$44 million. The savings for that individual would be perhaps \$20,000.

The savings in our proposed reforms will allow us to add more—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Deputy Premier: This morning the chair of the OSPCA announced that they have put a stop to the mass euthanasia plan at their York region shelter. To his credit, Rob Godfrey, the chair, admitted that they got it wrong, and they want to make it right. They'll now be testing animals individually and treating them individually.

Will the Deputy Premier now admit that his government got it wrong too—that by washing their hands of this issue, and not insisting on a second look at this plan, that more than 100 animals were in fact euthanized? Will he agree with me that what's needed is a full investigation to determine how this crisis developed and who was responsible?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I thank the member for his question. The minister responsible acted in the best interest of all concerned. He spoke, was at ongoing discussions with the OSPCA, which is an independent organization—it is defined that way in legislation. It's a terrible situation, and I think people across the province shared the concern of the member opposite with respect to what was happening with the animals. The OSPCA has shown itself capable of managing these situations. It is defined in legislation that they are independent; it is their role. The minister responsible had an ongoing dialogue, as I understand it, with the OSPCA. Our government welcomed the decision they took this morning, and we look forward to their continuing appropriate stewardship of this situation and, indeed, many other difficult situations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The minister should have intervened when I first called on him to do so. Instead, he washed his hands and claimed that he was neutered by his own legislation, claimed that as a result of legislation that this government passed, he had no authority. Will the Deputy Premier now agree that his legislation got it wrong; that what is needed is a change to legislation; that there in fact is proper government oversight of agencies such as this? Will he agree to work with us to bring in legislation that will provide the proper oversight for organizations such as this to ensure circumstances like this will never happen again?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: We have followed the legislation as it is defined. The government always welcomes discussions about legislation, in this case, whether the oversight provisions are adequate. We believe they are. We have confidence in the OSPCA. Again, the OSPCA has taken, in my view, the appropriate decision this morning. We continue to rely on them for their expert judgment. The legislation is premised, as I understand it, on the need to have veterinarians and other professionals make these decisions. The legislation's premise, I believe, is appropriate. I believe that this government will continue to work with the OSPCA and others who have animal welfare interests at heart and continue to work with—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1120

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. Last week, you were at that FONOM meeting. At that particular

meeting, there were many questions in regards to the whole issue of processing ores in Ontario. In that particular bear-pit you were involved in, you alluded to how your government was going to ensure that in fact refining and smelting happens out of the Ring of Fire. How, pray tell, are you going to make that happen if we don't have the legislative force to make it happen, knowing that companies have already indicated that they're not going to be processing ore in Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate the question. It was great to be at FONOM. I was there with my colleagues the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, and the Minister of Natural Resources. We had a great opportunity in the bear-pit to discuss those questions.

As for the Ring of Fire, we all know what an exciting economic development opportunity it is. We also know that we need to manage this process well. Certainly, we have every intention, when and if we move forward with this process, to be sure that we get the best value-added opportunities there, which include processing and refining the product that comes out of that ground in the province of Ontario.

Those discussions are ongoing. I'm certainly having discussions directly with the companies that are involved in this process, as we're having discussions with the First Nations and, obviously, other stakeholders involved.

We are very committed to this, and it's important for you to know that. We are very optimistic that indeed—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I heard the word “committed” and I heard the word “discussion,” all of which didn't mount up to anything when it came to stopping the closure of the Xstrata refinery-smelter in the city of Timmins. Why should we have any more confidence in your government, when you are not able to hang onto the very refinery-smelter that is operating in Ontario now, to do a better job when it comes to ensuring that at the very least, when the Ring of Fire goes forward, refining and smelting continue in Ontario? Why should we have any confidence in you?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: As the member knows very well, we have an extraordinary government-wide commitment to the Ring of Fire development. It's part of our Open Ontario plan. In our budget we made commitments related to \$45 million for skills development and also the hiring of a Ring of Fire coordinator. This is a long-term, complicated process but one that is going to provide us with some extraordinary economic opportunities.

Indeed, we recognize that one of the challenges will be making sure that those processes, in terms of the value-added opportunities, take place. Those are the discussions we're having now. We look forward to working with all of the stakeholders. I've got meetings with the companies that are involved with this.

This is something that we recognize as one of our responsibilities, certainly our ministry's responsibility, to see the economic opportunities. The thousands of jobs

that will be coming forward as a result of this will happen as a result of our government's commitment to the Ring of Fire development.

TAXATION

Mr. Khalil Ramal: My question is for the Minister of Revenue. Minister, the London area has benefited from the good jobs which are generated by the manufacturing industry, like 3M, General Dynamics Land Systems, Trojan, Purifics and many others. As Ontario recovers from the global recession, we need to become more competitive to ensure that investment and jobs continue to come to ridings like London–Fanshawe.

Yesterday, KPMG released a special report on tax competitiveness which found Canada the second-most competitive jurisdiction out of 10 countries worldwide. Greg Wiebe, KPMG's managing partner, said, "The upcoming harmonized sales tax contributed to Canada's improved ranking in this year's report."

Can you tell me, Minister, how this is going to benefit London and Ontario?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to commend my friend for understanding that what London needs is 21st-century jobs. That's what the good people of London–Fanshawe and the people in London need. That's what all of our communities need.

We have, of course, Dr. Jack Mintz, who talked about the number of jobs, but is that being confirmed by others in the marketplace? I have some quotes:

The HST "will mean more investment in the province, and more jobs" says Telus.

HST "savings will help to preserve jobs in Ontario allow companies to grow in the future," says the Canadian Chemical Producers' Association.

"A single sales tax will save jobs," says the Railway Association of Canada.

"The single most important step that can be taken to boost the provincial economy and create job opportunities" is the HST and our tax reforms, says Jayson Myers, president, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters.

"This is the most effective tax change to stimulate investment and job creation," says Roger Martin, the dean of the Rotman School—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: The Conference Board of Canada released their quarterly provincial outlook report this week. The report states that Ontario will lead all other provinces this year in economic growth, at 3.8% this year and 3.7% next year.

TD Canada Trust, which employs a large number of people locally, provides financial services, and Bell Canada provides good jobs in the communications industry in the London area. Bell Canada has said that the implementation of the single sales tax structure in 2010 means Bell can accelerate its investment in the province of Ontario for next year.

Minister, the HST means good jobs for London–Fanshawe and across the province of Ontario. Can you tell me, and tell the Conservatives and the NDP why they are opposing the HST and why they are stirring the pot and scaring the people of this province?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank Bell Canada for believing in this province, believing in your community and understanding that there is a brighter future, but it requires a number of things.

First, it requires a government that understands that our businesses are in an increasingly competitive global economy. We have to do our part by ensuring, as the Conference Board has said, that we are one of the most competitive jurisdictions in the world. We set the conditions, but it is up to the private sector to make those investments in their productivity, make those investments in their people and make those investments to attract the type of work and jobs that our children and our grandchildren need.

That's why we will not listen to the proponents of the status quo over there who say that the best thing we can do is nothing. That's why on this side of the House we know there is something we can do. We reject the do-nothing opposition. On this side of the House, we are committed to doing what's required to make sure we—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

NURSES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I did want to indicate that Caffy Pinnell's grade 5 class from Couchiching Heights Public School is here now.

My question today is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, I'd like to read a quote from Ms. Sandra Tansely, president of the Ontario Nurses Association at Soldiers' Memorial Hospital in Orillia: "Registered nurses are an endangered species, and if we do not do something about this, they will become extinct."

"Do you know that across the province, health care facilities are reducing the number of registered nurses and reducing the hours of nursing care so vital to patients' well being?"

"Do you know that as registered nursing hours are reduced your health is put at risk?"

Minister, do you agree or disagree with the statement by Ms. Tansely?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I completely disagree with the statement. We have made some very important investments in improving the availability of nurses, the supply of nurses and the scope of practice of nurses across the province. In fact, this is Nursing Week, so we're all very focused on the important role that nurses play in our health care system.

We have more than 10,000 more nurses working in Ontario today than when we took office in 2003. Nurses are taking on new roles in the health care system. Nurse practitioner-led clinics are providing primary front-line

health care to people in the province, and we're expanding the number of nurse practitioner-led clinics.

This afternoon, I'm going to the de Souza Institute, where I'll be meeting with nurses who are playing an expanded role in the treatment of cancer patients—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I will be visiting Soldiers' Memorial Hospital tomorrow to accompany nurses during national Nursing Week. I do this each year at a different location in my riding. You are aware that the citizens of Ontario have been hit with the health premium and the \$1-billion eHealth boondoggle, and now face the tax grab of the HST on July 1. Up our way, community care access fees have been cut by 30%. This amounts to billions and billions of dollars.

Can you tell me how I should respond to the fact that a week ago, the hospital announced the elimination of 26 nursing positions and the closing of 26 beds in a hospital that just completed a program that has taken the last 15 years to redevelop and expand? I'm going to have to give those answers tomorrow to those nurses at that hospital.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I'm going to suggest to the member opposite is that, when he is visiting Soldiers' Memorial Hospital, he ask about the nursing graduate guarantee program. It's a terrific program, an expression of our confidence in nurses in this program. My understanding is that, actually, 39 nursing graduates have received their first full-time job through this program at Soldiers' Memorial Hospital.

The future of nursing is very, very bright indeed in this province. I also would like you to maybe ask about the RNAO's position on what our government has done when it comes to nursing in this province. They say that this government should be congratulated for the investments we've made in nursing.

1130

I wish you all the best on your Take your MPP to Work Day. I know that many of my colleagues are doing the same, to learn about the important work that front-line nurses do.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Michael Prue: My question again is to the Minister of Health. In March, the Ottawa Hospital signed an agreement with nurses, orderlies and other health professionals who make that hospital work. That same month, the Minister of Finance stood in his place during the budget deliberations and said that all collective agreements would be honoured. Last week, the hospital announced that they could not honour their agreement with the workers because of this government's cuts to hospitals.

My question: Why is this government putting patient care at risk by urging hospitals to renege on agreements that they have signed and this government guaranteed?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: There is no question that we are facing financial challenges in this province. We have a deficit that all of us would agree is too large. We

need to get back to a strong fiscal footing. We need to ask all of us—all of us, frankly, who are paid by taxpayers—to take a bit of a pause when it comes to increases in our compensation. I think it's the right thing to do.

I know that people who work in the health care system have seen the impacts of governments choosing to slash programs, to cut spending and to open collective agreements. Our government is taking a much more thoughtful and fair approach.

All our partners in health care need to do their part to ensure that our health care system is strong for future generations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: To the contrary: I think this government has created a mess at the Ottawa Hospital that will put patients at risk. The nurses, orderlies and health professionals who make the hospital work had a signed agreement. This government guaranteed that that signed agreement would be honoured, and now the hospital is being pushed by the government to rip it up. The result will be uncertainty for patients and long legal battles, or both. Why is the minister putting patient care at risk by forcing hospitals to rip up agreements with nurses, orderlies and other professionals—an agreement that you guaranteed, during the budget deliberations, would be honoured?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to take exception to the member opposite's words that things are a mess at the Ottawa Hospital. Indeed, the Ottawa Hospital is a very, very fine hospital and is a leader in this province when it comes to improving quality of care for patients. I do hope that the member will clarify his remarks. The Ottawa Hospital, under the very, very capable and proud leadership of Jack Kitts, is one of the finest hospitals in this province.

This government has been a strong supporter when it comes to funding at the Ottawa Hospital. In fact, we've increased spending at the Ottawa Hospital by 42% since we came to office. That means more—

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Mr. Glen R. Murray: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship. I was pleased to join the minister when he recently announced changes to the Opportunities Ontario provincial nominee program. This program provides a pathway to permanent residency for high-skilled workers who were educated or trained abroad.

As many members of this Legislature know, students from around the world come to Ontario to study at our universities, which are among the best in the world. Many of those students graduate with skills that are in high demand here in Ontario. A Statistics Canada study, for example, found that one of the key challenges facing Canada will be retaining Ph.D. graduates upon the completion of their education.

Can the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration tell this House what the government is doing to retain more highly educated international Ph.D. students?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I want to first thank the member from Toronto Centre for this very important question.

Attracting the best and brightest talent from around the world is a priority for the McGuinty government because we recognize that in an open Ontario, a highly skilled workforce is essential to ensure that our province remains both strong and prosperous. That is why our government is taking action to help more international Ph.D. students stay in our province when they graduate. Changes that we have recently made to Opportunities Ontario, our provincial nominee program, will make it even easier for our international Ph.D. graduates who have received their Ph.D. from an Ontario university to obtain their permanent residency status and remain in Ontario. These graduates will no longer need an offer of employment to apply to the program, to be fast-tracked for permanent residency.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Glen R. Murray: Minister, recent changes to Ontario's opportunities program will certainly be welcome news to the international students I represent in Toronto Centre.

Until these recent changes, I understand that Ontario employers searching for highly skilled professionals would first have to recruit an internationally educated professional and then the employer would have to nominate the individual for permanent residency, a very complicated process. Now that the government has changed the nominee program to actively retain Ontario-educated Ph.D. graduates, the nominee process will have to be adjusted.

Minister, how can international Ph.D. students or graduates apply for permanent residency through the Ontario's opportunities program?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Again, thank you to the member for the question. I want to take the opportunity of also mentioning that I'm working very closely with my colleague the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities as we continue to attract more international students to this province, because there is a very high demand for Ph.D. graduates in a variety of fields here in Ontario.

Ontario-educated international Ph.D. students can submit their nominee application forms now directly to Opportunities Ontario for approval by visiting ontarioimmigration.ca. They can do this as soon they have met the requirements of the degree, even before the degree has been conferred. If approved by Opportunities Ontario, the Ph.D. student nominee would then submit their permanent residency application to Citizenship and Immigration Canada for review and final approval.

I'm proud of these changes that we've made to attract the best talent from around the world.

ABATTOIRS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture. Minister, last week during question period I pointed out that over 25% of the money that your

government announced to help small abattoirs was never spent. According to Better Farming, you said you didn't spend all the money because there weren't enough applications, not enough demand. But ministry staff said there were more than enough applications. In fact, they cut it off after 48 hours.

Small abattoirs in rural communities across Ontario are closing or being closed because they can't afford to meet your regulations. One of the suppliers of our local food is disappearing and it seems you have given up on them.

Minister, are you so out of touch with rural Ontario that you believe the needs of abattoirs have been met? Let me assure you, from all the people we've been hearing from it's clear that problem is not solved. Will you finally apologize to the small abattoirs and fulfill your commitment?

Hon. Carol Mitchell: I certainly thank you for the question, and it is a very important question. What I want to start with is that food safety is our first priority. We are the leader in food safety.

There was \$25 million in transition funding. What I said in the Ontario Farmer is that it was application-based and based upon demand, and we will always meet the demand of the applications.

So when we talk about our government and our commitment to food safety, let's talk about their commitment as a government to food safety. I'll tell you, they fired meat inspectors. When we look at the value chain and what is required within the value chain, food safety is the foundation that we build upon, and our farmers understand that. To get a lecture from that side of the House that we don't understand rural Ontario is a little too rich.

When I think about the hard work of our farmers and when they are on the land—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'll gladly accept unanimous consent for a supplementary question.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Deborah Matthews: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like to clarify the record. In response to the member, I said that there were 39 nurses hired at Orillia Soldiers' Memorial through the new nursing graduate guarantee. Speaker, 39 is the number in that member's riding; 18 of them at Orillia Soldiers' Memorial Hospital.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Sophia Aggelonitis: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'd like to correct the record. I should have said the current act has not been substantially revised since 1953.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no deferred votes and no further business, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ROSEMARY SMITH

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: One week ago today, I was pleased to attend the celebration to honour Rosemary Smith, who had been named 2009 Citizen of the Year for Kitchener–Waterloo for her outstanding contribution to our community.

Born and raised in Owen Sound, Rosemary grew up with a strong sense of community and a deep-seated desire to give back—and give back she has, as a volunteer by supporting many charitable and non-profit organizations, and by serving on boards, such as the chair of both the Greater Kitchener Waterloo and Cambridge chambers of commerce, Leadership Waterloo Region, and the YWCA board. A mentor, a coach, a connector and a teacher, Rosemary is genuinely interested in the well-being of others and has always given generously of her time and of herself.

Now, as CEO of the Kitchener and Waterloo Community Foundation, Rosemary is regarded as the heart-beat of our community and a brilliant community builder. She has led projects such as Waterloo region's Vital Signs and Random Act of Kindness Day.

Her ability to bring together for the common good all people in our community has resulted in many more dollars being invested in community initiatives.

Congratulations, Rosemary, for a life of giving back. You are truly an inspiration and a most deserving recipient of this prestigious award.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I stand in the House today to acknowledge the efforts of both the Thames Valley District School Board and the London Catholic District School Board for actively integrating parents into a conference held this past weekend on fighting bullying. The "From Rhetoric to Reality" conference dealt with bullying in the schools and representations of violence in the media.

As you know, Speaker, education is a priority of our government. Therefore, this conference was exceptionally important in educating participants and creating dialogue amongst teachers, trustees and parents on how to sustain a safe and equitable atmosphere for students at school.

Empowering parents with proper information and resources for dealing with bullying and violence in the media is a key step for enacting lasting change. It's also vitally important for demonstrating to students that something is being done to address bullying at school.

I stand here proudly supporting the efforts of these two school boards and, of course, the parents who actively participate in creating a safe and prosperous learning environment for students in my region.

