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of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 6 March 2012

Mardi 6 mars 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO**

Tuesday 6 March 2012

**ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO**

Mardi 6 mars 2012

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

**FAMILY CAREGIVER LEAVE ACT
(EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS
AMENDMENT), 2012**

**LOI DE 2012 SUR LE CONGÉ FAMILIAL
POUR LES AIDANTS NATURELS
(MODIFICATION DES NORMES D'EMPLOI)**

Resuming the debate adjourned on February 27, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 30, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver leave / *Projet de loi 30, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour les aidants naturels.*

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

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I am pleased to rise and continue the debate for the second reading of the Family Caregiver Leave Act (Employment Standards Amendment), 2012.

In previous conversations on this bill here in this House, we heard a variety of comments and opinions brought forward by a number of members from all sides of the House. There is no doubt that one of the principles that unites us is the need for compassion for our loved ones when they face a medical crisis. I believe that we heard that loud and clear. That is because everyone in this House, and those who may be following these proceedings from home, agrees that when loved ones face a serious illness or injury, we need to be at their side, we need to care for and to reassure those that we are closest to—our family.

The well-known theologian Thomas Merton once wrote that “the whole idea of compassion is based on a keen awareness of the interdependence of all living beings.” It is when we face serious medical situations that we realize just how dependent we are on those who care for us, and it is when our family members are seriously ill or injured that we realize how dependent they are upon us. At these times, our concentration and concerns are not on our day-to-day work but on working to restore those we love to health.

This proposed legislation, if passed, would provide up to eight weeks of unpaid job-protected leave for an employee to provide care or support to a seriously ill or injured family member. I would like to emphasize that the leave would have to be taken in one-week increments; an employee could take up to eight weeks per year per specified family member.

A family member for whom an employee could request unpaid time off to care for could include: the employee's spouse; a parent, step-parent or foster parent of the employee or the employee's spouse; a child, step-child or foster child of the employee or the employee's spouse; a grandparent, a step-grandparent, a grandchild or step-grandchild of the employee or the employee's spouse; the spouse of a child of the employee; the employee's brother or sister; or a relative of the employee who is dependent on the employee for care or assistance.

And importantly for many in our province, it could be taken to care for family members who live in other provinces or even countries. We know that many Ontarians were born outside of Canada—in the greater Toronto area, that percentage is about half—and so the importance of having job-protected time to take care of family members who are seriously ill or injured is all the more important when we must travel and distance separates us from those we care about. As I had the opportunity to mention previously in this House, I know this from my own experience. I learned first-hand just how hard it can be to juggle work and family responsibilities when I worked in the private sector and my father became ill in Italy. All of the challenges and the stresses that we face when our loved ones are near us are compounded when we must travel long distances to help them.

But even when our family is near to us, having the time off is still important for us and for those we care for. My mother, who is 82 years old, lives with my family, and again, through my personal experiences, I can understand and sympathize with those who struggle to find the time for seriously ill or injured loved ones.

When we and those we love face these very difficult situations, the last thing we need is to fear being left unemployed because we need time away from work. Working Ontarians should not have to choose between their jobs and helping seriously ill or injured family members, and that is why the McGuinty government promised to introduce this bill. That is why we have fulfilled that promise and taken this action for the working people of our province.

Another goal of our government, which I'm sure we all share, is to make Ontario the healthiest place in North

America, both to grow up and grow old. We all know that across Canada we have an aging population, and it is clear that this puts pressure on our health care system. So when the opportunity is there to help seniors facing a serious medical condition stay in their homes, where the financial cost to society is lower, we believe that making that happen makes sense for everyone. We can and should recognize the vital role family members play in health care and make sure that they can play this role without fear of job loss.

As both the Minister of Health and the Minister of Labour have said, our proposed family caregiver leave would support our government's seniors' strategy. This strategy recognizes that providing good care at home allows our older Ontarians to remain where they want to be, while at the same time relieving the stress on our hospitals and long-term-care system. This is an important step forward, but to take this step family caregivers have to be able to be there, and so this proposed leave would help ensure that time to care.