PHARMACISTS

Mr. Toby Barrett: I draw attention to just another example of how this government's ill-conceived and reckless health care cuts will affect small-town Ontario—small towns like Port Rowan in my riding of Haldimand–Norfolk.

Many years ago, there was a woman in Port Rowan named Lynda Green. She was a prominent citizen and businesswoman in the community. Sadly, she was diagnosed with ALS when her children were still young and her disease progressed rapidly.

As she struggled with the debilitation of the disease, she would discuss with her pharmacist, Glen Coon, various methods to help her cope with daily activities. She also questioned how those without financial means would ever be able to afford some of these items. Lynda's wish was to establish access to home health care aids at a reasonable cost so that people would not be financially punished after formal government health care stopped.

Following her passing, Lynda's wish came true after friends and Mr. Coon gave life to the Lynda Green Foundation. Patients who need walkers, wheelchairs, a bath bench or personal bathroom aids can simply borrow these items from the pharmacy and then return them to the pharmacy once they finish with them. It's that simple, really.

These are, in my opinion, the good things that this government is threatening with its cuts to small-town drugstores.

FUNDRAISING

Mr. Jim Brownell: Rain, hail and a deep chill in the air couldn't slow down the Children's Treatment Centre's Bike-A-Thon Plus last Saturday morning, as participants turned out in droves at the annual fundraising event in my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry. An estimated 1,400 people registered to raise funds and participate in the event to support the Children's Treatment Centre, which helps children who have suffered sexual abuse and lends support to their families. The total amount raised this year was approximately \$136,000, which means an average of almost \$1,000 raised by each participant. About \$7,000 of this year's total was raised by events held in Morrisburg, a new addition to the fundraiser in Dundas county.

The Bike-A-Thon Plus is the second-largest annual fundraiser for the Children's Treatment Centre. It's a fun-filled day, with activities for all interests and age groups. You can walk, run, bike or take part in events such as the car rally, which my wife and I took part in, as well as trail rides, motorcycle rides or a Rock-A-Thon.

A new feature added in 2006 was a seniors' walk, a shorter walk created so that all supporters could participate. Two new features this year included a 20-minute CrossFit workout and a 100-kilometre cycling challenge.

I would like to congratulate and thank the event chair, Milton Ellis, the volunteer organizers, and all the people

who braved the cold weather and rain to come out and support such an important cause. Events like these raise awareness around the issue of abuse, an issue which we must continue to fight against, especially when it affects the children of our communities.

TAXATION

Mr. Norm Miller: Over the past two weeks, Premier McGuinty has finally conceded that consumers costs will go up as of July 1 as a result of the harmonized sales tax. In fact, consumers saw goods and services go up May 1 for things like tickets and travel costs that fall after the implementation date.

All the while, the Premier's disclaimer has been that, over time, the savings incurred by businesses will be passed on to consumers—except, it seems, for wine and liquor, through a business it controls: the LCBO. Tax rates for alcohol are due to drop to 8% from 12% effective July 1, but retail prices will actually go up. That's because the province has actually instructed the LCBO not to lower prices, which means that, despite the reduction in the tax rate, the LCBO will increase its markup by 7.5%. The result is an overall increase in the price to consumers of domestic and imported wines.

Steve Erwin, a senior communications consultant for the LCBO, says that if prices were based just on the lower tax rates, then in fact prices of products would fall. But the ordered markup will have the effect of raising prices. An industry source states that the markup is “not about social responsibility, it's all about revenue.”

So the savings that the Premier claimed will be passed on to consumers by business will not be. It's just another in a long line of unkept promises—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

HOPEWELL AVENUE PUBLIC SCHOOL

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: It is a pleasure today to rise and congratulate Hopewell Avenue Public School on their 100th anniversary. Hopewell Avenue Public School is nestled in the Old Ottawa South and Glebe community in my riding of Ottawa Centre. Named after the former mayor of Ottawa, Charles Hopewell, the school has been a cornerstone of the education system in Ottawa since 1910.

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This month, they will be kicking off their anniversary celebration on May 17 with special guests, alumni, parents and staff at a commemorative opening ceremony. For the rest of the week, there will be festivities at the school, including such events as a wine and cheese, tours of the school, a celebration of music from the past 100 years, and the singing of the 100-year song, followed by lots of cake.

I want to thank Principal Nicole Turpin, Vice-Principals Kim MacDonald and Donna Boyle, as well as all the staff and teachers at Hopewell for making the 100th anniversary celebration very special for the kids

and the community. Hopewell Avenue Public School is an important hub of my community, and I wish them the best for the next 100 years of teaching our young people in Ottawa.

HOME CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Today I would like to take this opportunity to revisit the issue of home care in Ontario. Home care is an essential service for the frail and elderly residents who want to continue to live in their own homes as they age, safely and with dignity, and who want to stay out of hospitals and long-term-care homes for as long as possible.

Our home care system is made up of grossly underpaid and extremely hard-working men and women who are dedicated to helping those in need. They often have to travel long distances between clients and have to work all sorts of shifts spread out over the course of any given day. With the home care system we have right now, they are not good jobs. They are poorly paid and the benefits are non-existent.

Just this week in the Globe and Mail there was a story of an elderly woman who had had to wait for hours in an overcrowded emergency room surrounded by other sick, elderly patients, only to be admitted 15 hours later but with no bed available for her. This happens far too often. Why does this happen? Because our home care system is broken; because we don't provide the care and support that the elderly and frail people of Ontario need to live in their homes with dignity.

This is unacceptable to me, and it is largely the result—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ONTARIO ECONOMY

Mr. Dave Levac: I rise in the House today to deliver more good news about the Ontario economy. Ontario saw an increase of 40,500 net new jobs in April, the fourth consecutive monthly gain and the strongest month in over two years. Ontario employment has increased by 142,500 net new jobs from a low in May 2009, and by 382,500 net new jobs since October 2003.

However, as we all know as members here, it's always devastating to lose a job. Our new five-year Open Ontario plan is about opening up our province to new economic opportunities that will result in new jobs and growth. Our plan will prepare Ontario to compete with the global economy that's emerging from the last recession. The world has changed.

We are also investing \$34 billion over the next two years to stimulate economic growth and help Ontario families. That includes \$32.5 billion for infrastructure. This investment is estimated to create and protect more than 300,000 jobs in the province over the next two years.

According to the Conference Board of Canada, “If not for the recent increases in infrastructure spending,

Ontario's economy would have lost an additional 70,000 jobs in 2009." That's great news, and it has been helpful in the riding of Brant. I know there have been projects in my riding that have created jobs and have also sustained jobs.

The best way to overcome the challenges in this global recession that everyone knows we have all gone through is by building a powerful economy in Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

NURSES

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to stand in the House today in support of Ontario nurses, especially as this week is National Nursing Week. I'm looking forward to participating in RNAO's Take Your MPP to Work Day tomorrow—I'm off to visit the Guelph family health team.

Nurses play a key role in delivering health care and are now using more of their skills to take on diverse roles within the system, benefiting all Ontarians. Since 2003, the government has created more than 10,000 nursing positions and exceeded its goal of 900 nursing positions in 2009-10. Today, many nurses have received specialized training that allows them to provide a broader range of health services.

Earlier this week, the Minister of Health highlighted the registered nurse surgical first assist program in hospitals. Originally a pilot program, these nurses work with the surgeon and the rest of the operating room team to ensure patient safety before, during and after surgery.

In addition, the nursing graduate guarantee program ensures that every Ontario nursing graduate has the opportunity to work full-time in Ontario. There have been over 8,000 placements under this program. This supports the government's five-year Open Ontario plan to provide more access to health care services while improving quality and accountability for patients.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ENDING PUBLIC FUNDING OF ELECTROCONVULSIVE THERAPY ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 METTANT FIN AU FINANCEMENT PUBLIC DE LA THÉRAPIE ÉLECTROCONVULSIVE

Ms. DiNovo moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 67, An Act to end public funding of electroconvulsive therapy / Projet de loi 67, Loi mettant fin au financement public de la thérapie électroconvulsive.

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

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: The Health Insurance Act clearly defines that insured services are prescribed by regulation. This bill amends section 11.2 of the act to provide that electroconvulsive therapy is not an insured service, despite the regulations.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

HEALTH PROMOTION PROMOTION DE LA SANTÉ

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Last week, I had the opportunity to participate in the 3rd International Congress on Physical Activity and Public Health. The Ministry of Health Promotion was pleased to sponsor an event that brought together delegates from approximately 55 countries: experts in the fields of physical activity, public health and health promotion. Scientists from around the world spoke at the congress on topics including challenges to promoting physical activity among children, the importance of creating physically active and friendly communities, and the power of collaboration in preventing disease and promoting good health.

The Ministry of Health Promotion recognizes the numerous benefits of physical activity. Active living enhances quality of life, promotes a greater sense of well-being and builds stronger communities. At a time when 40% of our provincial budget is spent on health care, and a significant portion of that is spent treating preventable illnesses, we have a combined responsibility to take steps to address this critical issue.

As stated in the Heart and Stroke Foundation's A Perfect Storm report, half of our population between the ages of 20 and 64 is overweight or obese, and half of us are not getting enough exercise to maintain our good health. According to data from the World Health Organization, physical inactivity is the fourth-leading risk factor for non-communicable chronic disease worldwide, and causes more than two million preventable deaths every year.

These alarming statistics are precisely the reason why the Ministry of Health Promotion is working diligently to establish a network of partnerships to collaborate in creating a culture of health and well-being in the province of Ontario. Working with our partners, my ministry continues to explore the factors that affect the health of people and communities.

We value the information generated and shared at the congress, and it will inform and assist us as we develop new initiatives to assist Ontarians in leading healthier, more active lives.

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A major outcome of the congress was the ratification of the Toronto Charter for Physical Activity. The charter

is a call for action and advocacy to increase physical activity worldwide. The reasons are clear. As the opening lines of the charter explain, physical activity promotes well-being, physical and mental health; prevents disease; improves social connectedness and quality of life; provides economic benefits; and contributes to environmental sustainability. Jurisdictions around the world are called on to use the guiding principles and the framework for action as a guide in developing strategies for increasing physical activity. The solid information that forms the foundation of the charter will strengthen those efforts.

I am confident that the Toronto charter will have the same powerful impact the Ottawa charter had following the World Health Organization conference in 1986. Almost 25 years ago in Ottawa, the World Health Organization and its partners established five action areas for health promotion. These principles guided and informed the goals and missions of governments, non-governmental organizations and many other bodies in jurisdictions around the world, including the Ministry of Health Promotion, as we developed strategies and programs for health promotion.

Together we can influence the behaviour of individuals and groups to make informed decisions toward healthier, more active living. That goes for everyone in this chamber. We all have a role to play in this.

In closing, I want to extend my thanks to the organizers of the congress and the authors of the charter for their efforts in further advancing the health promotion agenda in promoting health and quality of life through physical activity.

I want to remind everyone today that your health is your wealth. It is the most important asset you have. Take care of it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I want to respond to the statement that has just been made by the Minister of Health Promotion.

I agree with what she said. I think it was a very important congress that we just had, this third International Congress on Physical Activity and Public Health. I think it is certainly significant that people from around the world had this very rare opportunity to assemble and collectively examine the critical need to further advocate for physical activity and healthy lifestyles.

When we say there is a need for physical activity and healthy lifestyles, these are not mere words. In fact, I would say to you that we're almost at a crisis point, when we take a look at the lack of activity we're seeing amongst our young people today and the consequences that is going to have upon their quality of life as they get older: not just obesity, which is very, very serious right now, but also, of course, cardiac disease and all other sorts of diseases that are certainly going to impact their life.

So this congress is important. They came together and were looking to make a change and improve health outcomes for everyone.

I'm pleased today to speak on behalf of our caucus. I do so in particular because I am a former physical education secondary school teacher. I want to thank the people who came together, the International Society for Physical Activity and Health. When I was Minister of Health, part of the focus that I had was to shift away from illness and focus on wellness and health promotion. We introduced initiatives such as Healthy Babies, Healthy Children. We certainly took a look at doing everything that we could—cardiac wellness; we had programs there.

We have to constantly strive for solutions to the current problems of obesity and sedentary lifestyles, and that is what the congress attempted to do.

The minister made reference to the fact that the conference was in Toronto this year, and it was unique in that they presented and ratified what is now known globally as the Toronto Charter for Physical Activity. I think they spent over a year working on this international standard for the promotion and improvement of physical activity throughout the world. There was extensive consultation. At least 53 countries were involved in this collaborative effort to determine and reach consensus on how we globally increase rates of physical activity.

Yesterday, I participated in a forum on global health, and I am concerned to learn that as a result of urbanization in our developed world, we are seeing less and less physical activity and, as a result, many of the diseases that these countries never had before are now developing and becoming quite widespread. So, this was an important meeting.

Hopefully, this Toronto charter will now be a very effective and influential tool for health advocacy. We have to influence the decision-makers. I hope this government does put in place and recognize the need for healthy, active lifestyles.

As I say, I'm concerned about the levels of obesity, particularly in our young children. I don't think there is time to waste, because we're facing an epidemic. Our children simply don't have the level of physical activity or exercise that we had even five or 10, and certainly not 20, years ago. Again, if you don't have activity, we're going to see higher rates of cardiac disease—we're already seeing them—diabetes and countless other detrimental health effects.

It's encouraging to know that these health professionals, these health advocates, came together, and that they're trying to do what they can globally to raise awareness and develop policy to ensure a healthier future for people throughout the world.

Certainly, I want to congratulate all the participants. I think the minister acknowledged that it was a successful congress. Let's all move together to make sure we lead more active lives.

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm pleased to speak today on the third annual health and physical activity conference and the ratification of the Toronto Charter for Physical Activity. This conference, which took place a couple of weeks ago, is a clear example of the importance of physical activity in maintaining a healthy society.

Physical inactivity is a huge individual and societal problem. Physical inactivity has been directly linked to obesity and many diseases including cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and some cancers, to name a few, and contributes to over two million preventable deaths annually.

The Ontario government spends about \$42 billion each year treating people who are already sick, but we spend very little on keeping people healthy. Health promotion is not high-tech, and it doesn't grab headlines, but a properly coordinated health promotion ministry could save us billions down the road.

Physical activity is a key pillar of the health promotion puzzle. Physical activity is essential in fighting sedentary behaviour and chronic disease. There are many simple ways that the government can support physical activity. One easy way is to create more biking paths and walking trails throughout the province. If you build it, they will come.

Another way is to ensure that sidewalks are built into all new residential areas. It just boggles the mind to see all the new residential areas right now that are built without sidewalks. How can that be? It is because you assume that every one of those residents will hop into the minivan to drive to the soccer field.

What's wrong with this picture? If you have sidewalks, mom and dad will take the baby for a stroll in the stroller. Older people won't walk on the shoulder of the street, but they will go for a stroll if there is a sidewalk. To this day in Ontario, new residential areas are being built without sidewalks.

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Another important area that we could do is to increase physical activity in our schools. Research shows that when we do not encourage children to engage in physical activities at a young age, they are much more likely to withdraw from sports and other activities and rely on unhealthy choices during their leisure time. Children need our support in order to live a healthy life into their teenage years and beyond.

I hope that this conference was able to shed light on the importance of physical activity not only to Ontarians but to the Ministry of Health Promotion, which continues to let way too many opportunities to promote health and take action go right by. The Ministry of Health Promotion should be the champion for ensuring that the infrastructure for exercise is promoted, from urban design to school curriculum. The Ministry of Health Promotion should make sure that we have a social-determinants-of-health lens on every policy and decision that is made by this government to identify the opportunities up front and to make sure that we capitalize whenever there is an opportunity for physical activities. Do it up front.

I want to let you know that I wear a pedometer. It was given to me as a gift. I'm at 2,983 steps today. I do not go to bed before I reach 5,000 steps every day.

Interjections.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Some of the members exercise in the same places I do, so they know that I don't go to

bed till I've reached my 5,000 steps. I encourage each and every one of you to do the same. We have a role to play in this, but so does the Ministry of Health Promotion.

La troisième Conférence internationale sur l'activité physique et la santé publique a attiré des délégués venus de quelque 55 pays, spécialistes dans le domaine de l'activité physique, de la santé publique et de la promotion de la santé, et ils ont participé à la ratification de la Charte de Toronto pour l'activité physique.

J'espère que ceci servira de tremplin pour un nouveau tournant pour la ministre de la Promotion de la santé, qui verra l'activité physique comme une importante plateforme pour la promotion de la santé en Ontario.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

"Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk;

"Dalton McGuinty's cuts will:

"—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends;

"—increase wait times and lineups for patients;

"—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery; and

"—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

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

"That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies."

I have affixed my signature to the petition as well.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Sudbury, and it reads:

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

Whereas since October 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 the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine";

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

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature, and send it to the Clerk with Jacob.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here that was sent to me by Rebecca Gingrich, one of my constituents in Oxford county. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ontario government is cutting front-line health care at pharmacies, which could mean higher prices, less service and even store closures for us;

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

“Stop the cuts to front-line health care at our pharmacies now.”

Thank you very much for allowing me to present that on Rebecca’s behalf.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

Mr^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Sudbury and Nickel Belt.

“Whereas a company’s resumption of production with replacement workers during a legal strike puts undue tensions and divisions on a community; and

“Whereas anti-replacement legislation in other provinces has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to enact legislation banning the use of replacement workers during a strike.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my signature and send it to the Clerk with page Vrajesh.

NIAGARA DISTRICT SECONDARY SCHOOL

Mr. Kim Craitor: I’m pleased to introduce this petition on behalf of the people of Niagara-on-the-Lake. It reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the people of Niagara-on-the-Lake, deserve and have the right to request that the local school board provide programming and facilities to make the community’s only secondary school viable and thriving;

“Whereas the only local secondary school is an important community hub and a critical component of the strategic planning for the future of Niagara-on-the-Lake;

“Whereas Niagara-on-the-Lake’s economy, agriculture, tourism and service industries depend on the community’s young people attending school here, working after classes and returning after their post-secondary education, the school board’s plan to close the school

will have major negative impacts on the town’s economic future and development;

“Whereas the accommodation review committee recommended keeping the school open;

“Whereas there are over 700 high school students living in Niagara-on-the-Lake, which is more than enough to maintain a viable high school, and an independent review of population trends confirms Niagara-on-the-Lake is a growing municipality with sufficient future enrolment to sustain a high school;

“Whereas the municipality, individuals and community groups have provided a number of significant programming proposals and money to ensure the school continues to operate;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request that the Minister of Education work together with the district school board of Niagara and the community and municipality to ensure Niagara District Secondary School continues to operate and is provided with the programming, resources and facilities necessary to make it viable and thriving.”

I support it.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus support public health care and protecting access to front-line care;

“Ontario families have already given Dalton McGuinty \$15 billion in health taxes, which was wasted on the \$1-billion eHealth scandal. Now the McGuinty Liberals are cutting front-line public health care and putting independent pharmacies at risk;

“Dalton McGuinty’s cuts will:

“—reduce pharmacy hours during evenings and weekends,

“—increase wait times and lineups for patients,

“—increase the out-of-pocket fees people pay for their medication and its delivery,

“—reduce critical patient health care services for seniors and people with chronic illnesses such as diabetes, heart disease and breathing problems;

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

“That the McGuinty government stop its cuts to pharmacies.”

I agree with the petition and I will sign it.

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here signed by a great number of constituents in Oxford county.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents of Oxford do not want Dalton McGuinty’s new sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberals’ new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$500,000; and

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberals’ new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

“Whereas the McGuinty Liberals’ new sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families, farmers and low-income Ontarians;

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

“That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families.”

I affix my signature as I still agree with this petition, even though it has been going around for some time.

ONTARIO PHARMACISTS

Mr. Pat Hoy: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontarians pay more for popular generic drugs for diabetes, high blood pressure and other common health issues than patients in other jurisdictions; and

“Whereas Ontarians deserve fair prescription drug prices so that families and seniors are not charged more than those in other countries; and

“Whereas some members of the opposition have sided with large corporations to preserve the status quo rather than make prescription medications more affordable for Ontario patients by supporting the proposed drug reforms;

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

“That all members of the Ontario Legislature support Ontarians by passing the government’s legislation to lower the cost of prescription medications.”

I send this to the Clerk.

1340

WATER QUALITY

Mr. Jeff Leal: I have a petition today from Mike Ferguson from the great community of Wallaceburg, Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas we never want to see another tragedy like Walkerton ever again. The health and safety of Ontarians can never come second to profit and greed. Clean, safe drinking water is a right all Ontarians should be able to enjoy.

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

“To continue to upgrade our current water filtration system;

“To continue to monitor and test our water systems;

“To continue to strengthen Ontario’s trust in the safety of our drinking water;

“To continue to invest in new systems and personnel to monitor and test our water;

“To never forget the mistakes of the past and always hold our water supply to the highest standard;

“To continue to invest in the health and safety of Ontarians through our water supply.”

I agree with this petition and give it to Tristen.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

RETIREMENT SAVINGS PLANS FOR EMPLOYEES AND SELF- EMPLOYED PERSONS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LES RÉGIMES D’ÉPARGNE-RETRAITE DES EMPLOYÉS ET DES TRAVAILLEURS INDÉPENDANTS

Mr. Leal moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 54, An Act respecting retirement savings plans for employees and for self-employed persons / Projet de loi 54, Loi traitant des régimes d’épargne-retraite des employés et des travailleurs indépendants.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I’m pleased today to have the opportunity to debate Bill 54, An Act respecting retirement savings plans for employees and for self-employed persons.

The issue of pensions has become a topic for both a provincial and national debate. The Melbourne Mercer Global Pension Index indicated that Canada’s retirement system ranks among the best in the world. The index concluded that Australia, the Netherlands and Sweden have higher ranks than Canada.

But despite this very credible ranking, there’s a concern that the current retirement savings system is not adequate and many Ontarians are approaching retirement with uncertainty. The first big group of the baby boom generation will retire this year. The proportion of seniors in Canada is expected to nearly double in the next 20 years, from 13% to 23%.

This situation creates two challenges: (1) new pressures on the social safety network; and (2) the increase of the dependence ratio—the number of non-workers supported by active workers—pushing up against the availability of public resources.

The international financial crisis which started in the United States has placed a spotlight on Canadians’ and Ontarians’ savings rates. In 1980, 20% of disposable income was placed in savings. Today, that is 5%. We need, as a society, to focus on the need to increase our savings rate.

In order to create an environment for savings, we must start with our youngest citizens. My colleague from Kitchener–Conestoga is searching for ways to introduce a new curriculum to teach financial literacy in Ontario schools. According to the member from Kitchener–Conestoga, “Ontario students today are Ontario’s future consumers and investors. We have to change habits and nurture, I guess, a culture of responsibility.

“This is about giving them the knowledge and planting the seeds so this is a future foundation for behaviour.” Saving for retirement cannot start too soon.

Ontario’s retirement savings system is built on a number of elements. They are commonly known as the three pillars.

Pillar 1: The first pillar consists of public pensions granted to all our citizens. Old age security is provided at age 65 for retirees who have 40 years of residence in Canada after age 18. For those with fewer years of residence, the pension is pro-rated. For low-income seniors, there’s also the guaranteed income supplement. These inflation-indexed pensions are financed out of general government revenue.

Pillar 2: CPP/QPP. The second pillar acts like a defined benefit plan and is financed by mandatory contributions, split between employees and employers, of 9.9% of covered earnings. When CPP/QPP was introduced in the mid-1960s, it was intended to replace up to 25% of wages to the national median income of some \$47,000. The OAS/GIS and the CPP/QPP together replace 75% of employment income for someone making \$20,000, and 41% for someone making \$40,000. As employment income rises above these levels, the replacement income ratio falls, so that a \$100,000 earner would see OAS and CPP/QPP covering only 17% of pre-retirement earnings.

Pillar 3: registered pension plans and registered retirement savings plans. The third pillar is meant to provide a level of income adequacy that goes beyond the bare basics. It relies on private sector savings and consists of two elements: workplace retirement plans including registered pension plans, or RPPs, as well as group RRSPs. The proportion of workers covered by RPPs, which include defined benefit and defined contribution plans, is declining. It is currently estimated at 39%, down from 46% in the late 1970s.

Five million Canadians are covered by workplace defined benefit pension plans, which are designed to provide a deferred lifetime income. The majority of these plans are in the public sector. About 1.3 million Canadians are covered by workplace defined contribution plans where retirement income will be based on accumulated savings at the point of retirement, and another two million Canadians are covered by workplace group RRSPs, which are not necessarily locked in for retirement.

Individual Canadians contribute more than \$34 billion a year to RRSPs through individual plans established with the ongoing assistance and support of advisers. However, they’ve only used 6% of the contribution sums

they have built since 1991. This information was provided by a study conducted by Mr. Bob Baldwin in 2009: Research Study on the Canadian Retirement Income System.

Australia developed a universal deferred contribution plan where employees contribute 9% of their income to privately run superannuation funds. Participation is mandatory for all employees between 18 and 70. The Australian plan does not contain an opt-out provision.

In a recent discussion paper, the Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association Inc. recommended the following five measures to improve access to retirement plans by Canadian workers:

(1) Amend tax and pension legislation to permit the adaptation of direct contribution multi-employer pension plans/deferred contribution multi-employer pension plans.

(2) Require every workplace with 20 or more workers to provide a retirement plan either on its own or through a defined contribution multi-employer pension plan. Employers should be left the option of whether to contribute to the plan. It is my personal view that it would be in the best interests of the employer to make matching contributions.

(3) Amend tax and pension legislation to enable auto-enrolment in workplace retirement plans.

(4) Amend pension and employment standards legislation to prevent the impediment of auto-escalation in workplace retirement plans.

(5) Amend tax legislation to ensure that employer contributions to group RRSPs are retained for retirement purposes through locking in.

I’d like to spend some time outlining the merits of defined contribution multi-employer pension plans. This type of plan would expand access and foster regular contributions to retirement savings plans for private sector workers.

Plans would be sponsored and administered by a regulated financial institution, relieving participating employers of almost all the administrative costs and compliance burdens. For example, you could select the investment and savings options, performing due diligence on the investment/savings provided and selecting trustees associated with offering a pension plan.

By having regulated financial institutions take on the role of plan sponsor, plans would be made accessible to the self-employed.

By having individual pension plans applicable to multiple workplaces, administrative and compliance costs would be reduced, allowing plans to achieve economies that are currently realized by only the largest pension plans. The fact that a critical mass of pension funds can be achieved through a deferred contribution multi-employer pension plan significantly improves returns and reduces leakages in administrative fees.

1350

Bill 54 also includes a provision for auto-enrolment. Auto-enrolment means that workers would automatically be enrolled in the pension plan offered by their em-

ployers unless they specifically opted out. Recent data from the United States, which pursues the creation of auto-enrolment rules: 66% of workers participated in a deferred contribution plan; with auto-enrolment, participation rates rose to 87%.

Some have suggested that an auto-escalation feature could also be incorporated on top of the auto-enrolment plan. With auto-enrolment escalation, a plan could start members out at a base contribution rate as low as 3% of pay, automatically escalating it 1% in each successive year until it reached a fixed rate of 6% of pay. This provision would also increase the savings rate.

In proposing Bill 54, it is my intent to add some additional ideas to what I believe should be a province-wide and, indeed, national debate on pension reform. Every Ontarian has a big stake in this debate, and every member of the Ontario Legislature needs to be part of the discussion.

I do not believe that a strictly public sector approach or a strictly private sector approach provides the answer. We are fortunate that we have great strengths in both the public and private sectors. The time is right to forge a new consensus on Ontario pensions.

I close with some wise words of former Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson: “Failures are made only by those who fail to dare, not by those who dare to fail.”

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Norm Miller: I’m pleased to have an opportunity to speak to the member from Peterborough’s private member’s bill, Bill 54, An Act respecting retirement savings plans for employees and for self-employed persons. I think it’s clear that retirement saving is a concern across the country. It’s certainly is a concern here in Ontario, so I’m pleased the member has brought this private member’s bill forward.

The issue of coverage, that being how many people have a plan, is significant. The fact of the matter is, in Ontario and in the country, not enough people are saving for retirement and not enough people have plans. So anything that we can do to increase the coverage and provide more opportunity for people to participate in a plan is a positive thing, so I will be supporting this private member’s bill.

The fact is that, currently, 65% of Ontarians do not have any form of registered pension plan, and 50% of Canadian taxpayers have no private savings at all. So we need to provide some means for people to be able to save, and this bill does provide some form of increased coverage.

I note that the experts in the field, such as the Association of Canadian Pension Management, when they talk about what we should be focusing on, say that we need to rebalance the debate to focus on retirement income, and that we need to encourage formation of more workplace plans and savings plans for Canadians, which is critical to the retirement income debate. So that’s what this bill, in a small way, is doing.

The bill would require employers with 20 or more employees in Ontario to provide retirement savings plans

for employees. It would be a plan that would be a defined contribution multi-employer plan. So even though it would be required of employers of 20 or more—and the member can correct me in the few minutes he has left; he can just nod his head if I’m right—as I understand it, even a sole proprietor or a very small business could participate in this plan, which might be for themselves, in that case. I think that’s positive.

I did have one concern about whether it would be a burden on businesses that couldn’t afford to do it but might want to offer the plan. As I understand, an employer is not required to contribute towards the plan, but they may if, in designing the plan, they so desire to. I see the member nodding, so I think I’m correct on that.

I think we do need to do what we can to provide opportunities for people to save for retirement.

Another feature of the plan that I do like is that it has an auto-enrol feature, so that if your employer is 20 or more and he has set up a plan, you as an employee are automatically signed up for the plan, but you have the right to opt out of it if you so desire. I think it’s just human nature that we all have something else we would rather spend our immediate cash on versus saving for a time that might be 20 or 30 years away, which is retirement. We can always think about something like the new car or a vacation or whatever on which we’ll spend the cash at hand, when really, if we’re doing what’s best for the future, we should be putting a bit of money aside over the long term to be able to provide for our retirement. So I do like that auto-enrol feature of this private member’s bill.

I have to say, and it’s not concerned exactly with this private member’s bill, that on this issue of retirement savings, I am concerned about the fact that in the province of Ontario, starting July 1, the HST, the 8% additional tax, will be applied to the management fee on mutual funds. I’m concerned about that because those people who rely on RRSPs currently can only put up to 18% of their income into an RRSP, as compared to the other side of the retirement savings picture, which is someone who has a defined benefit plan. The value of that plan, for those lucky enough to have it, is about 35% of pay. There’s a big inequity there at this point, and by putting a tax on the management fees on RRSPs, it makes people less able to save and further compounds the problem of people having enough money for their retirement income.

Another question I did have, which maybe the member, in his few minutes at the end of this, would be able to respond to, is the issue of portability. Say I’m an employee and I sign up with my company, which has 25 employees. His private member’s bill gets passed. My company sets up the plan, the defined contribution multi-employer plan, and I work there for 10 or 15 years, and then I move out of the province. Maybe he could explain to me what happens then. I assume—and you can correct me again if I’m right or wrong—that I have a set amount after the 10 or 15 years in an account that I would be able to take with me when I move to BC because I lost my job in Ontario—

Mr. Dave Levac: No, no. Don't do that. Stay.

Mr. Norm Miller: Just kidding there; sorry. But seriously, the issue of portability is one I did have.

I note that I've pretty much used all the time I have, but I'm pleased to see this private member's bill coming forward. I look forward to a response to the couple of questions I had.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Dave Levac: The NDP doesn't want to talk?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I don't know.

Mr. Michael Prue: We're letting you talk.

Mr. Dave Levac: No, no. Go ahead.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate before it collapses?

The honourable member for Brant.

Mr. Dave Levac: If it hadn't been for the member for Peterborough, I would have played chicken with the member from Beaches—East York—

Interjection.

Mr. Dave Levac: I would have won, because we would have got the bill.

But anyway just a couple of minutes to thank the member from Peterborough. He has done outstanding work on this area for a long time, even before he was elected. I want to compliment him for the work that he does in having us understand the issue.

I do support the bill. I do want to say, though, that I think all kinds of ideas are necessary to engage in this debate. The biggest part of this is that I hope that this, along with anyone else's private member's bills, and including the previous motion that the NDP put forward, allows us to enter into a larger national debate. I don't know if there's anybody in this place who does not understand, recognize and probably support that, as a nation, we should be evaluating this whole process and, of course, what kind of impacts that would have in the province of Ontario.

I want to say at the outset that one of the things I liked about the bill was that it wasn't public versus private; it was public and private. So the opportunities for us to enter into the debate are: Is there a public entity that can be participating in this pension discussion? Yes. Is there a private opportunity for us to enter into the debate? Yes. I think it's a combination of both, providing us with the opportunity in terms of investment.

What's unfortunate about this is that employers are now going to be relegated—if we don't open this debate, we would be simply saying that the only solution we can come up with at a national/provincial level would be public. I don't know that that's true. So I would suggest that that's what this bill is doing: It's allowing us the option to flow in a combination of, and in partnership with, public and private opportunities.

1400

The other thing is that I want to thank the member from Kitchener—Conestoga, along with something that's

already happening, for her work in education. I think we need to make sure we change the culture of who we are as Canadians, because the statistics of how poorly we do in this field are there. There is a committee that's taking place right now, through the Ministry of Education, looking at the curriculum and where we want to move from there. That in itself is going to help us change that culture. I think there are several ways in which we can continue to do this operationally to move the cultural discussion into one that sees us becoming better at pensions for people.

I want to compliment him on the part where he spoke about auto-enrolment. We've seen evidence—you move from 66% participation to around 83% or 85% participation—that tells us that's a helpful stick inside the debate on changing the culture. I thank the member for it. One of the things I want to point out too, when we talk about education and auto-enrolment, is how young people are when they participate in this at the onset. If I'm coming out of university or college or high school, I'm walking into my first job and have no knowledge about how I want to save for the future. If we have auto-enrolment and higher education of those students, we will see an increase and a change in that culture.

All in all, I want to compliment the member from Peterborough. He has my support. I think everyone here should be putting this on the table for us to continue the debate, and I will be supporting the member from Peterborough.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I very much appreciate being able to speak today to Bill 54, An Act respecting retirement savings plans for employees and for self-employed persons, and I appreciate the fact that the member has brought this bill forward. I can tell you that as far as we're concerned, this is a good stepping stone. As I mentioned to the member—he said that it opens up a discussion—I think it's important that that discussion take place, primarily because people now are more and more aware of why they need to have some kind of plan in place.

The reality is that if you want to have a decent standard of living, you can't get along with \$50,000 in a bank account when you retire if you don't have some kind of pension plan. You actually have to have those investments, whether they are in the form of an RRSP or any kind of investment, if you want any kind of income, after you've worked to the age of 60 or 65 and happen to live to be 80 or 85 years of age; that you can live with a decent income and not be at poverty level, in some cases.