As parliamentary assistant to the Ministry of Labour, I am also aware that our province faces a skills shortage. Whether it is the high-tech or construction industry, skilled workers are one of the important keys to a prosperous future for Ontario. Without the right skilled employees to do the job, the job will be done elsewhere, out of province. Keeping these skilled workers when they encounter the same family health crises we all face is a matter, then, of keeping our economy secure. So it would make economic sense to provide this caregiver leave rather than see skilled workers leave their employers.

For those who have questions whether this proposed leave could be taken advantage of, the bill provides reasonable protections for employers. First, for an employee to be entitled to the leave, a physician would have to issue a certificate stating that the family member has a serious medical condition. This note would have to be provided to an employer upon request. Secondly, this proposed leave would be unpaid. We have asked our federal counterparts to make those who take this leave eligible for employment insurance benefits and are awaiting a response. So, if passed, the leave would have reasonable controls in place to balance the interests of all parties. All Ontarians, whether workers or employers, can, in a heartbeat, face a situation in which a family member becomes seriously ill or injured. Illness and injury, Mr. Speaker, do not discriminate.

0910

We share a common bond, both as family members and as human beings vulnerable to sickness or injury, and it is the most vulnerable among us who would benefit most from this bill. We know that those who financially have the least have the least capacity and ability to use resources when seriously ill or injured. For those for whom normal, everyday life is a struggle, how much more is it true when they face the additional burden of caring for family members dealing with serious health issues? It is these caregivers who may also have the greatest fear of job loss; it is these employees who may

have the least, in terms of benefit provisions, that this bill would assist or protect. And so, again, our bill, if passed, would help the most vulnerable among us to protect those they love who are struggling with sickness or injury.

A working mother should not have to hesitate to take time away from her seriously ill or injured child or husband because she fears losing her income. A single parent should not have to choose between their employment and being there for an elderly father or mother who has suffered a stroke or a broken hip.

I know as well, from the experience of my constituents, of the struggle of those who immigrate to this country, of those who are dealing with learning a new language; those who may face job barriers and who are making an adjustment to a new culture. For these individuals, their job may be the one security, the one anchor of hope in a life surrounded by many challenges. This proposed job-protected leave for family caregivers would help immigrants not only during their period of adjustment to a new country and province, but also if and when a loved one abroad is ill or injured.

There is another group, of course, to whom an unequal share of the responsibility of caregiving has historically fallen, and that is women—and women who have the least are the most vulnerable. I do not believe that any in this House would want a mother to worry about providing for her child who is seriously ill or injured because she fears she will lose all or a significant part of that family's livelihood.

Certainly women, or any employee who is working part-time or on contract, can also be among those who are most vulnerable and who may have the greatest fear of losing their job when they need to take time off when family health crises occur. So the bill would make all employees who are covered by the Ontario Employment Standards Act eligible for this proposed job-protected family caregiver leave. Whether they are full-time, part-time or on contract, Ontario workers covered by the ESA would be eligible for this leave. I believe that's only fair and that is only just.

The one thing Ontarians need the most when it comes to caring for seriously ill or injured family members is the time to be with their loved ones. This proposed legislation is part of the McGuinty government's commitment to ensure that families across Ontario have the support they need when they need it the most.

Our proposed family caregiver leave is a matter of compassion and caring for those who provide care to their loved ones. I believe it is simply the right thing to do for Ontario families and residents.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Just a few comments on the bill, the Family Caregiver Leave Act; I'll be speaking to it in a few minutes anyhow. But basically, I think the bill is lacking clear definition. I think it needs to be taken back and rewritten so that the questions are answered; so that we can actually have a good debate on this bill.

I thank the speaker for her time, but basically, the minister's staff has yet to provide that there is actually a

need for this legislation. We already have family medical leave and personal emergency leave. I think those pretty much handle what is needed today.

Also of note: This act doesn't really help small businesses. In fact, it might actually hurt small businesses: those with 10 or less employees who will find it hard to replace the staff that do leave due to issues with the family. You find, if it's a very specialized person working for you, it's hard to replace them, let alone to train and staff.

The other part: I think the comment on this bill is that the government today needs to start focusing more on our economic situation. We're heading toward disaster in this province. Our deficit is at \$16 billion and heading toward \$30 billion, and we have yet to see an act or bill come out—let alone a response to the Drummond report—to deal with these issues. I would really appreciate the government actually getting to work. Go to work on the issues that are at hand, and that's getting jobs back to this province and getting regulations in place; setting up good tax structures; going through with their promise to lower corporate tax rates; and getting Ontario back to business so that we can start to pay off our debt and get jobs for the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Cindy Forster: While we support the intent of the bill, I think that eligibility and enforcement are going to be a problem. The government is already suggesting that the ESA budget be cut by \$6 million, and we know that enforcement is an issue with legislation that's currently in place many times here in the province.

Section 49.3(5), I think, is problematic in the bill as well, because it requires people to actually take a full week of leave off as opposed to individual days. In many cases, these may be lower-paid workers trying to access these leaves of absence for serious illness in their family. I think that if they were able to take individual days and perhaps share that time off with family members, it might assist more workers here in the province.

I'll give an example of the kind of enforcement and eligibility that I've dealt with over the years: under the Election Act, where people are able to take three hours off or four hours off to vote in a municipal, federal or provincial election. Even in unionized settings, workers who are unionized have difficulty getting the employer to give them that time off. Clearly, in non-unionized settings many never get time off to vote, even though there's legislation around that.

So I think that the enforcement and monitoring piece will be the big issue. The second piece will be the kind of prescriptive requirement to take no less than a week off at a time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I certainly appreciated the remarks made by my colleague the member from York South–Weston on Bill 30, the Family Caregiver Leave Act.

I think all of us in this House, over our lives, often are faced with situations where a family member or another loved one, injured family members—indeed, to provide care if they are indeed seriously ill or injured. And an opportunity, of course, to be with family members—what is always an extremely difficult time, when one is dealing with these kinds of situations. All of us, I think, agree in this House that family caregiver leave is a matter of compassion and the right thing to do for Ontario families.

Inevitably, this bill will make its way to committee: an opportunity to solicit opinions from right across every sector of the province of Ontario, to join us here during the committee process. One of the great advantages, of course, of a minority government will be an opportunity to work with our good friends in the official opposition and, indeed, the third party in order to build the Ontario consensus on a key issue that we want to be discussed here.

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Leal: My good friend the House leader, I know, wants to build that kind of consensus on this kind of bill, Bill 30.

I also note that in York South–Weston, at the Weston Golf and Country Club, was the first PGA victory for Arnold Palmer, in the 1955 Canadian Open in York South–Weston. For those of us who are interested in golf trivia, that's a very important historical fact from York South–Weston.

0920

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Steve Clark: I want to respond to the address from the member for York South–Weston, but I also want to say how impressed I was with the member for Peterborough. He's a virtual cornucopia of golf trivia. So I want to thank him for that little snippet of golf trivia about the member opposite's riding.

I want to take this opportunity to try to work into my comments a meeting that I just had in my office with people from Epilepsy Ontario. I want to recognize in the west members' gallery a couple of people that I met with: Pamela Murray, the executive director of Epilepsy Ottawa-Carleton; I also want to introduce Susan Harrison, the executive director of Epilepsy and Seizure Disorder Resource Centre in Kingston, who is actually from my riding of Leeds–Grenville. I want to welcome them to Queen's Park. Also, I met with Peter Andrews, and we had a great meeting talking about some of the issues that they are bringing forward today.

I did have an opportunity to talk to them just briefly, and I appreciate their patience with me running off to my House duty this morning. Certainly they are strongly recommending today that MPPs support and urge the adoption of the Ontario epilepsy strategy. We talked about some of the issues around getting care; the fact that many people who are affected with epilepsy take sometimes over a year, sometimes multiple years, depending on where they live, to get access; and as well, some of

the barriers that they have receiving drugs and also for employment issues around ODSP.

They were surprised when I mentioned that I was running off to talk about Bill 30 because, given some of the issues with employment, you'd think that the government would take time and speak to stakeholders. I know the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington mentioned that in his address.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for York South–Weston has two minutes to respond.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I would like to also thank all the members that have taken the time to comment on the bill: the member for Elgin–Middlesex–London, the members for Welland, from Peterborough and Leeds–Grenville.

I would like to specify that there is a gap in the current leaves of absence under the ESA. The ESA doesn't currently provide a long-term unpaid protected leave for employees who want to care for a family member with a serious medical condition where there is no imminent death risk. So the family medical leave is an unpaid job-protected leave for a family member that has a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death within a period of 26 weeks.