I like the fact that it's optional for both the company and the employee. They can opt out if they have to, and the company can be limited to what they put in—that's my understanding. But at least they've set the plan up, and in a lot of cases they can actually bring in professionals: people who can come in and speak to the employees about why they have to have X dollars set aside as they grow older.

I myself have been in a couple of small businesses like that, and in fact we ended up putting some kind of plan in place for both of them so that people could at least move in a forward direction so that they could have some type of income.

I think that what draws it to attention now is that most people in the public service have excellent pensions. Whether they are firefighters, police officers or are with an OMERS group, they have a decent income at the end of their working days and can live a fairly decent lifestyle with that. But there are many other people who don't have that and really haven't been educated in a proper way on how to invest properly and to make sure they start putting money away at a very early age. You can't wait until you're 50 or 55 years of age and think you're going to have enough money put away to retire, if you have a normal-income kind of job. You have to start putting it away from your 20s and 30s, so that you have a decent type of income.

I think it's a step in the right direction, and I applaud the member for doing it. In a lot of cases, we have some really positive private members' bills taking place in this House, and they get shuffled away with prorogation of the House or whatever. But in the end, as the member said to me, they are a point where you open up a discussion for the future. Maybe it will go nowhere, but maybe it will end up having an impact on some companies, on some of the people in the public service. We can move this forward in a fairly positive direction.

We've said it a few times in the House that if you want to have a normal kind of income, something with which you can sustain a decent lifestyle, not only living on the Canada pension plan, I can tell you that you're going to have to do better than just having a few bucks set aside in the bank. You're going to have to have a plan where you can count on a monthly income. People in their 60s and early 70s like to do a lot of travelling. You want to make sure you have money set aside for that. You might have to replace cars once in a while, and there will be maintenance on your home, that sort of thing. I think it's important that, as we move into the future generations, we make sure that we're setting the groundwork so that they can take some positive steps in that manner.

I'll be supporting the bill, and I hope it moves forward. I hope it gets to committee and we can actually debate it further and get some more professional-type people in to explain why this bill makes sense. I think you'll find that this would be fairly widely accepted by the business community as well as by individual citizens across the province as they look forward to retirement.

I don't think it's something that will save a lot of pension plans around here for our generation. I think it's the young people coming up who need to make sure that, no matter what age they are, they start setting a bit of money aside all the time and having these investments take place so that they can look down the road and retire with dignity and with some proper income as they grow a little older.

Again, I thank you, and I'll be supporting this.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened to the member from Peterborough and I've listened to those who want to support this bill, and I cannot believe my ears. In the late 1990s, the government of Ontario—the Mike Harris government—did away with the pension plans of every single man and woman member in this House.

Mr. Dave Levac: Shame.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Shameful.

Mr. Michael Prue: Absolutely. The member here who spoke in favour of the bill just said, "Shame."

What is being proposed here is the selfsame plan that was imposed on all of us. What the member from Peterborough is proposing is a plan that he does not even accept for himself. I have heard from every single member of this Legislature, over the past nearly nine years that I have been here, that the single most ridiculous thing—and I'm even going to ask the Conservatives to comment on this—that the Mike Harris government did was to shelve the pension plan of MPPs and substitute for it a defined contribution plan.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: A private plan.

Mr. Michael Prue: It was a private plan. It doesn't work. I have been here, as I said, nine years. I went, and all of you went who wanted to go, to the same luncheon that we had this week. If you have \$100,000 invested in the plan at the end of the time you're here, which is more than most members will ever accumulate, you can hope for somewhere between \$700 and \$800 a month for 10 years.

Mr. Dave Levac: It's not a career.

Mr. Michael Prue: No. Okay, it's not a career.

Mr. Dave Levac: It's not a career.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, but this holds true for anybody out there. Even if you're at 30 years and you put in the kind of money as a percentage that we make, which is \$125,000—not many Ontarians do that—at the end of the period, you get a pittance. You get an absolute pittance.

Mr. Dave Levac: How about the 73% of people who get nothing?

Mr. Michael Prue: No, listen to this: 73% get nothing, yes, but you get a pittance.

The issue here isn't whether or not we have a defined contribution plan. Surely to God, the issue is whether or not Ontarians should have a defined benefit plan. I think that this is where the member is missing the whole thing.

Every single member in this House knows that what we have is not right. Every single member in this House knows that what Ontarians want is what we used to have. Every single member in this House should be advocating for a pension plan that pays a decent pension when you retire, not a pittance, which is the best you can do because you're walking in lockstep with the insurance industry. Only the insurance industry, under this plan, will be allowed to sponsor and administer the new multi-

employer plans, potentially resulting in billions of dollars in fees for that industry.

1410

I went to the plan the other day, for those who had the time to show up to it. There were only a few of us there, but we showed up. One of the questions they asked us was, "What was the difference if you went into this plan, and what kind of difference could a really good adviser make towards the plan?" I was naive. I guessed that an individual adviser who knew the stock market and everything else could increase the plan by 2% or 3% or 4% a year by making all the right investments. I got gonged, because that's the button I pushed. The reality was that if you have the best adviser in Canada, you might be able to gain 0.5%. Mr. Ramal was there; he remembers this.

Here's what it is: You're going to skim billions of dollars for 0.5%; that's the very best you're going to do. That's what Mr. Leal is asking us to accept, and I don't accept that. We do not believe that the way to provide the maximum opportunity for people's retirement in this province is to allow insurance companies and banks to skim off scads of administrative dollars and whittle away the savings of people so that they can make all kinds of profits on the backs of hard-working Canadians, hard-working Ontarians. You want to skim them off. Sure, they can make money. I'm sure the insurance companies and the banks will love this motion. They'll say, "We can do this for you. We can take your money. We can invest it. We can maybe make 0.5% if we're really good at it, in addition to what has been put in," but at the end, you're not going to get a whole lot.

We believe that this needs to be managed by the public sector. We believe that the CPP has shown us the way to do it. We believe that adding an extra \$600 or \$700 a month for 10 years for somebody who has served this Legislature is tantamount to not very much. And if that is based on an average salary in this place of \$125,000—about which, I think the papers are right—how many Ontarians are going to see that \$600 to \$700? How many are going to see it with this bill? I'm telling you, I don't think that this is the way we ought to be going. After years of putting your contributions in, you don't know what you're going to get, whereas, if you have a defined benefit plan, they can tell you, on the day you are about to retire, how much you can expect. I think that that's what we need to do.

Tommy Douglas said a long time ago—and he is revered across the country. I hear oftentimes that the Conservative and Liberal members will quote Tommy Douglas. One of his greatest sayings to me that I ever heard was, "Dream no small dreams." You can dream this dream, the member from Peterborough, but it's a small dream. It is a very small dream. Or you can dream the big dream: that everybody in this province who retires has a pension plan which is enough for them to live in dignity for the rest of their life. It is like the CPP plan: an addition to the CPP plan. The monies that are taken in are used for very small administrative purposes,

and the rest goes back into the plan. The rest goes back into making sure that people don't live in penury. After years of putting your contributions into the plan, you know exactly how much you are going to receive as your pension benefit when you retire. It provides the best retirement security.

This plan that's being proposed simply doesn't work. I know it works for the banks and the insurance companies; you all know it works for the banks and insurance companies. You all know, as MPPs, what is going to happen to us when and if we retire. It has been said around this place that the fact that so many people choose to stay on beyond 65 and 70 and 75 and into their 80s running in this place is because they don't have a pension, because they require the money that is here. They have no other means of looking after themselves, because what we have today is not sufficient.

I don't wish for others what I have to have for myself. I came from other places. I came from a municipal government where we had a defined benefit plan. I came from the federal government, where we had a defined benefit plan. When I came to this place, my wife was very angry at me. She called me a name which I cannot say in this House. She told me, in effect, that I was an idiot because I was 50-some years old when I left municipal government and I was coming to a place that had virtually no pension. I am still here because I had virtually no pension. I don't wish that upon other people. I think that all Ontarians deserve the right to have a full and complete pension.

Should the government members vote for this bill, it is a clear sign that this government wants banks and insurance companies to get even more of our hard-earned disposable income on high-risk retirement plans and that they don't want to set up a plan that all Ontarians would truly benefit from.

The member from Peterborough's bill suggests that it's only to skim the outrageous fees off the retirement income of even those earning the lowest wages. We think you need to put wage earners first. Please don't put the banks and the insurance companies first. Put the wage earners, put the people who are going to live in poverty and are afraid of what happens when they turn 60 or 65 or 70, first. You have a choice. We put forward a bill the other day, and it didn't pass. I don't think this bill is the answer.

This bill ought not to signal where this government is coming from. The members in the Liberal Party ought to say, "We don't want to go there either." Come up with your own plan. Come up with something better. Come up with something that gives people hope and an opportunity. You need to advocate on behalf of your constituents. It's not just to say you might be able to have a couple of hundred dollars in the end—because that's all most of them are going to get after 20 or 30 years. If they're only making \$30,000 or \$40,000 a year and if they're entitled to put in what they're entitled to put in, that's all they're going to end up with in this kind of plan. Please don't do that to them. Having \$200 extra a month

is not where they need to be. They need to be in a place where they have sufficient money and are able to look after themselves. They need that decent amount of income. They need certainty about their financial security. They need a quality of life that they have, and ought to, become used to, that they're not going to get if you turn it over to the insurance companies and the type of plan that we have seen be so unsuccessful to all of us.

If contributors were paying the wholesale administrative costs offered by these large public pension funds, their fees would decline—this is from the actuaries—by some \$8.4 billion a year. Equivalently, their retirement savings would grow by an additional \$8.4 billion a year if it was public. You can give that money to the insurance companies, and if you pass Mr. Leal's bill, you will. Or you can make sure that \$8.4 billion goes where it's supposed to go: into the pockets of the retirees of Ontario. You've also got all the money that they skim off.

I think what I need to say in conclusion is that the evidence points away from where Mr. Leal wants to send us in this bill. We have an obligation. I know I have an obligation; I'm sure all of you feel the same one: to protect the people of this province, your constituents; to provide the very best that can you provide. If you think that providing the very best is to give them the type of plan that all of us in our heart of hearts reject, then vote for his bill. If you think we can do better, then I think we need to say we can do better and say no to Mr. Leal.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Just a reminder that we refer to each other by our riding names.

Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted to enter the debate. It's an important debate. I believe it has been around this place for many years. Since we got elected in 2003, people have been talking about it. Lately, our Premier has been talking to the federal government to introduce a national pension plan for all Ontarians and all Canadians. I think it's the best way to do it. Also, early this week the leader of the third party introduced a bill in that regard, and today the member from Peterborough brings to us a great, important bill to be debated in the House.

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I would have to agree with all the elements, because I believe that government should run and control the pension plans for all Ontarians, especially when we talked about it this morning. We talked about how security commissions and regulators should be united and should be in one office for the country to maintain and watch all the financial companies, because they deal with the people's money. So many people have invested millions and billions of dollars. They're saving for their retirements, like us. When we checked our retirement plan, 15 months ago we found out most of our money was gone. So there was nothing for our pension when we bought RRSPs. I went on the assumption that we would have something for ourselves when we retire from this place, if we retire, and we could depend on it.

Therefore, I believe it's an important step towards opening the discussion. As the member from Simcoe

mentioned, it's a great dialogue, it's an important dialogue. As a private member's bill, it might not be a bill or a law we adopt in this place, but it's very important to talk about these issues for the sake of security for all the people of Ontario. I think we are obligated as citizens, as elected officials, as a people who have some kind of ability to make rules and regulations in this place to come up with a solution for the 70% of the total population who have no pensions whatsoever. They cannot depend on anything.

As I said on Tuesday when I spoke on opposition day, you know what? In the end, we, as a government, are paying anyway. We're paying for people, whether through Ontario Works, through disability, through family benefits or different sorts of supports. So why don't we organize the system from the beginning, when the people, the youth, are young, and they can contribute some money for when they're retired and they can depend on it.

Again, it's a very important debate, and I want to thank the member for bringing it to our attention. I'm looking forward to hearing more.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure to join in the debate today. I thank the member from Peterborough for bringing Bill 54 forward. I was hoping to speak from several angles, but I don't have a lot of time. I'm not even sure how much time I have, but I did want to highlight a few important aspects.

There was a conference this week run by the Institute for Research on Public Policy. They're saying that the opinion remains divided among pension experts, economists and business representatives, although they are agreeing that most support the principle that no plan should put young workers or taxpayers at risk of having to bail out current or future retirees if investment returns fall short of expectations. So I thank the member from Peterborough for bringing this forward. I commend him for beginning this very important discussion.

I also wanted to highlight a special in the *Globe and Mail*. It was an article that highlighted some really shocking statistics, and I think it comes into play in this debate. One in three are struggling or can't keep up with their finances in Ontario, one in four are weak in the key areas of planning and budgeting, and 30% are not preparing for retirement. At the same time, personal debt relative to income has been climbing steadily for two decades. They're asking, how many of us resolve to spend less each month to pay down our debt and to contribute to our RRSPs yet never do so? They refer to a behavioural economy which shows the gap between intention and action.

I thank the member for Peterborough for highlighting the work that's being done with the working group on financial literacy that was commissioned by the Minister of Education. Minister Dombrowsky continues to support this initiative, because what we're doing is looking at exactly that: We're looking at a behaviour change. It's a

whole philosophy shift in the way that we think about finances. Where does that begin? It begins with our youngest: our students.

How do we take this behaviour change? Just a quick story: When I went into an elementary school, I said to the students in grade 3, "Where does money come from?" All the hands went up, so I asked Alyssa, and Alyssa told me that money comes from grandma or grandpa or it comes from a birthday card. Fair enough; maybe it does. Then Kevin in the front row said, "Money comes from a bank." Yes, money does come from a bank, Kevin. So I said, "What do you do with that money when you get it?" Pretty much all the hands went up, and it was unanimous that when you get money, you put it in a jar.

What we need to do as a working group on financial literacy is look at that behaviour shift, that change in behaviour—that gap, really. It's a gap between knowledge and action.

We've been consulting around the world. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development out of Paris told us that Ontario is at the forefront of the world on this file. So it's so important that we continue to focus on behaviour change, and this is the discussion that the member from Peterborough has brought forward today.

I also thank the member from Brant for bringing forward the topic of the working group, because these symbiotic actions are going on at the same time. We have to be having the discussion of retirement and pension at the same time that we have to be looking at how we're teaching our youth in schools. It's bringing together those two actions that is important.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Jim Brownell: I just have a little over a minute. I'm pleased to stand today in support of Bill 54. Certainly the member from Peterborough gave all the aspects of this bill, so I won't talk on that, but I do want to say that a debate has started, a debate through the opposition, the debate that's here today with Bill 54 and certainly the good work that's being done.

I know the member from Kitchener–Conestoga and her interest in making sure that the education starts. When you have statistics that say that in 1980, 20% of disposable income was put into savings and now it's down to 5%, there has to be an education piece on that by schools by teaching the young folks what it is to save and how you can save.

Certainly what the member has given us here today is that opportunity in businesses employing 20 people or more, requiring them to have a retirement savings plan in place. That's where it has to start. This is a start of a debate.

The Premier and the Prime Minister have been talking about expanding opportunities for savings and pension plans. Let this be a start and let Bill 54 be a start here in the Ontario Legislature of us moving forward in making amendments and making the Employment Standards Act amendments

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Mr. Leal, the member for Peterborough, has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'd like to thank the following members who participated in the debate today: Parry Sound–Muskoka, Beaches–East York, Simcoe North, my colleagues from Brant, Kitchener–Conestoga, London–Fanshawe and, of course, the hard-working member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

It's interesting when you do a little research on some of the big public pension plans in Ontario. I took a look at OMERS for a moment. Everybody thinks the returns from OMERS come from their investment in public sources. In fact, in 2003, OMERS changed their plan and adopted a new approach, a new asset-mixed policy with greater emphasis placed on private market investments, as it was believed that those markets would yield strong, predictable and consistent returns with reduced risk. Where did OMERS invest their money? The Royal Bank of Canada, Barrick Gold, Golf Town, Bruce Power, Square One Shopping Centre in Mississauga, along with Watermark Place in London, the United Kingdom.

At the same time, the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan revised their base of investments: government of Canada bonds, Toronto Eaton Centre, Birmingham International Airport, Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment—I think that's a questionable investment—and Valentino Fashion Group. The Valentino Fashion Group is where the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan has invested their dollars to get a rate of return.

This is about the start of a debate. In an ideal world, we would set up a select committee here at Queen's Park to look at pensions in the province of Ontario, because I think we need a full debate. In today's edition of the Toronto Star, Jim Leech, who is acknowledged as one of the great experts in pensions, says it's time we had a great debate: "Our generation can be the pension champions who resolved the problem, or the chumps who squandered the retirement security of future generations"—the young people of Peterborough. He says we need a debate on both aspects: public pensions and also looking at the private sector to shore up pension plans in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. We'll vote on this ballot item in about 100 minutes.

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ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislature of Ontario petition the Prime Minister of Canada and the Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to amend their policy directive regarding third party access to the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) databases immediately to make it possible to screen potential employees, service providers and volunteers who are potentially in positions of trust and authority with vulnerable persons such as children and youth who are served by organizations such

as school boards or their agents (pursuant to regulation 521/01 of the Education Act, Ontario), health and social service agencies, municipalities and volunteer organizations, including the ability to determine in a timely manner if an individual has been pardoned for a conviction for a sexual offence.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mrs. Sandals moves private member's notice of motion number 31.

Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has up to 12 minutes for her presentation.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'd like to mention a few people who will be joining us shortly. We're moving along quite quickly here this afternoon. But we will be joined by Bob Williams, who is the executive director of the Ontario Education Services Corp.; Gail Anderson, executive director, and Jeff Sprang, director of communications, from the Ontario Public School Boards' Association; Bill Byrd, the Safe and Caring Schools administrator from the Toronto District School Board; Alice Pitt, dean of the faculty of education at York University; and Genalyn Lo, representing the dean of the Michener Institute. Those folks are actually joining us as we speak.

When Ontario parents send their kids off to school or out to the hockey rink or to Girl Guides or dance class, they assume that the organization has done the proper checks and that their child will not be keeping company with a sex offender. Last November, that would have been a reasonable assumption. But late last fall, a federal policy directive stopped the existing process for many of those reference checks.

I'm going to indulge in a little bit of a history lesson here, because it sets the context.

Back during the time of the Conservative government, they appointed Mr. Justice Sydney Robins to do an inquiry into the sexual abuse of students by adults in schools, and Mr. Robins wrote a very extensive report, a very useful report. In response to that, the then-Minister of Education, Janet Ecker, tabled a piece of legislation which, if recall serves me, was supported by all three parties at the time. I think, in fact, the member from Simcoe North may have been the parliamentary assistant at the time. He's nodding his head.

This was also a very good piece of legislation. It dealt with, among other things, how school boards should manage if they do have allegations of sexual abuse against an employee. But it also laid out very specifically that school boards are required to do criminal reference checks for, number one, their employees, and, number two, service providers who have direct contact with students. Volunteers aren't mentioned, but obviously lots of school boards do also require criminal reference checks for their volunteers. I would also note that while this particular legislation applies to school boards, there's similar legislation in lots of other sectors that deals with vulnerable people with children and youth.

Now, I put this in this context because it's important to understand the rationale for requiring the criminal reference checks in the first place. The rationale was to make sure that you, insofar as you can do that with a

criminal reference check, attempt to discover whether or not the prospective employee or service provider is in fact a sexual offender. You want to know what their past history of sexual offences is.

That raises a couple of issues. The first one is this whole issue around pardons, which has been in the press a lot lately. When you do a reference check, can you find out if the person has been pardoned?

I'd like to talk a little bit about what a vulnerable person is. Vulnerable persons are defined in section 6.3 of the Criminal Records Act:

“vulnerable persons’ means persons who, because of their age, a disability or other circumstances, whether temporary or permanent,

“(a) are in a position of dependence on others; or

“(b) are otherwise at a greater risk than the general population of being harmed by persons in a position of authority or trust relative to them.”

Commonly accepted examples of vulnerable persons are children, youth and adults with developmental disabilities. There's no question that those people all fall into the vulnerable sector category.

Going on with this issue of pardons and sexual offences: If a pardon has been granted, the criminal history information about an individual convicted of a sexually based offence is retrievable by law enforcement only for the purposes of a vulnerable sector check. If we think back a month or so ago, there was a lot of discussion about Graham James in the media and it came to light just how routinely pardons were being granted for sexual offences. I certainly didn't realize that, even as somebody with a lot of experience in the education sector. So it makes it absolutely crucial that whoever is doing the check get to a vulnerable persons check. If you don't do that, you've actually sort of missed the purpose.

The other issue, at least with respect to school boards but I think a lot of other people as well, is: What is a service provider? We know who the direct employees are. What's a service provider?

Let's give some examples of people who might be service providers to school boards or other people.

The people who do breakfast programs at schools probably are not direct school board employees, but they will have direct contact with children. The people who run school cafeterias, for the most part, are employees of a caterer who has been contracted, not a school board employee. The people who drive buses are employees of bus companies, not school boards. The people who drive taxis, who take a special-needs child to school from home—one-on-one contact with a very vulnerable child—are definitely not school board employees; they work for taxi companies. Other examples might be the photographers who do school pictures or the person who comes from a school yearbook publisher and works with the kids to lay it out. The list goes on and on.

Other categories would be faculties of education. The students from the faculty of education, over the course of the year, will be placed in various schools in various school boards to do practice teaching and practicums. We

also, if you extend it, would have places like the Michener Institute, which does education in the health professions; for example, respiratory technologists or ultrasound and MRI technicians—but, who, again, in the course of their practicum, will be dealing with vulnerable people.

All those people need checks. This is a good idea.

Back in 2000 or so, when this legislation was tabled, boards tried to make it work. But the experience was that there are literally hundreds of police service boards in this province, literally thousands of service providers, and the quality of the checks was extraordinarily inconsistent. Some were vulnerable sector, some weren't; some cost \$10, some cost \$50; some police service boards don't do checks, some take months and months to do checks, and some will do them while you wait. When you put this all together, what you had was total chaos.

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One young teacher I was talking to, who was a teacher at the time, or going through teacher ed at the time, has had two different criminal reference checks for purposes of practicums and another couple of criminal reference checks for working with different boards. She has had so many criminal reference checks at different police departments that it's sort of like a revolving door. The interesting thing is, those checks took anywhere from while-you-wait-at-the-counter to five months. Clearly the five-month part of it is not viable.

So what did the boards do? What the boards did was set up something called the Ontario Educational Services Corp., or OESC, which is, in essence, an agent of all 72 school boards. It was set up by the four school boards: the French public, the French Catholic, the English Catholic and the English public. It worked on behalf of all 72 school boards. It primarily does the service providers and the volunteers. In 2009, this one organization did 50,000 checks. Other sectors have similar organizations; it's not the only one. This has the advantage of consistency. It has the advantage that the vulnerable-sector check is getting done. It has the advantage that no matter what service provider you are or what area of the province, you're getting asked the same questions, the same standards for what's clear and what's not clear. It brought what was chaotic into a very smoothly working system—until the RCMP issued a directive to every police force in Canada to stop doing third party reference checks. The whole system that had been built up ground to a halt.

I want to assure parents who are listening that school boards are still doing direct checks on their own direct employees. The teacher in the classroom is still getting the check. The educational assistant working with your child is still getting the check. I don't want to put people into a panic. But there's a whole host of service providers out there for whom it is very, very difficult to get checks in a timely manner.

Let me give you an example, because I think we have representatives from the faculties of education here. What was happening in years past is that at this time of

year, when acceptances are going out, the students were told, "You must go to OESC and get your reference check done over the summer. Then, when you start classes in September, no matter what board you get sent to, your OESC clearance will be proof that you've had the clearance. If you don't get OESC clearance, we know there's something wrong, and we'd better be looking into that, because, are you really a good candidate?" But that has all been shut down—doing it in this consistent and timely manner.

What my motion asks for is that we ask the federal government, the RCMP, to revisit this policy, to look at their third party policy and to work with the third party providers who are doing a good job to get a protocol and get back to work and get these checks done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today to make a few comments on the member from Guelph's motion. I'd like to read it again into the record. It's Ms. Sandals' motion: "That, in the opinion of this House, the Legislature of Ontario petition the Prime Minister of Canada and the Commissioner of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to amend their policy directive regarding third party access to the Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) databases immediately to make it possible to screen potential employees, service providers and volunteers who are potentially in positions of trust and authority with vulnerable persons such as children and youth who are served by organizations such as school boards or their agents (pursuant to regulation 521/01 of the Education Act, Ontario), health and social service agencies, municipalities and volunteer organizations, including the ability to determine in a timely manner if an individual has been pardoned for a conviction for a sexual offence."

I support what the member is trying to accomplish with this resolution. I wasn't really 100% sure of the impact of this until it hit me a couple of months back with a volunteer organization. I think maybe I mentioned it to the member. I've done a lot of petitions and comments in this House on the Wye Marsh, which is an environmental centre up in our riding. Each and every year, I believe around 25,000 students go through the Wye Marsh for environmental education. It's a really great program. It's kind of an icon in our community, and we do a lot of fundraising. It's just a great organization, particularly for a lot of young people.

I was talking to one of the members of the board of directors, and he brought to my attention that they were having a really difficult time getting the CPIC analysis done on their volunteers. This organization has a movement of volunteers. Throughout the year, probably 10% or 15% of their volunteers retire or move on and new people come in, but there are always 300 or 400 volunteers on a regular basis helping out at events, and children are almost always involved. Young people are involved, whether it's on tours, cross-country skiing, hiking, canoeing, you name it—all these sorts of things.

There are 3,000 acres they work with there. They were getting really concerned about this and they asked me what we could possibly do, because they didn't want to try to create some of their own policy. They liked the program that was in place before, and they needed to make sure that they could move forward in a positive manner.

Just yesterday, I was with the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration at a conference in Orillia at Geneva Park. It was by a group called PAVR-O, and it's basically administrators of volunteers throughout the province. They represent hospital boards and non-profits—that type of thing. One of the things that we were discussing was the fact that today in our society we've got the public sector, we've got the private sector, and something I found interesting that the minister was saying is that we've got the volunteer sector. The volunteer sector provides literally millions of hours of volunteer work throughout our province, and it helps so many organizations basically survive.

When we talk about getting a background check, we're talking about something that's very important to many, many organizations, and we have to get this thing right. I'm in favour of doing whatever we can do, whether it's through this private member's resolution—although I do think that when we're dealing with the federal government, we have to make sure that we engage our Minister of Community Safety and the government itself. I'd like to hear what the minister is saying on this, because I think it's important that this debate takes place and we get the clarification and the improvements required so that all of these organizations can background check their volunteers in a very, very timely manner.

If you look around the province—and I'm basically zeroing in on volunteers, not on school boards at all. I understand the issues around employees, janitors, teachers, people working in food services in schools etc. I completely understand the importance there. But I can tell you that in Ontario in general, when you look at sporting organizations and all the kinds of different programs young people are involved in today, we have to make sure that we do deal with this in a timely manner.

I look forward to the passing of this resolution, but I also look forward to the debate that I think we should begin almost immediately between members of the cabinet and possibly the Minister of Community Safety and his colleagues in Ottawa, making sure that we get this thing to a point where we can make sure that organizations aren't having to worry. These are all volunteer people in these volunteer organizations and they need to have the assurance that they've got the support both at the provincial and the federal level as we move towards making sure that people who are working particularly with young people can get background checks in a timely and proper manner.

I'll be supporting that, and I appreciate very much the ability to say this today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Kormos: Thank you kindly, Speaker. One, New Democrats are going to be supporting this motion; two, we applaud the sponsor of this motion for bringing the motion forward.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Wonderful.

Mr. Peter Kormos: But Ms. Wynne, you know there is a “however” coming.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I was trying to pre-empt it.

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Mr. Peter Kormos: Third, we find this a subject that is sufficiently important that it should not just be a matter of a motion. I would encourage the sponsor, Ms. Sandals, to perhaps consider getting support to use standing order 126 to have a committee look at the proposition. Because it's a motion, we don't have jurisdiction to do legislation. Ms. Sandals and I talked about this just a few minutes ago. That means that it doesn't, as of right, go to committee. It can't be forced into a committee by the standing orders, but a 126 application could put this matter in front of a committee for consideration and indeed could allow the committee to go beyond the scope of this motion, which talks about the prohibition against third party access to CPIC records.

However, let's put this in a broader context as well. We understand that nobody does a criminal record search or any of the variations—we casually call it a criminal record search, but there are any number of types that can be done; I'll talk about that in just a few minutes—without the consent of the person whose background is being searched; that's a given. So far as I'm aware, anybody anywhere can, upon payment, apply to any police services board, any police authority, in any part of the province. The payments vary from modest to, in some places, more expensive, because there's no standard in the province; there's no regulation of what police services boards can charge for them. I appreciate that scarce resources in police services boards compel them to charge for these things. Also, I suppose, their argument might be that they want to control unnecessary or frivolous access by individuals. It's done with the consent of the individual; anybody can apply for it.

The issue here is third parties. As Ms. Sandals explained it to me—and I'm very grateful for that explanation, and it's because of her particular background and expertise with school boards and trustees on those boards—school boards across the province have gathered together and formed an entity that will process criminal record searches for those boards from one central source. That's the third party that Ms. Sandals refers to in the motion. It's that third party that the RCMP directive—because the RCMP controls, or perhaps owns, CPIC; I'm not sure about “controls” CPIC. That's the RCMP directive that Ms. Sandals is referring to, which she says interferes with third party access. That means that the subject can still apply for a CPIC search, should he or she be inclined to. That means, as I understand it, that the employer can also apply for a criminal record search, of course with the consent of the potential employee or volunteer.

Let's understand some of the shortcomings, though, of this in general—not of the motion; the motion's fine. We learned just recently that CPIC is oftentimes incomplete. We learned that, from police service to police service, sometimes there's—what, Mr. Levac?—as much as a six-month lag in getting the information from that police service, from the courts in that community, onto the CPIC record. There is also, as I understand it, no consistency in what's reported to CPIC by a local police service.

Finally, there's the question of what a criminal record search really tells you. It tells you that a person has been convicted of an offence that identifies her or him as someone unsuitable, but it doesn't identify the person who has never been caught or convicted.

I used to practise criminal law a long time ago, and—

Mr. Dave Levac: A good one, at that.

Mr. Peter Kormos: I want to make sure that's in Hansard.

My experience in working with some very tragic criminal cases is that most child molesters—let's be candid; we're talking about child molesters here, by and large; that's the primary focus—never get caught. They're clever; they're stealthy; they're vulpine in their style. Again, they prey on children because they know that children can't fight back, and they also know that children are less likely to report.

Secondly, of those who are accused or charged, there's a significant portion even now, after all the changes in the Criminal Code and the case law—cases like Khan, for instance, and Criminal Code changes that permit a screen to be placed in front of a child witness; all these various safeguards—even now, it's not a sure thing that a person charged, even if he or she is in fact, the person who perpetrated the offence, is going to be found guilty.

I mention that and I've had occasion to mention that before because we've sort of adopted criminal record searches as the cure-all, and they're not. The fact is that if they are overly relied upon, it means that we treat them as the absolute screening tool, and that means that a whole lot of dangerous people have the potential to be put in positions where children are put at risk. So we've just got to put that in perspective. I really believe Ms. Sandals understands that aspect of it.

Now, we have this other problem, and that is that CPIC only contains what's transmitted to it. As I understand it, CPIC has to contain, or at least ought to contain, all convictions. Then again, Ms. Sandals would point out that—and we've had this recent flurry of newspaper items and a little bit of grandstanding and politicking around the issue of people who have received pardons and who therefore do not have a criminal record for the purpose of a criminal record disclosure. Our pardons act does not clear the person. The person isn't presumed innocent, but simply for the purpose of being asked, "Have you ever been convicted of an offence for which you have not received a pardon?" you can honestly say no. At the border, for instance, you won't be stopped because the American access to criminal records, which

is CPIC-based, won't reveal a criminal record if you have been pardoned for that offence. So there are some dangers, and we understand the federal government is going to toughen up on that. I think it was a surprise to most people that serious offenders could receive pardons as casually as somebody who, when they were 17 years old, smoked a little bit of marijuana and happened to get caught. Nowadays you can smoke it and you don't—the other day here at Queen's Park, Ms. DiNovo, I happened to be in Toronto. I was driving—

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Kormos: No, I was in a cab on College and there was this huge blue haze over Queen's Park. I looked—I was down at the Steelworkers Hall on Cecil Street for Gord Brigden's memorial service, and there's this blue haze over Queen's Park. I thought, "My God, not my office." There are all sorts of things in there that are very dear to me. But of course it was all the kids smoking pot here at Queen's Park, and all the cops surrounding them getting contact highs. Well, it was inevitable.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Have we lost the thread here?

Mr. Peter Kormos: No, we haven't. I had the cabbie roll down all the windows and stop for two red lights at College and University.

But we're not talking about somebody who, when they were 17 or 18, got caught with marijuana. We're talking about people who are convicted of serious, serious offences, and they pose a danger to the community, especially to young kids.

The problem is that you have different levels of record searches. There is a very broad-based one that's available primarily at the local level because it's a police contact. That may not be the most accurate phrase, but then again—and that means if you were ever arrested, for instance, for a particular offence, even though you were found not guilty, it will show up on that search. That in itself may be unfair. One of the interesting things, and one of the things that I urge of Ms. Sandals, if she indeed is going to consider a standing order 126 application, would be to get the privacy commissioner's views on exactly to what extent non-conviction data could legitimately be included. It surely would be of some interest, notwithstanding the presumption of innocence, to understand that a potential employee or volunteer who was going to have contact with young kids was charged with three separate incidents over a span of, let's say, nine or 10 years, with sexual assault or sexual interference with children, but acquitted each time. You would still want to ask some questions, huh? You wouldn't want to simply say, "Well, fine, there was no conviction. Let's move on," notwithstanding the paramountcy of presumption of innocence. So it really would be interesting to have the privacy commissioner get engaged.

The fundamental question is for the RCMP and the federal Minister of Justice to explain why this directive went out, to get a clear rationale for why the RCMP

would use this directive. If there is a need for third party agencies—and we're primarily talking about one here, although Ms. Sandals indicates it could be any other number of them. Big Brothers across Ontario, for instance, could decide to use the same sort of collaborative or co-operative approach, having one office process all their criminal record search applications. I think it is important to understand why the RCMP did this. I, for the life of me, can't think of any cogent reasons. Trying to enter the RCMP rationale, their thinking cap, for a moment, I can't think of any cogent reasons. Is this stuff expensive? Of course it is. Does it put a new tax on police resources? Of course it does. But it's not being done frivolously.

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We're getting very serious here, finally. I say "finally" because, heck, even 25 years ago criminal record searches were rare. As a matter of fact, I am familiar with agencies that were reluctant to impose them because it would deter potential volunteers. Well, no kidding it would deter potential volunteers.