Also, the personal emergency leave provides short-term unpaid protection for 10 days per calendar year for a broad list of emergencies and illnesses. So there is a difference with the current bill that we are proposing.

As far as businesses are concerned, I also want to point out that only employees whose employer regularly employs 50 or more employees are eligible to take the personal emergency leave.

The government does recognize that some smaller operations may have some challenges in providing this proposed leave, but what I think is really important is that employers care about creating a more positive, a more loyal, a more protective workplace. By having something like this in place, I think it will go a long way in sending that message. The proposed bill is also supported by many organizations in the sector.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'm glad to have a few words on Bill 30, the Family Caregiver Leave Act.

"The bill amends the Employment Standards Act, 2000.

"Section 49.3, which creates family caregiver leave, is added to the act. Under section 49.3, an employee is entitled to a leave of absence without pay to provide care or support to a family member who has a serious medical condition. An employee may take up to eight weeks per calendar year with respect to each family member described in the section or prescribed by regulation. Entitlement to family caregiver leave is in addition to any entitlement to family medical leave under section 49.1 and personal emergency leave under section 50."

I just wanted to review that, because it's been a few days since I've listened to the debate.

My first point is: Is there really a need for this bill at this point in time? I haven't received any letters, any emails or any indication that anybody really wants this bill to be at this time. Usually, I get quite a few emails. I'm sure many of our colleagues here will hear from their constituents and stakeholders when there is actually a bill up for discussion, giving their points. I'll make two references here: I think I get about, I don't know, 100 emails a day just on this wind energy from MPP Lisa Thompson, her motion—

Interjection: Only 100?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Per day—her private member's motion which calls for the moratorium on further Industrial wind turbine development until third party health and environmental studies have been completed. So, I know this is an issue and I'm hearing every day that people support this motion. I hope in the House later on, when we debate, that we'll pass this motion. But as I'm saying, they are letting me know, and with the caregiver leave I have yet to hear anybody. Maybe when I get back to my office today I'll have a few.

Another point here that I know is big out there—and I know it's a huge issue because I'm getting lots of emails, and more now. I don't know if you guys are getting them, on the value for money, the horse racing issues that are out there. You know, that's an urgent problem that needs to be debated, and I hope the government will bring that up for debate in the House.

Interjection: It could help us out.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Well, exactly. I mean, I'm hearing here that the government, at the end of the day, has taken in over \$1 billion that they can spend on health care and education, and with one fell swoop of the pen they're going to break an agreement that's revenue-sharing and that \$1 billion is going to disappear. I don't know where they're going to get that money to replace their costs in health care and education.

But I mean, these are just various issues that actually come across my desk. Again, as I've made earlier, I have yet to hear a support or a yea or nay on the caregiver leave act. And I'm just wondering.

I mean, I think the government works under perception. They want to give us the perception they're actually doing something when—

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Actually, yeah: They're ignoring the economy, the jobs; things that we need to be dealing with. They go on the perception that they're doing something, so they'll say they're discussing, they're passing these laws. "It's something that is good for Ontario; working together"—their usual spin.

But they also tried perception on other issues, like Ornge. They say Ornge is under control; there are no problems; they've replaced the board of directors and everything is hunky-dory, but really, in the perception, Ornge has been a total disgrace to our province. I think Mr. Smitherman, when he wrote the legislation, made huge errors and the government has not picked up on them over the seven or eight years.

Interjection: eHealth.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: eHealth's another one.

Perception on our deficit: "No problem. We're actually ahead." This year, in their economic statement, they said they're ahead of projections on the deficit: It's \$16 billion instead of \$16.5 billion. The debt: "No problems." But you look at the Drummond report, and we're headed to a \$30-billion deficit in four years and \$400 billion in debt. You try to run this government when you're \$400 billion in debt—you think the services are suffering today, you wait. In four years' time, what are services really going to be like?

So we need the government to stop living in the world of perception and just giving people—like, we're working on giving this caregiver act. We need them to start working on some hardcore issues.

The other thing I've noticed in reading about this: This is the sixth new leave of absence introduced in the past seven years. Six in seven years. What have they done for job creation? What have they done for fixing the tax structure in the last seven years? I haven't seen it. I think, before I personally dissect this part of the bill, this bill itself is sloppy. There are too many open-ended questions and not enough definitions. I think it should be pulled back and rewritten. I think it's a sloppy, sloppy bill. But I'll dissect parts of the bill, and parts of other bills—personal emergency leave, declared emergency leave, family medical leave, reservist leave, organ donor leave.

0930

Personal emergency leave, just to review that one: There's actually a cut-off there for small businesses. If it's 50 or more employees, this leave affects them. There's got to be a reason why there is a cut-off for small businesses. I think it's pretty obvious that businesses with few employees find it harder to replace staff who leave. While I support the personal emergency leave, I'm glad there is a cut-off there for small businesses. It has a definition of "emergency," and it's limited to 10 days. I think any business can get by with an employee leaving for 10 days on short notice. I think that's fair. I think that was a good idea and it's a good leave.

For family medical leave, eight weeks are allowed, which is fine. I mean, we do get emergencies. There's a clear definition of why you can leave. Sadly, it's because someone will pass away within 26 weeks. We understand that; we're a compassionate province and a compassionate country, and we understand that in your lifetime when those stresses occur, it's good to give support, to go and support your family member. The other benefit of this is that the federal government has actually said that they would support it for six weeks of EI insurance, to help fund the person. So they're taking a leave from work, and instead of having the hardship of worrying about paying the mortgage or the car payments or their high energy costs, they are able to collect some unemployment insurance and they can focus on their family member, or whoever, to take care of them. It is only for a spouse, parent, child or family member, and that makes sense.

Now, in this bill they talk about how a person can take a leave because they have a "serious medical condition." That term is not defined. How can employers and employees manage this kind of leave if the definition has not been set? Every other leave has a definition of how you can take that leave. I looked up the definition of "serious health condition." One definition: "'Serious health condition' entitling an employee to ... leave means an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves either (1) in-patient care or (2) continuing treatment by a health care provider."

The definition of "in-patient care" is relatively straightforward. "'In-patient care' means an overnight stay in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical care facility, including any period of incapacity or any subsequent treatment in connection with such in-patient care. The term 'incapacity' for the purposes of this definition means inability to work, attend school or perform other regular daily activities due to the serious health condition, its treatment, or recovery from it."

The definition of "continuing treatment" encompasses numerous different scenarios which are discussed in detail in the regulations that I was talking about; this comes from the United States.

A serious health condition involving continuing treatment by a health care provider includes the following—now, this is a different definition:

"'Incapacity and treatment' requires a period of incapacity of more than three consecutive, full calendar days, and any subsequent treatment or period of incapacity relating to the same condition, that also involves:

"(a) Treatment two or more times within 30 days of the first day of incapacity, unless extenuating circumstances exist, by a health care provider, by a nurse under the direct supervision of a health care provider, or by a provider of health care services under orders of, or on referral by, a health care provider; or

"(b) Treatment by a health care provider on at least one occasion, which results in a regimen of continuing treatment under the supervision of the health care provider.

"The two treatments referred to in (a) above and the initial treatment referred to in (b) above must be in-person. The first (or only) in-person treatment visit must take place within seven days of the first day of incapacity.

"In-person treatment or the regimen of continuing treatment may take place after the period of incapacity has ended and the employee has returned to work. Therefore, leave that may not have qualified" for the leave-of-absence leave "at the time it was taken may later meet the requirements" of the leave and need to be retroactively designated as such. Confusing.

Where are the definitions in that? It's leading to problems in this area in the States.

What is a "serious health condition"? An "illness, injury, impairment or any physical or mental condition that involves either (1) in-patient [medical] care or (2) continuing treatment by a health care provider." Is that emphysema, a ruptured appendix, asthma, heart attacks, a

bad back, arthritis, cancer, stroke, spinal injuries, nervous disorders, any serious injury caused by an accident on or off the job, emotional distress, migraine headaches?

What is the definition going to be? I think if you have this bill and you don't have the definition set out, I think that's truly unfair to employers—and employees, those wanting to take the leave.

Now, I'm going to talk about consultations with stakeholders. I just wonder if the government has taken the time to actually talk to small businesses. Has there been an impact analysis on how this will affect them in running their businesses? This government here does have a habit of being indifferent to how legislation affects the job creators in communities, especially in small-town areas like St. Thomas, and I've seen it first-hand at my pharmacy.