One of the other ways of doing it, of course, is to identify the search to ensure that the search is only with respect to certain offences, so that if somebody had a marijuana offence from 20 years earlier in their life, that would be excluded from any report; so that only the offences that were relevant to the position that person was going to hold would be reported. That would address the deterrence aspect of criminal record searches. There may be something you did as a kid that was embarrassing that you wouldn't want revealed in a criminal record search, but you're otherwise a fine person, and the failure to disclose that has nothing to do with your eligibility for a particular job or volunteer role.

So, we support the motion. We think we have a reasonably good handle on it. We appreciate Ms. Sandals's work in this regard. We understand the importance of it.

I want to underscore again, I would be delighted to see this as the subject matter of a study by a committee—the justice committee would be a reasonably good one. Under standing order 126, which permits once a session for each of three committees to review—you used to be able to do that as a right. You understand that, don't you? A member could move that as a right, but now you need the permission of two thirds of the committee, and I suspect Ms. Sandals might just be able to obtain that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure to join in this debate today. It's very exciting to be part of this discussion.

Interjection.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: Mum is watching right now. Mum, the member from Welland is heckling me. He says hi.

Mr. Peter Kormos: No, I'm not.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: No, he's being very lovely. Thank you.

I'm delighted to speak on this as the PA to education, and I'm delighted to speak on it due to my 12 years as a member of the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Council in Waterloo region. I'm delighted to speak on this as a member of the safe schools action team and, previously, as part of the community partnership initiative that brought people together to create safe and healthy communities.

First and foremost, I really want to commend the member from Guelph. The work that she has done throughout my entire career in education in keeping kids safe in school has been really outstanding. It's incomparable, really. It's all I've ever known and looked up to. She has been a role model and mentor for all of the educators in Ontario, and I thank her for that.

This is about third party access today to the Canadian Police Information Centre, or CPIC, databases for possible screening with vulnerable persons. As an educator, I can't stress enough how important it is that we have information; that we're able to communicate information we need to keep our kids safe, whether they're at school, whether they're in the neighbourhood or wherever it is, especially when we have vulnerable populations who work or function on a premise of trust. It is our moral imperative to make sure we create that safety net.

I'm going to digress, but the safety net, of course—I always use the reference to Holden Caulfield in *The Catcher in the Rye*. Holden always said—

Mr. Peter Kormos: Watch the language, though.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I'll watch the language, absolutely; thanks for that.

If he could have anything in this world, Holden Caulfield wanted to be the catcher in the rye, to stop all the little children from falling off the edge of the cliff. That's what we're doing here today. Again, I commend the member for Guelph, because we need the information, we need that communication, we need access to records to be able to create the safety net and stop the children from falling off the edge of the cliff.

I have a few items I wanted to briefly touch on. There's an article from the *Hamilton Spectator* that spoke exactly to this on May 5. It states:

"There is a whole system dedicated to preventing convicted sex offenders from having access to society's most vulnerable members.

"So that sex offenders never coach our children. Or enter our schools. Or work in our nursing homes....

"It is a complicated system fraught with legal hurdles and inconsistencies, and it doesn't always work the way it should....

"In December, the RCMP cracked down on the criminal background check process and now the fallout is taking effect...."

"There are two kinds of background checks." There's the CPIC that the member from Welland referred to and there's the vulnerable sector screening check, which goes further. The article goes on to say, "In December, the RCMP said third party companies could no longer be

used because it is an infringement on the applicant's privacy rights."

Unfortunately, I think this is where the debate and the discussion needs to occur. The article ends in saying that unfortunately, "it is an honour system.... Problem is, the people the system is trying to weed out don't have any honour."

When we look at what our responsibility is and saying that we need to have access to this information, what we want for our youth and our children is a safe and positive learning environment. I do want to say that since 2004, this government has invested \$178 million in safe schools. Nobody knows this better than the member from Guelph, because she was part of all of those initiatives that have come to such success in Ontario in our schools.

It's fascinating. I would refer you to the website of the Canadian centre for missing children. Just a couple of items out of here that I think really stress for us the significance and the importance of this discussion today. It says, "Children are the most vulnerable members of our communities, and as a result, they are the ones most at risk of abuse and/or maltreatment.... The people who molest children are often not the people that we would expect. Evidence shows" that these people "do not often fit the comforting myth of the obvious pervert waiting around the corner, peeking from the bushes. Child molesters can be relatives, neighbours, school teachers, camp leaders...."

It goes on to say, "It is refreshing to see that, increasingly, voluntary agencies, sports organizations and others are seeking the help of police in conducting screening checks. Clearly we are beginning to recognize the need for better information...." Of course, we want to encourage this information flow, this communication, and we don't want to hinder it.

One of the main objections, it says, to allowing people to be screened is that it's an infringement on personal rights. Again, I would refer you to this discussion on the web, because it's quite fascinating. It says, "Screening allows the employer to know who they are hiring to work with children.... It is not as simple as saying that anyone who has any kind of police record cannot be a volunteer. The presence of a criminal record may not justify refusal of employment." It goes on to say that you can discuss what the offence was, and then it goes into detail about if the background check finds nothing, the negative record is returned to the agency. But if it has a hit, if it finds something, it's returned to the individual. Then it's their responsibility, "leaving it to the individual's discretion to disclose the results of whether there is a criminal record." I don't know about you, but I have three sons in sports at school and I really am not comfortable with it being left to the discretion of the individual who's had a positive hit on a background check to disclose.

Finally, I'll leave you with a quote at the end. They say, "Our children are our greatest resource; they represent our future. For this reason all children must be protected and given a chance to grow up safe and happy. To achieve this goal, society must shift its focus from the

abuse of children after the fact to preventing it from happening at all." That's exactly what the member from Guelph is doing for us here today, and I commend her and thank her for that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ernie Hardeman): Further debate?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important motion. I want to echo the member from Kitchener-Conestoga by complimenting our colleague from Guelph for bringing forward a very important issue to this House. She has worked extensively on issues around safe schools, bullying and homophobia, and I think this particular motion is part and parcel of ensuring that we have places in our society, be they our schools or our playgrounds or our youth centres, that are safe for our children and youth, period. We should take every step possible to ensure that those who interact with our young people, our children and youth, are people who would not in any way jeopardize the safety of the vulnerable population in our society.

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We, collectively as members of this House and as members of our communities, do a lot of work to ensure that our children are being brought up in a healthy and safe environment, and we need to make sure that we have instruments in place that ensure that.

I will be very frank with you, Mr. Speaker. I probably would not have really thought about this issue that deeply until the whole issue around Mr. Graham James came about, which has been in the news for the last few days. This is somebody who was a former junior hockey coach who sexually assaulted, I believe, at least two young players a few hundred times, as I recall reading in the papers, was convicted of that crime, and recently was pardoned and has been located in Mexico.

Yes, he's not harming any of our children here, but it really raises an issue that here's somebody who has gone back and integrated well into society, and that's not problematic. They should, hopefully, be able to integrate back into society—that is extremely important—and hopefully will contribute to the betterment of our society and our community. No doubt about that either. But we want to make sure that the interaction with our young people is limited. We want to make sure that, again, there are tools in place like the vulnerable-sector screening check, like the CPIC check, which will allow us to weed out, if I can use that term, those individuals from interacting with our young people.

Once again, I commend the member from Guelph for bringing this important issue. I echo this motion and urge the federal government, the Prime Minister and the RCMP to reinstate that check, that information so that we can ensure that our children and youth remain safe in our communities.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate.

Mr. Dave Levac: I just have a few moments to say a couple of words about this particular motion. First of all,

to the member from Guelph, as a friend and colleague: a very smart way to proceed with this.

To give some assurances to the House and the opposition member who brought up the concern, the member from Simcoe North, I just want to review very quickly for him the Ontario Education Services Corp., OESC. They have chronologically allowed me to indicate to you that on December 22, they dealt with the provincial government and the RCMP; January 5, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services; January 7, the same ministries—and the list is endless.

So I can assure them that the provincial government has, indeed, been participating in trying to move this forward. This was not intended by the RCMP, so I hope no one gets the impression that the RCMP said, “Let’s cause a lot of havoc across the province of Ontario and Canada.” Not the case. So, I think we need to put that to bed.

The other thing we need to put to bed is that no one is going to stand up and say they want bad people in front—we don’t want that to happen, so I don’t think anyone, any organization, any individual wants to allow bad people to get in front of kids or vulnerable adults. We want to be sure about that.

Last but not least, the member from Welland is absolutely bang-on with his comments outside, I think, in terms of this motion. Let’s talk to the feds. Let’s talk to the RCMP. Let’s move this forward and get this taken care of, for our kids’ sakes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to rise just for a moment and thank the member from Guelph for bringing this motion forward.

I’ve heard a lot of people speaking to it who have a lot more knowledge about this issue than I do, as does the member from Guelph, but my concern has been that in Oxford county we’ve seen, since the—first of all, I should say that the resolution speaks to asking the federal government to change their protocol or their process, not to change the law, and that is because the information in the past was available to our local police to do these background checks in a reasonable time frame to deal with the applications that were going forward. If someone’s applying to volunteer somewhere, they needed the check done and they needed it done in a reasonable length of time. People who were looking for a job that required this type of check need that report back in a reasonable length of time.

All of a sudden we started hearing that they were told that because it was going to the RCMP, it was going to take an awful lot longer to get a report back. In fact, some people came into our office when the opportunity that they had was at risk because of the time it took to get that information back. It would seem to me that if this information is available to the people’s representatives, to the government of this country, and consequently to the government of Ontario and to the people of Ontario, we should find a timely way to access the best possible

information and do the checks, not only to protect our children but to facilitate the people to volunteer and work in our society with those children.

I commend them for bringing it forward. Hopefully, when we have the government talk to the Prime Minister, the federal government and the RCMP, they can at least facilitate that our police authorities get this information so we can get these timely checks done, and the people of my community can get these checks done so they can work with the children who would be at risk.

I really do have some concern, presently, that when it takes so long to do it, the decision-makers who are going to allow people to work with the community in the jobs that they’ve applied for and are waiting for the background checks will, at some point, say, “Okay, it’s going to take too long. Why don’t we just proceed in spite of not having that check? We’ll get that as we go down the road.” If we have a protocol that says that these checks need to be done before they can take that position, then I don’t think that, because of the process that governments have created, we should take that risk, even for that period of time. Anything we can do to facilitate those checks and do it in a timely manner, I think, will serve all of our people well.

I commend the member from Guelph for bringing this forward and I thank her for not only doing this, but for pointing it out. Up until the debate today, I was not aware that the change in the requests coming into my office was actually related to the changing of the protocol from the federal government and the RCMP that prevented our OPP from being able to do the background checks that they had been doing in an orderly fashion and as quickly as possible in the past, and now they no longer could do that. I commend her for bringing this forward so we can get that straightened out to go back to when, shall we say, it was working well.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Guelph has up to two minutes for her response.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Thank you to everyone who was so very, very supportive: the members from Kitchener–Conestoga, Ottawa Centre and Brant. I would just like to follow up with the reassurance that I know that the OESC has spoken to both the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services and I think the Ontario chiefs of police, and they have all been involved in trying to sort that out. I would commend the member from Oxford on behalf of the Oxford OPP, who have actually been very, very co-operative in trying to make the whole third party system work.

I just wanted to briefly, perhaps, respond to a few of the issues that were raised by the member from Welland. I am always amazed by obscure standing order possibilities that I never heard of before the member brings them up. In this case I will gratefully decline his offer to figure out if one can send this to committee, because right now, quite frankly, speed is of the essence. The point of the year when school boards are figuring out who’s going to be doing what for next year is upon us, and it’s important

to get criminal reference checks done, as opposed to us sitting and examining our navels in committee. As the member from Oxford mentioned, we do need to make sure that these checks get done in a timely manner or there is the temptation for non-compliance when you can't get the checks done.

The member from Welland was correct in pointing out some problems with the CPIC process, but it does remain our best source of information. If we're going to keep our kids safe, we need access to that information.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time for this ballot item has expired. We'll vote on it in about 50 minutes.

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ESCAPING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA FUITE FACE À LA VIOLENCE FAMILIALE

Mr. Naqvi moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 53, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 with respect to domestic violence / Projet de loi 53, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation à l'égard de la violence familiale.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has up to 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to speak on this very important issue.

It was about two months or so ago that a young woman contacted my office requesting that I meet with her. I think all of us get those types of phone calls. My staff inquired as to the purpose; she said it was something personal she would like to discuss.

They set up a meeting. I went to a local coffee house to meet this person, and we sat down. At that moment, this young woman had the courage to tell me her story, a story which involved being in an abusive relationship for approximately three years. She made numerous attempts to leave that abusive relationship and finally, to her credit, she was successful in doing so. But in that ordeal, she shared with me some of the challenges she faced and some of the vacuums or deficiencies in a system by which she could move forward, escape from that domestic violence situation and be able to find a safe place to live.

One of the challenges she highlighted was that, as a financially independent woman, she rented an apartment. She was the tenant; i.e., she was on the tenancy agreement. If she had left her place—and she had to, because the abuser knew where she lived and this place was not safe for her—she was still liable to pay the rent for an extended period of time. There was no recourse available under the Residential Tenancies Act to allow her to cut her ties with that particular place and move away somewhere so she could be safe.

That story really struck me. I think she is watching these proceedings; I want to commend her for her

bravery in coming forward and raising this issue. I think it was one of those moments for all of us, as elected representatives, where you get to hear somebody's personal story, look into the matter, and say, "You know what? She's right. I'm going to do something about it." So it's my true honour to be here today to speak on this bill, which has been inspired by this person who lives in my riding of Ottawa Centre. I want to thank her for bringing that issue.

I also want to thank my staff, who have been tremendous in helping me in getting the research done and getting this drafted and being present here today: Jackie Choquette, Geoff Turner, and my OLIP intern, Paul Di Ianni, who was very instrumental, and of course legislative counsel Tara Partington and Jennifer Gold, who were very helpful in drafting this bill.

We know that domestic violence is a serious criminal offence—no ifs or buts about it. We do not engage, in our society, in domestic violence. It is a criminal act and it should be prosecuted as vigorously as possible. We have laws in place to prevent domestic violence. We all endeavour to put public policy in place to ensure that we prevent any kind of domestic violence. We need to make sure that we move away from that heinous criminal act that takes place against, most of the time, unfortunately, women in our society.

The data, the statistics, are quite terrifying at times. I'm looking at StatsCan data which says that in 2007, nearly 40,200 incidents of spousal violence were reported to police. This is across Canada. This represents about 12% of all police-reported violent crime in Canada. That is quite high, and this is just spousal violence, which includes married relationships and common-law relationships. This does not include relationships that are outside those definitions. That could be a definition of somebody dating somebody else or just being in a conjugal relationship.

Police also reported that spousal violence has steadily declined over the past 10 years, decreasing 15% between 1998 and 2007, which is encouraging. However, the level of domestic violence relating to non-spousal relationships has been going up, which is extremely disturbing to know.

Also, the majority of victims of spousal violence continue to be females. I think that's not going to come as a surprise to any one of us. According to this data, 83% of victims happen to be women, which is very disturbing.

Another number I wanted to share: 12% of Canadian women aged 18 to 24 reported at least one incident of violence by an intimate partner in a one-year period, compared with the national average of 3% of all married or cohabitating women—again, statistics that I think should give us pause when we're looking at this matter.

Governments, of course, as I was mentioning earlier, have been doing a lot of work. We in Ontario have a domestic violence action plan which ensures that we have seamless services provided to prevent violence against women and issues around domestic violence. We want to make sure that there are mechanisms by which

women can escape an abusive relationship. I think the policy is very clear. One is that if you are in an abusive relationship, you should flee from that relationship—you should find some refuge, be it family or women's shelters—and report the incident to the police, because only then can the police act, lay criminal charges and investigate the matter. It's extremely important that that second part also takes place, that is, reporting the matter to the police. Of course, we need to put in place policies that would encourage victims of domestic violence to do that. There are definitely challenges around that.

In terms of investments made in that area—I won't go into too many numbers—the government is investing more than \$208 million to protect women from violence and support victims of abuse, which includes about \$87 million for the domestic violence action plan, to which I was referring earlier. This has resulted in an increase of about 369 shelter beds across the province for women and children fleeing abuse. Just in my riding, a few months ago, Minister Meilleur and I made an announcement of new funding for a women's shelter to ensure that there are more spaces available in the Ottawa area.

However, having said all that, we have a disconnect in our public policy, and that's what Bill 53 is trying to achieve. The disconnect is as follows: On one hand, as I stated earlier, we encourage women to report assault, encourage anybody who is a victim of domestic violence to take this matter further and report it to the police. But on the other hand, if you are somebody who lives in a residential tenancy environment, if you are a tenant, we make it difficult for you to do so because you are liable for rent. Bill 53 tries to provide a mechanism by which a victim of domestic violence could terminate the lease in a manner that protects the interests of the landlord, but also allows for the tenant, with the least amount of penalty, to get out of the lease.

I'm mindful of the time, so let me just highlight some of the key features of the legislation. One thing it does is allow for 28 days or, let's say, a month period to terminate the lease. So a tenant who is a victim of domestic violence can give a 28-day notice to terminate their lease, which means the landlord gets to keep at least one month's rent, most likely the last month's rent, which is already paid in deposit. The victim also has to at least produce documentary evidence to substantiate that he or she is a victim of domestic violence, and that could be a restraining order under the Criminal Code, a peace bond under the Family Law Act or a letter from the police stating that an investigation has been commenced. That will obviously require the woman to approach the police and file a complaint. One of these documents, plus a 28-day notice, is sufficient to then terminate the lease. That, in essence, is the scheme that is outlined.