Our party here has campaigned on a promise to bring about a small business bill of rights, and I fully agree with it. The main point was to consult with businesses before any new legislation or regulation is tabled, so there's the fact that it will be known how a regulation or legislation will affect a small business. We, as a party, do recognize that small businesses are the engine of growth and the job creators.

This bill here has no exemption for small business and family medical leave—whereas family medical leave has a cut-off of 50 employees. I'll just take this to a personal level. Back at Yurek Pharmacy, we're currently at 60 employees, so we're good. We have enough coverage now. We've grown our business—not with the help of the government; we did it on our own—and we're now over 60. But back about 10 years ago, we had about 12 employees. I can tell you now that if a pharmacist left my business out of the blue to go on caregiver leave, that would have devastated my business. Number one, a pharmacist is a highly skilled worker. They can't just be replaced by anybody in the business. Number two, there is a shortage of pharmacists, especially in rural—not in Toronto; Toronto has a lot of pharmacists. But if you go to rural communities up north or down south, it's hard to find a pharmacist to come in to work, especially in small cities like St. Thomas or Aylmer or Port Stanley. To actually find a pharmacist overnight would be quite hard. I tell you, 10 years ago we ran into a position where we actually ran out of pharmacists. Being the employer, I was working around the clock every day, my brother and I, and it was tough.

The third part about it is, if this pharmacist left and I was able to find a pharmacist to bring in—they're called locums. They don't work for me; they work for themselves. But their rates are one and a half times higher than what we pay employees. It's highly expensive to bring these people in to work for us and to have them trained to how our operations work. That would have been a high cost to our business 10 years ago. It would be a high cost now, but I think we would be able to manage it with the higher staffing that we do have.

So I just wonder if the government actually thought about how, economically, this could be devastating to small, family-run, independent businesses out there.

I think the government is so removed and focused on multinational corporations. Not every business out there is a big multinational company. I think the larger employers out there, the factories that we have and the industrial sector—their union agreements probably already have a caregiver leave in their contract. I would bet money that the majority of them already do have it. So really, is this bill going to affect them or be any benefit to them? As I said before, I think the government should be focusing on our economy.

Again, the structure and the operations: Employers are going to need to be more flexible with their hiring. It's not going to be easy just to pick someone and train them for one specific job. They're going to have to do some cross-training, and maybe that's going to inhibit people being hired, because they don't have the skills to be able to work more than one particular skill set in a business. So you might actually be hurting jobs. I know this is a stretch, but you might actually be hurting jobs with this caregiver act.

Again, the employer has to continue to pay benefits, has to bring in a replacement and has to pay their salaries. In this day and age, when costs to businesses are high, for those that are running borderline, this might actually put small businesses out of business. The Auditor General's report states that electricity bills will rise 46% over the next five years. I think that cost alone is going to be hard enough on businesses, let alone pulling away staff.

The questions that they ask—like, how long do you hire? I mean, person can take a week at a time, up to eight weeks. Do you hire for a week? Do you hire for eight weeks? And then if someone comes back in three weeks, you've got double, and you've got to pay them out.

0940

I think they need to sit down and review this bill and actually call up some small business owners. I'll give them a list, and they can call them up, and they'll get it first-hand. They'll get an honest opinion from the business owners, because they don't like government—either way, opposition or the sitting government—being involved in their businesses. They'll tell you up front how bills like this would affect their businesses.

I also have a concern in the agricultural sector. With this type of bill, especially during the spring planting and the fall harvesting, if an employee leaves, there's the fact that the farmer has to go and find someone to replace them. In rural Ontario, I don't know if there are really that many out there to pull in to help with the harvest, let alone for them to pay—if it's a bad harvest year and their yield is down and yet they still have to hire someone to come in, that might actually have a higher cost.