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Right now, essentially you are liable for the rent owing. If you're on a month-to-month basis, then you have to give 60 days' notice, which could be a huge impediment. If you're on a fixed term, then you are liable for the remainder of the term on that lease, which could

be any number of months; it could be 10 months, six months or only three months. That could be a huge impediment.

In the Residential Tenancies Act today, there is an opportunity for the tenant to work with the landlord and mutually agree. That option is still available. Most landlords are good people and they will allow that option to be exercised. But we do have some circumstances in which that won't happen. By adopting Bill 53, we're providing a very defined mechanism which allows a victim of domestic violence, with some documentary evidence, to terminate the lease and which makes sure that the victim is in a safe place.

That is exactly what we want to do. That's exactly what government policy is. That's exactly what all the advocates against domestic violence plead: that we ensure that the person is able to escape and report the matter to the police so that the abuser, the perpetrator, could be investigated and, if they are convicted, sentenced accordingly. That is pretty much what I'm asking to do.

There is a confidentiality clause in this legislation, ensuring that landlords don't pass this information to any future landlords, again to protect the integrity of the victim.

If there is any misleading information which is knowingly being posed, then there is a provision for fines under the Residential Tenancies Act that will apply in that situation, again to ensure that there is no wilful abuse taking place of this particular bill.

Once again, I think this is a relevant issue. It's important to make sure that we protect victims of domestic violence and ensure that they continue to live in a safe place—not only them but their dependent children, if a child is at risk—so that they can find a refuge and be in a safe place.

I really ask all members to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to start off by saying that I support taking steps to help victims of domestic abuse, and I think everyone in this Legislature would agree with that principle. I want to commend the member from Ottawa Centre for his efforts in trying to do that. I understand how he was touched by the story of his constituent who was trying to escape a dangerous situation, and I want to commend him for his efforts to help her with that.

But I do want to speak about a few of the concerns about the bill. I think it was evident from the presentation by the member that this is about domestic abuse, but this bill is only a very small part of it. I dare say that someone—even the constituent that the member spoke about—would likely accept that having to pay one more month's rent was the least of her problems after those three years of domestic abuse.

As I say, I want to point out some of the concerns that I have with the bill, but I do also want to say that I will be supporting the bill on second reading. I believe it's a

very important thing to have more discussion on that. The things that I have a problem with in the bill are not insurmountable. I think the principle that is there is appropriate. I think sending the bill to committee and having further discussion and amendments to it to make it work is a good idea.

But in reading the bill, I was a bit confused as to what it would actually do, who it would apply to and who would benefit from it. I don't claim to be a lawyer, as is the member who introduced the bill, or even an expert on anything very much. Some of you may have come to the conclusion that I'm a politician, and the prerequisite for a politician is not necessarily being an expert on anything.

As I read the whole bill, I find it somewhat confusing, so if I find it confusing, I really believe that the average person who is to benefit from this bill is not going to understand it either. And I think that's the big problem. I think we need to spell out what we're trying to do much more clearly for the people who need to benefit from it.

I know it's difficult to design legislation to deal with situations like this because you want to ensure that it's broad enough to include all victims, and the last thing any of us wants is to cause anyone who has been the victim of domestic violence any more difficulties. We don't want them to get caught up in a lot of red tape. We want it to be expeditiously administered.

At the same time, we don't want to make legislation so broad that others try to take advantage of it. Under this legislation, it's possible that someone who doesn't want to live with their boyfriend anymore would make out a false report and some of the other documentation that's required, one piece of evidence. If they were living together with someone, they could report it to the police. It doesn't say there has to be a conviction; just that it was investigated by police. Then they could get out of a lease they had signed, a legal contract that they've agreed to and that everyone else has to live by. Someone could use that. So, I think it needs to be more clearly defined as to what would allow people to do that.

The landlord and tenant rules are an attempt to balance the needs of both parties. While we want to help victims, we need to ensure that people do not use this legislation to falsely break a lease or force landlords into a position where they expected to get a return on their investment on a regular basis monthly and all of a sudden there's a new law in place that allows someone to avoid paying for that time of notice that they were obligated to give.

We need to make sure that the people who use this legislation are the ones it's intended to help, and I think the member would agree. For instance, one of the situations described in the bill is a reckless act that causes damage to property, which, to me, seems to be a pretty broad category. That's a reason for being able to get out of the 60 days. I don't know how that would work.

Going on, I think there needs to be some connection between what has happened and why the person needs to get out of a lease. For instance, a husband and wife are sharing the rent on an apartment and the husband gets violent and is forced to leave and the wife can't afford to

pay the rent totally on her own. I believe that absolutely she should not be forced to stay in the apartment and pay for an extra month because she's unable to pay that rent. But there has to be a connection as to why the person wants to move or needs to move and the abuse that has taken place. I don't think it should be just a time that we can get out of a legal contract.

In St. Catharines—and this is another story that I think relates to the bill. In St. Catharines, there was the sad story of a girl who was being stalked by her next-door neighbour. You may remember that my colleague from Whitby–Oshawa raised this issue in the Legislature and asked why the crown wasn't doing more to help that family. The mother had found a number of footprints outside the house and set up an infrared camera to investigate what was going on. What she found was that the next-door neighbour's son was peering into her daughter's bedroom window.

I'm not going into the details of what happened, but it's fair to say that family were victims and they were failed by the court system. Without informing the family, the crown withdrew charges against the young man. The crown did not proceed with the lesser charge. The crown did not even ask for a peace bond to ensure the family's security and the young man's rehabilitation. This family was forced to live next door to the young man they knew was stalking them. The family next door is even alleged to have pointed a camera directly at the bedroom window.

In this case, the family owned the house, so obviously we know that this piece of legislation would not help them. But even if they had been tenants, this legislation would not have covered that situation because the requirement of domestic violence was not there, as is required in the legislation. I believe that that type of victim should be covered in exactly the same way. If that was a rented apartment, they should have been covered just as much as if it had been domestic violence.

In order for this bill to apply, the person who was alleged to have committed the act or omission must fall into the categories listed. Again, this is where I think we need more debate on the bill. Only one of the categories has to do with where a person lives, so in fact a lot of things could be happening. The abuse and a lot of the things could be attached to somewhere different from where you live. Where you live is only the one thing.

Some of this violence may very well occur with people not living in the same house. Some of the reasons why they need to move may be well beyond someone they have lived with or are living with at the present time.

1540

If it's a safety issue—the person needs to move because the person who is alleged to have committed the abuse knows where they live—then I think this bill is addressing the wrong issue. We need to do a better job of preventing violence and protecting victims to ensure they are not driven from their homes. Again, I don't think it's appropriate to put laws in place that make the victims of abuse also victims in having to move.

It becomes very important that we address some of these issues in the bill. I could go on; I do have a copy of the bill here, and some of the things in it are hard to understand. But to me, it narrows instead of broadens the scope of who would qualify for this. At the same time, I don't want it so broad that everyone qualifies and all of a sudden what we've done is just changed the amount of notice required under the Residential Tenancies Act from 60 days to 30 days.

If I talk to landlords in this province, a lot of them say that the Residential Tenancies Act already allows far too many days between the time that tenants should be leaving and the time they actually get out of the establishment or out of the house. I think it's important that this law doesn't make that worse, yet does everything it can to protect people from domestic violence and assist them in any way we, as a society, can to make sure they can get on with their lives in peace and quiet, shall we say, and not be bothered by that.

Again, I commend the member opposite for his efforts to help victims, and hope we will have a chance to go to committee and address the concerns of this bill so we can work collectively to do the best we can for the domestic violence people he is trying to help.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: First and foremost, let me say to the member from Ottawa Centre that I'm delighted to support his bill; I will be voting for it. I'm delighted whenever the words "domestic violence" and the issue are raised in this chamber, because it's such an intractable problem, and a problem that, as women's critic for the New Democratic Party, I have made a focus of some of my work here.

He gave you the stats. Suffice it to say that somewhere between one in four and one in two women will experience violence in their lifetime, the vast majority of that domestic. That's how horrible the statistics are and how awful is the impact on lives.

I'm reminded of a story about assault against women told to me by a woman who had worked in the former Yugoslavia. She described going into what were literally called rape camps for some of the victims of that war—we know that rape is now used as a method of war in various countries in the world. In this instance, she said there was something like 23,000 victims whom they had identified during that conflict.

She came back, in her case, to the United States and was telling somebody the story, and her friend in the United States didn't raise an eyebrow—didn't seem surprised at all. She said, "Don't you find that shocking: 23,000 cases?" She said, "No, there are 700,000 cases in the United States every year." Think about it: 700,000 cases of rape in the United States every year. If that's not a war on women, I don't know what is. That's what these stats mean. Sometimes when we use them—when we say, "One in four, one in two"—we don't see the horrendous numbers behind them. This is an ongoing problem.

I also want to commend two of my colleagues from both of the other parties in the House for taking part with

me in one of the attempts to address the problem in faith communities. Ruth's Daughters of Canada was launched here last week. It was wonderful. I also thank Jim Coyle for the lovely column he did on this initiative. Donna Cansfield and Christine Elliott were part of the support for that initiative. We're trying to really get women in all faith communities across the faith spectrum to get active around the issue where they live and pray and work. This is so important.

We have some concerns with the bill. These are not insurmountable and certainly don't detract from my support in any way. In fact, if the member addresses these concerns, I think that will make the bill a great deal stronger for the victims we are all trying to help. They were suggested by the Advocacy Centre for Tenants Ontario, and I want to give them kudos for the work they do with tenants across the board, not just in the case of domestic violence.

I have to say that it would have been helpful as a backdrop to this bill were my motion passed—which is on the order paper—calling for an all-woman, all-party committee to look at domestic violence. This is one of the sad by-products of the kind of partisan warfare that happens in this place; that we can't get together to do even that; that we can't, as women independent of political stripe, get together to look at this horrendous situation that exists in our midst that affects all of us. We know there isn't a person here who does not have a relative or a friend who has been affected by domestic violence. That's what those statistics tell us: that everyone has been touched by it in some way, shape or form.

Twelve percent of all police-reported violent crime in Canada is domestic violence, more than one in 10 calls. My husband was a police officer briefly for Kitchener-Waterloo, and he says the call they feared the most was the call to a domestic violence home. It was the most frightening, the most dangerous, and of course stayed with you the longest—because we have to remember that most of the time the victims of domestic violence are not just adult women, they're also children, particularly girl children who have been the victims of sexual and physical abuse by their fathers or stepfathers or the man in the house—83% of them. Who wants to go to a call like that, even as a fully armed police officer? That's what we ask our police to do. Trust me, they'd rather do just about anything else in the line of duty than that.

Here is how I think we can make the bill stronger, and that's what I want to focus on. First of all, the notice period is a little confusing. Twenty-eight days can only be effective—this is reading from the bill—at the end of the month, after the month is given. That is, if it is given on March 2, it can only be effective on April 30, and the date must be specified. If it is specified to be effective on March 31, it's void. Why? And 47.1(3): Application of the deposit should be mandatory—this is important—so the word "shall" instead of "may," in keeping with subsection 105, part 10. Again, it just makes it stronger.

Perhaps more importantly, though, the bill specifies that the tenant or their child is not a victim unless there is

an order from the courts or a letter from the police or a number of other documentary pieces of evidence. Just picture yourself, a woman who has been assaulted or a mother of a child who has been assaulted. You want to get out of that place as quickly as possible. You want to get to safety as quickly as possible. Often, not every case of domestic abuse or violence goes to the police or the courts. Usually there's a pattern. Usually there has been a call or two, but the domestic violence is an ongoing problem. Sometimes you don't have documentary evidence. I think, really, to make this bill stronger, that you want to allow the victim to go immediately, without thoughts of "Oh my goodness, I've got to get a court order," or "I've got to get a piece of evidence for the police," or "Where did I put it?" even if they have it. Because often when you're fleeing, you're fleeing with not much: a satchel, your purse; that's it. Again, I think by taking that out it makes it more powerful.

The other smaller concern to me is the confidentiality of all of this for the victims. Is there some imperative for the landlord to keep this information confidential? I think that would strengthen the bill if that was the case.

Of course, the question looms: Once the victim or victims have left, where do they go? This leads to the broader-ranging topics of how we really deal with victims of domestic violence, and that is, where do they run to? We do not have a policy in Ontario of ensuring that there's a safe place to run to.

Just two nights ago, I went to a party hosted by the Redwood shelter in my riding. Certainly they get the vast majority of any extra money I have, in terms of charitable giving. They, of course, talk about the lack of funding, the fact that every woman and every child who flees a domestic violence situation does not have a place to go. There aren't enough shelter beds and, quite frankly, there are many, many women out there who don't want to run to a shelter. They'd rather stay and suffer. So we need transitional housing, real housing.

1550

There are other jurisdictions that do this better than we do, that will provide transitional housing for women and who will all of a sudden bump them to the head of the list when they leave situations of abuse. We need that. Of course, with 140,000 families waiting on the affordable housing wait-list in Ontario, it's very easy to see why we don't have transitional housing for victims of domestic violence. This, again, is one of the reasons we need more housing dollars and more housing action in this province. This is the sad, sad result of that.

We also need equity with teeth to it. Women make 71 cents for every dollar that men make in this province, so there are economic constraints upon women for leaving domestic violence situations. Many women who have been homemakers, who have been raising their children, don't have a job to go to and they don't have money to go to. They need help. The help that we can give, in part, is to fund equity commissions so that they can do the good work that they should be doing, and to make sure

that those women who are leaving have some kind of immediate funding backup.

It's very important, of course that we make it extremely easy for women and children leaving domestic violence, particularly in a multicultural reality, because we need culturally sensitive supports for women who are leaving, who may not want to go to a shelter for all sorts of reasons, who may not ever want to testify against their abuser for all sorts of safety reasons, who need supports delivered in their mother tongues, who need counsellors who are sensitive to their religious backgrounds and to the reasons why they left in the first place. Too many women are silenced.

I'll just conclude by saying, again, I'm going to support this. We wish it was made stronger, and we'll work to that end, if it comes to committee. I hope it does. Certainly, kudos to the member for even raising the issue here. We need to be raising it all the time.

I remember, as a minister, that the most terrifying time in the many, many years that I was in ministry was not when we were having our evening service and drop-in programs that catered to people with mental health and addiction issues. Sometimes we'd have a hundred people there, many of them using crack actively and quite violent. No, that wasn't the scariest. The scariest moment in ministry was when a middle-class woman came running in on a Saturday afternoon trying to escape her husband, and then he came running in after and went from room to room of the church trying to drag her out. I knew that even if we called the police, it would take them at least 15 to 20 minutes to get there. Meanwhile, not only could she be hurt but other innocent bystanders in the church could be hurt. That was the most terrifying moment. I could only imagine what her life was like day to day, hour to hour.

My friends, we've got to do more. This is just a small step. We've got to take some really big steps, if we're ever going to want to have an equitable society where men and women are really equally safe.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to be able to speak in support of Bill 53 this afternoon. I thought, maybe, I would reflect a little bit about some of the issues that I see in my constituency office, because it just happened that when the member from Ottawa Centre was in the process of tabling this bill, there had been a mum and a daughter in my constituency office. There had been allegations of abuse of the daughter, interestingly enough, by the landlord, and the mum had essentially been told, "You need to get out of here to protect your daughter," by family and children services in the particular community that she had been living in before. There was no women's shelter in the community in which this woman had previously lived, which was a small rural community, so she had come to Guelph and was living in the women's shelter in Guelph. One of her issues was, in fact, "What do I do about the fact that everything I own is in the hands of the landlord who is the abuser of my daughter?"

I'm not sure that this bill 100% applies to that situation, but it certainly demonstrates the fact that while many landlords are going to be co-operative with a woman who is fleeing from violence and abuse, and say, "I understand that you're supposed to give me two months' notice and you're only giving me one," or, "I understand that you've got a lease and you want to break your lease," in this case it was quite clear that there was no way that this particular landlord was going to be in any way co-operative, because it was the landlord who was actually the problem. That's obviously an unusual situation, but it is a situation that I dealt with just a couple of weeks ago.

More generically, certainly when I talk to women in crisis in Guelph and talk to the women who will occasionally come into the constituency office who are in these circumstances, there's often a very long history of abuse, and finally something has gotten so bad that the woman has left.

The crisis shelter in Guelph serves the rural area around Guelph, and it's not unusual in rural areas that in fact the opportunity to leave doesn't arrive until (a) you've got access to transportation, and (b) all the kids are gathered up at home and you've actually got the opportunity to leave, because until you've got control of the vehicle absent the abuser, typically male, you actually can't leave. You really don't have a way of leaving with the family intact. So again, in those situations you've got women who are literally fleeing, going nowhere, with no funding, and the ability to get out of that lease, to be able to give 28 days' notice, to have your last month applied to that—and I do want to assure people who are thinking about rural situations that it isn't that everybody in a rural area owns their own house. They are often renting a house but they are still tenants. Just because they don't live in a high-rise doesn't mean they're not tenants, and we do need to figure out a way to address this.

So I will be supporting the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise this afternoon. I'd like to thank the member from Ottawa Centre for bringing forward this private member's bill on escaping domestic violence.

I commend the member for bringing forth a bill on such a serious issue. Domestic violence is a serious issue. No one, whether it be a man, woman or child, should have to suffer violence at home. Domestic violence can be physical, sexual and psychological in form and has wide-reaching effects on its victim. The trauma of the abuse affects many aspects of a victim's life and can leave them with lasting emotional and sometimes physical scars. Incidents of domestic violence are also rarely an isolated occurrence, but are perpetuated again and again.

It is alarming how widespread the occurrence of domestic violence is in Canada. According to the Canadian Women's Foundation, half of Canadian women have experienced at least one incident of physical or

sexual violence since the age of 16. One to two women are murdered by a current or former partner each week in Canada. These statistics are startling.

The member from Ottawa Centre has rightly pointed out the barriers faced by victims of domestic violence. More often than not, victims of domestic violence do not speak out. According to the Canadian Women's Foundation in 2004, less than 36% of female victims of abuse report these crimes to the police.

Often, people wonder how it can be so difficult for a victim to remove themselves from an abusive situation, but the barriers are real. Leaving a violent relationship is a very dangerous time for a victim of abuse. Victims fear for their safety and the safety of their children, often fearing the possibility of retaliation for leaving. Victims of domestic abuse may also feel ashamed or embarrassed, or fear being stigmatized if they reveal the realities of their situation. And, as rightly pointed out by the member from Ottawa Centre, victims often lack resources or supports needed to be able to leave the home.

1600

Bill 53 points to the barriers that rental agreements pose by requiring a tenant to provide no less than 60 days' notice to the landlord to terminate a lease. Rental agreements can force the victim of abuse to incur added costs in leaving. The intentions of Bill 53 are certainly good. As we have discussed, we must do all that we can to eliminate barriers faced by victims of domestic abuse. We must empower victims, providing them with the social supports they need to have.

I just want to finish off by saying that I'd like to thank the member for bringing this forward. I understand there are some issues with it, as far as our concerns around the landlord itself. But I think it opens up a good discussion, and I think that any time you bring the words "domestic violence" to this Legislature, you understand that there is a problem today in this country, in this province and in some of our communities and that it's a good thing to discuss. The intention, of course, is to stop domestic violence once and for all. Thank you to the member.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure, this afternoon, to rise in support of Bill 53, an act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, and to be part of the discussion this afternoon. I find myself quite loquacious this afternoon, so I will leave some time for the member for Toronto Centre.

I did want to, though, begin by commending the member for Ottawa Centre. He has worked tirelessly. His efforts have been endless in working towards safer, healthier communities. He has worked personally with the Waterloo Community Safety and Crime Prevention Council and directly with the manager, Christiane Sadeler. I spent 12 years on that council; I'm extremely familiar with them, but the whole focus is that they are part of a broader national strategy to prevent crime by changing social situations out of which crime arises, and

this is exactly what the member for Ottawa Centre is doing here today by bringing forward Bill 53.

I also had the opportunity to be the parliamentary assistant for women's issues. Domestic violence, sexual abuse: This was all part of a portfolio that I had for two years, and I got to see first-hand, across the province, personal stories and experiences that move us to a place where we realize that non-action is not possible. So this action today is a positive step forward.

We know that victims of domestic violence are faced with a very small window of opportunity to flee, to escape, and there should be no barrier to that, the very least of which should be a lease. They must be able to flee dangerous situations without any added financial or administrative obstacles. I wanted to focus on the effect that this has on our youth. If a child is in a family, whatever the family structure might be, and the parent needs to flee an abusive situation and can't because of a lease, and they don't have the means by which to remove themselves from that abusive situation, the effects on the youth are astounding. I would refer you to the Review of the Roots of Youth Violence that was put out by the Honourable Roy McMurtry and Dr. Alvin Curling. What they do in that study is they go through, at length, the effects that this particular issue has on our youth.

The report states that while "most families provide secure and safe places for children to grow and learn, many do not."

"A severely troubled home life can have a damaging affect on the youth's interest in school, ability to learn, and interactions with peers and teachers." They make a very interesting comment. They say that "children succeed when they are safe." This bill today by the member from Ottawa Centre, Bill 53, is another step forward to help ensure that students, children and youth can live in that safe place because parents are not beholden to stay in a difficult or a dangerous situation. It takes an enormous amount of courage on the part of the victim to leave an abusive situation. So I would encourage all of us to support this because what the member from Ottawa Centre is doing is opening the door and allowing the opportunity for the victim to leave the abusive situation, which has a huge ripple effect on the immediate family and the entire community.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate.

Mr. Glen R. Murray: It's a great honour to participate in a very elevated debate. I was particularly inspired by my colleague from Parkdale-High Park's comments because I think she put context very much from a woman's perspective behind this issue.

The economic inequality between women—especially the women in newcomer communities, who do not have the means and often don't have access to their own savings account. Any significant amount of rent money is an enormous barrier to overcome.

I'm also very impressed that this is coming from my colleague and friend from Ottawa Centre, a younger

member of this Legislature who lives in a very real and sensitive world around the needs of women and recognizes that more than many men. It surprised me that no one has spoken to what the core problem is here. The core problem isn't women. The core problem is men.

Domestic violence is a bit of a misnomer because 99% of violence is done by men. I'd like to take a moment and speak to all my male colleagues in this House, because I think it's important that we, as men, own our own culture and own and recognize that we live in a society that enables male violence. I don't mean to suggest that biologically men somehow are more prone to violence than others, but I have to tell you, growing up as a gay man, it wasn't being gay that was the issue. It was being a sissy. To avoid being beaten up in high school by other men, I became captain of the football team, I became very athletic. As a matter of fact, I became a student of masculinity in a way that most of my straight male friends hadn't. I learned very quickly that if you were tough, strong, didn't express emotion, were never vulnerable, took control of situations rather than express feelings, people thought you were straight. As a matter of fact, when I told my father I was gay, he told me I couldn't be gay because I played football. Had I been a hairdresser or a stylist, I think he probably would have assumed differently. I notice many members are smiling because there's a certain amount of humour to that.

There's a rally being proposed for extreme fighting. We live in a culture where we don't give men opportunities to express vulnerability—certainly not to the women they love. We live in a culture that has so hyper-masculinized men and associated us with violence, and now we send young men to war. There is too much in our culture that idealizes that. It's often said that strength in its greatest form is gentleness and that gentleness only occurs when men are actually strong, that it is only men who are not strong who cannot be gentle.

I think that until we, as men, own our own capacity for violence, that until each and every one of us are able to stand in this House and acknowledge that we are products of a culture that has not left us with the fullness of emotions and sensitivity to actually express ourselves in ways with emotions other than anger and control, we are going to continue to put the women we love and those we don't know at risk. There is no amount of government money that's ever going to build enough shelters until men and our culture mend.

I would ask some of you who are straight, who are middle-aged and married, who come from rural communities, who would be less suspect if you made these kinds of speeches, to stand up and stand by the women you know and help us put an end to the violence shown by changing the culture and allow men to resort to more healthy solutions to their displeasure and frustration.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Naqvi has two minutes for his response.

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Let me first start by thanking the members from Oxford, Parkdale-High Park, Guelph,

Simcoe North, Kitchener–Conestoga and Toronto Centre for their expression of support for Bill 53. I also thank you very much for some very constructive suggestions as to how, by working together, we can strengthen this bill.

I think all of us raised a point that violence against women or domestic violence is a very large issue. I agree with you that it is definitely beyond the scope of this one particular bill. Nor is this bill intending to address the very big societal issue around domestic violence in our communities. I wish I had the prescription for that. I wish all of us collectively had the prescription for that. Unfortunately, we don't, for many reasons that have been outlined by other members.

1610

This particular bill is trying to address a very specific, focused, narrow issue that relates to domestic violence and residential tenancies. We know that a lot of people, especially a lot of women who are financially independent, live in rental apartments. We know—and I think there's an acknowledgment by everyone—that there is a discrepancy that exists, a disconnect that exists between policy and what the Residential Tenancies Act allows us to do. Through this bill, at the behest of my constituents who brought this issue to me—and I'm sure there are many more who have not had the courage or the means to speak to me or you. Through Bill 53, I'm trying to rectify it, making it easier, reducing that one very important barrier by which a victim of domestic violence could escape an abusive relationship, an abusive situation, and flee to safety. If we can help one person, that's one more person we have helped to get away from a domestic violence situation.

I thank you very much for your support this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has expired. I will ask members to please take their seats.

RETIREMENT SAVINGS PLANS
FOR EMPLOYEES AND SELF-
EMPLOYED PERSONS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LES RÉGIMES
D'ÉPARGNE-RETRAITE DES EMPLOYÉS
ET DES TRAVAILLEURS INDÉPENDANTS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will first deal with ballot item number 19, standing in the name of Mr. Leal.

Mr. Leal has moved second reading of Bill 54, An Act respecting retirement savings plans for employees and for self-employed persons. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I hear noes.

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

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We'll call in the members after the next couple of ballot items.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 20.

Mrs. Sandals has moved private members' notice of motion number 31. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

ESCAPING DOMESTIC
VIOLENCE ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LA FUITE
FACE À LA VIOLENCE FAMILIALE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 21, standing in the name of Mr. Naqvi.

Mr. Naqvi has moved second reading of Bill 53, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 with respect to domestic violence. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Naqvi?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I move that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): So ordered. Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1613 to 1618.

RETIREMENT SAVINGS PLANS
FOR EMPLOYEES AND SELF-
EMPLOYED PERSONS ACT, 2010

LOI DE 2010 SUR LES RÉGIMES
D'ÉPARGNE-RETRAITE DES EMPLOYÉS
ET DES TRAVAILLEURS INDÉPENDANTS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Leal has moved second reading of Bill 54.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

| | | |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Albanese, Laura | Fonseca, Peter | Qadri, Shafiq |
| Arthurs, Wayne | Hardeman, Ernie | Ramal, Khalil |
| Balkissoon, Bas | Kular, Kuldip | Ruprecht, Tony |
| Best, Margaret | Leal, Jeff | Sandals, Liz |
| Brownell, Jim | Levac, Dave | Sergio, Mario |
| Delaney, Bob | Miller, Norm | Sousa, Charles |
| Dhillon, Vic | Murray, Glen R. | Takhar, Harinder S. |
| Dunlop, Garfield | Naqvi, Yasir | Van Bommel, Maria |
| Flynn, Kevin Daniel | Pendergast, Leeanna | Wynne, Kathleen O. |

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------------|---------------|
| DiNovo, Cheri | Kormos, Peter | Prue, Michael |
| Hampton, Howard | Marchese, Rosario | Tabuns, Peter |

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 27; the nays are 6.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'd ask that this bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): So ordered.

All matters pertaining to private members' public business having been completed, I do now call orders of the day.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 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. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|---|---|---|
| Aggelonitis, Hon. / L'hon. Sophia (LIB) | Hamilton Mountain | Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs |
| Albanese, Laura (LIB) | York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston | |
| Arnott, Ted (PC) | Wellington–Halton Hills | Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle |
| Arthurs, Wayne (LIB) | Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est | |
| Bailey, Robert (PC) | Sarnia–Lambton | |
| Balkissoon, Bas (LIB) | Scarborough–Rouge River | |
| Barrett, Toby (PC) | Haldimand–Norfolk | |
| Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB) | Sudbury | Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels |
| Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB) | London West / London-Ouest | Attorney General / Procureur général Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones |
| Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB) | Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest | |
| Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB) | Scarborough–Guildwood | Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé |
| Bisson, Gilles (NDP) | Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James | |
| Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB) | St. Catharines | Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement |
| Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB) | Etobicoke–Lakeshore | Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine |
| Brown, Michael A. (LIB) | Algoma–Manitoulin | |
| Brownell, Jim (LIB) | Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry | |
| Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB) | Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre | |
| Caplan, David (LIB) | Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est | |
| Carroll, M. Aileen (LIB) | Barrie | |
| Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB) | Markham–Unionville | Minister of Tourism and Culture / Ministre du Tourisme et de la Culture |
| Chiarelli, Bob (LIB) | Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean | |
| Chudleigh, Ted (PC) | Halton | |
| Clark, Steve (PC) | Leeds–Grenville | |
| Colle, Mike (LIB) | Eglinton–Lawrence | |
| Craitor, Kim (LIB) | Niagara Falls | |
| Crozier, Bruce (LIB) | Essex | Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président |
| Delaney, Bob (LIB) | Mississauga–Streetsville | |
| Dhillon, Vic (LIB) | Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest | |
| Dickson, Joe (LIB) | Ajax–Pickering | |
| DiNovo, Cheri (NDP) | Parkdale–High Park | Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB) | Prince Edward–Hastings | Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation |
| Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB) | Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre | Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure |
| Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB) | Windsor–Tecumseh | Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|---|--|
| Dunlop, Garfield (PC) Elliott, Christine (PC) | Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord Whitby–Oshawa | Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle |
| Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB) Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB) | Oakville Mississauga East–Cookville / Mississauga-Est–Cookville | Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail |
| Gélinas, France (NDP) Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB) | Nickel Belt Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles | Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement |
| Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB) | Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord | Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts |
| Hampton, Howard (NDP) Hardeman, Ernie (PC) | Kenora–Rainy River Oxford | Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle |
| 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 Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration |
| Hoy, Pat (LIB) Hudak, Tim (PC) | Chatham–Kent–Essex 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 |
| Jaczek, Helena (LIB) Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB) | Oak Ridges–Markham Brampton–Springdale | Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles |
| Johnson, Rick (LIB) Jones, Sylvia (PC) Klees, Frank (PC) Kormos, Peter (NDP) Kular, Kuldip (LIB) Kwinter, Monte (LIB) Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB) Leal, Jeff (LIB) Levac, Dave (LIB) MacLeod, Lisa (PC) Mangat, Amrit (LIB) | Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brook Dufferin–Caledon Newmarket–Aurora Welland Bramalea–Gore–Malton York Centre / York-Centre Glengarry–Prescott–Russell Peterborough Brant Nepean–Carleton Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud Trinity–Spadina Cambridge | Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu |
| Marchese, Rosario (NDP) Martiniuk, Gerry (PC) 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) McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB) | Thunder Bay–Atikokan Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud | Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario |
| McMeekin, Ted (LIB) | Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale | |
| McNeely, Phil (LIB) Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB) | Ottawa–Orléans Ottawa–Vanier | Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones |
| Miller, Norm (PC) Miller, Paul (NDP) | Parry Sound–Muskoka Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek | |
| Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB) | Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre | Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités |
| Mitchell, Hon. / L'hon. Carol (LIB) | Huron–Bruce | Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales |
| Moridi, Reza (LIB) | Richmond Hill | |

| Member and Party / Député(e) et parti | Constituency / Circonscription | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|---|---|
| Munro, Julia (PC) | York–Simcoe | Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Murdoch, Bill (PC) | Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound | |
| Murray, Glen R (LIB) | Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre | |
| Naqvi, Yasir (LIB) | Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre | |
| O'Toole, John (PC) | Durham | |
| Oraziotti, David (LIB) | Sault Ste. Marie | |
| Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC) | Oshawa | |
| Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB) | Kitchener–Conestoga | |
| Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB) | Elgin–Middlesex–London | Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative |
| Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB) | Scarborough–Agincourt | Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement |
| Prue, Michael (NDP) | Beaches–East York | |
| Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB) | Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest | Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce |
| Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB) | Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord | |
| Ramal, Khalil (LIB) | London–Fanshawe | |
| Ramsay, David (LIB) | Timiskaming–Cochrane | |
| Rinaldi, Lou (LIB) | Northumberland–Quinte West | |
| Ruprecht, Tony (LIB) | Davenport | |
| Sandals, Liz (LIB) | Guelph | |
| Savoline, Joyce (PC) | Burlington | |
| Sergio, Mario (LIB) | York West / York-Ouest | |
| Shurman, Peter (PC) | Thornhill | |
| Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB) | Nipissing | Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement |
| Sorbara, Greg (LIB) | Vaughan | |
| Sousa, Charles (LIB) | Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud | |
| Sterling, Norman W. (PC) | Carleton–Mississippi Mills | |
| Tabuns, Peter (NDP) | Toronto–Danforth | Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu |
| Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB) | Mississauga–Erindale | Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux |
| Van Bommel, Maria (LIB) | Lambton–Kent–Middlesex | |
| Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB) | Perth–Wellington | Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu |
| Wilson, Jim (PC) | Simcoe–Grey | First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée |
| Witmer, Elizabeth (PC) | Kitchener–Waterloo | |
| Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB) | Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest | Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports |
| Yakubuski, John (PC) | Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke | Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle |
| Zimmer, David (LIB) | Willowdale | |

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Amrit Mangat, Phil McNeely
John O'Toole
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Pat Hoy, Norm Miller
Glen R Murray, Charles Sousa
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: David Oraziotti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Bob Chiarelli, Steve Clark
Helena Jaczek, Kuldip Kular
Dave Levac, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, David Oraziotti
Joyce Savoline
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Donna H. Cansfield, M. Aileen Carroll
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Lisa MacLeod, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Leeanna Pendergast
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Christine Elliott
Peter Kormos, Reza Moridi
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Yasir Naqvi
Bas Balkissoon, Bob Delaney
Joe Dickson, Sylvia Jones
Amrit Mangat, Norm Miller
Yasir Naqvi, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Peter Shurman
M. Aileen Carroll, France Gélinas
Jerry J. Ouellette, David Ramsay
Liz Sandals, Peter Shurman
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
David Caplan, Kim Craiton
Jeff Leal, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Lou Rinaldi
Tony Ruprecht
Clerks / Greffiers: Trevor Day (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Vic Dhillon, Cheri DiNovo
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Ted McMeekin
Shafiq Qadri, Khalil Ramal
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité
spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
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