I also want to talk about the financial crunch that this bill could have on people. The fact that the government has only expressed an intention to press the federal government to offer employment insurance benefits—so they put forward this bill for us to pass, and they're going to expect people to leave work, being compassionate, but

they're not going to have any employment insurance to cover them in paying their mortgage or paying for food. So I think the right thing to do would be for this government to actually talk to the federal government and get this agreement in place before the act is passed. I think that's a smart thing to do; it's actually planning ahead. Again, I always go back to the fact that the government needs to start planning for this \$30-billion deficit we're headed for and start dealing with the problems at hand. The federal government is working hard to balance its budget and may not be able to afford extra payments into this caregiver act; they might actually just deny it. So you've done this act—good for you—but no one can really take advantage of it, because there's no money for them to live their lives.

The government, as I said, likes to say everything is under control; I have, from the Auditor General's report, some words that kind of prove they're not: "It is important to note that while the government has presented a plan to eliminate the annual deficit by 2017-18, no clear strategy or forecast has been articulated for paying down its existing and future debt."

I take that to heart, because we have the Drummond report sitting on someone's desk in the government, and that's a plan to get the deficit down. I'm sure they can come up with a plan, and waiting until April, when they give out the budget—we'd rather have that plan sooner than later so we can start working towards being fiscally responsible in this province.

Another thing is, the Minister of Health has talked about increasing home care coverage for people, and I think that's great. I have worked with a lot of home care workers quite a bit—I'm now a politician, and I guess I'm not working with too many right now—and I think the nurses and the physios who visit are hard-working people, and it gives people a sense of comfort in their home. If we have money going in to develop this home care system, maybe we don't need to rush into this caregiver leave act, because there is someone there who is going to be taking care of your family member while you work. I know that's a tough thing to say, but it's tougher times. We want to focus on supporting our small businesses and supporting family members, and we can't have everything. I think if we're putting money into home care and having the visitations and having someone there with your loved one while you're able to still work—

Interjection.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: As a review; I mean, as a small business owner—you just took me right out of my talk.

Interjections.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'll take a rest. I could start talking about golf, but I won't.

So, just to review, we need to define medical illness, we need to protect small businesses, and we need to get the federal government on board with covering the leave.

Thanks for your time, and I appreciate your comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions? The member for Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Madam Speaker, and might I say it's good to see you back in the chair again.

I'm pleased to respond to our friend from the Progressive Conservative honourable opposition. Certainly, their concern for small business is laudable; we don't see much of that concern reflected on the government side of the House these days. In fact, there was a very problematic comment made by the finance minister just yesterday in question period, seeming to say that the New Democratic Party was not on the side of small business. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, we had the lowest small business tax rate as part of our party platform of all the parties. Government simply assumed our platform, which we're thankful for, but it's hardly their innovation.

We're very sensitive about small business. It creates 90% of the jobs in Ontario, and it's been particularly hard-pressed by this government; I look forward to talking about how hard-pressed in my minutes coming up.

I also listened to his concerns about the actual efficacy of this bill, which clearly is not going to be very efficient at all in helping those who want to spend time with their loved ones, since who can afford in Ontario, particularly this Ontario, the Ontario of the McGuinty Liberals, to take eight weeks off of work without pay? You show me that person and I'll show you a person that probably could take it off before this bill was even introduced.

So again, the problem is not for most businesses and most people taking time off to look after a loved one who's in distress; most employers that I've talked to have some way of doing that. The problem is the pay when you do it, and this bill does not address that whatsoever.

Like all the feel-good bills that this government brings forward that go an inch when you need a thousand miles, we will probably support it, only to see it go to committee so we can make valuable amendments, which this bill desperately needs. But the idea that the federal government is going to come and save their bacon on this one, Madam Speaker, is a joke. One would think they would have consulted first and acted later.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments or questions?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: A few points that I would like to make: First of all, in regard to how a serious medical condition can be defined in the proposed bill, it would leave it up to the doctors; it leaves to them the discretion to determine on a case-by-case basis whether an individual has a serious medical condition. The term is hard to define in legislation because, similarly to family medical leave, it would give the doctors the discretion to determine on a case-by-case basis whether an individual has a serious medical condition. So it may not be practical to define this term.

For who can afford to take the eight weeks off, I would like to stress that it can be taken in increments of one week. I would also like to say that my experience has been that some constituents that find themselves in this situation end up losing their job, whether they can afford

it or not, because they're trying to take care of the person in the family that is seriously ill. At least this bill would prevent that. At least their job would have to be kept.

Now, we all know that a lot rests upon the relationship between the employer and the employee. As far as the supports for small businesses, one thing I would like to say is that it does try to really prevent potential abuse by employees requiring the medical certificates and putting in place other requirements as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I want to compliment the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London. He spoke in a very informed way and I think helped members of the Legislature understand what he calls some of the sloppy sections of the drafting of the bill. I think I should reinforce the fact that he is a health care provider; he's a professionally trained pharmacist, and spoke with great authority in terms of some of the medical glitches as well as the impact on small business. I like the way he wrapped it into a context of where Ontario is today. In fact, he said quite clearly—and I'm sure our leader would say the same thing—that we're all for compassion and honesty and integrity and transparency with the people of Ontario.

But if you look at this particular bill, Bill 30, you find out that there's this lack of clarity. It's similar, as he mentioned, to—some of this has parallels to Ornge, the air ambulance system in Ontario. It's a travesty when you look at it examined. Every day for the last three or four weeks, the Minister of Health has failed to admit that she completely messed up the file and put Ontarians at risk.

0950

Now, the issue with this thing is, as the member from the NDP caucus said, who can take eight weeks off without pay? Really, it's as simple as that. They're saying people can take eight weeks off—and by the way, they're going to blame Stephen Harper for not giving them employment insurance. It's a travesty, a sort of a shell game here for the people of Ontario.

We're for compassion. The most compassionate thing you could do is provide an economy for jobs for young people. That would be a good start. We have 600,000 families in Ontario out of work. They can't afford to heat their homes.

What they've done to seniors, increasing—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Further comments and questions?

Mr. John Vanthof: It's my pleasure to comment on some of the other speakers today—especially Elgin–Middlesex–London? Cool, I remembered that.

A bill like this is like voting against motherhood and apple pie, and that's kind of the way it's written. It's almost like it's written in a way that, yes, you can't criticize it because it's like criticizing motherhood and apple pie, but that's part of the problem. It's almost like it's made to divide us on something that we should be working together on.

There will be other issues coming in the House later on where they take issues that we should have serious discussions on, but they're making it “either you're with us or you're against us,” and that's a big problem. And the government side is looking—yes, it's the guys on this side, but a lot of times it's the government side doing the “you're with us or you're against us.” They're making things complicated for both employees and employers.

If you're a small employer—I'm under 15. I have employees, and I have under 15, so do I qualify? Do my employees qualify under that? Can they qualify? It's things like that. We have to be much more clear. And, yes, all motherhood and apple pie is great, but we've got to be a lot more clear on who qualifies. I know my employees; if they had to take a lot of time off, they couldn't afford it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Elgin–Middlesex–London has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I want to thank the comments from the members from Parkdale–High Park—that's right, these seating arrangements work well for me—the member from York South–Weston, thank you; Durham, thank you; and Timiskaming–Cochrane—never been there. It's pretty up north though, I imagine.

Mr. John Vanthof: You're cordially invited.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: Well, some day I'm going to come up there.

Thank you and thank you for your comments. For the record, I do love my mom.

Interjection: Do you like apple pie?

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I love apple pie. I'm not a fan of baseball, though, but that's another topic.

I've checked with my EA, and I still have yet to receive any emails, so I don't know if people at home are watching or what have you, but if you are watching and you have an opinion on this act, please let me know because they'll help me formulate my decision on this bill.

But I think the bill is too broad. It needs to be more clear, more defined, and we need to deal with the small business aspect. This bill is coming out—and maybe I'm just taking it a little too personal, the fact that you actually need a bill because businesses are all bad and that.

I have operated my business; my dad started in 1963, and I've been at it for 16 years now with my brother. We've had to deal with these issues before in our business. It's just basically sitting down and talking with our employee. We've given people time off, the time they need, and it wasn't set like, “You're off for this week.” It worked for both of us. We said, “We understand your position, but do you understand our position and the fact that you're a key member of our team and you can't fill in the time?” The way it usually works out is they'll get some of the week off but they'll come in and work a couple hours on the night shift. It's working together, and I don't know if the government needs to set laws to make people work together. I think small business owners out

there are compassionate and they are working with people if these instances do come up.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's always an honour to rise in this place and stand for the people of Ontario, many of whom do not feel they have a voice in this place. So it's always, I think, incumbent upon us to try to give them that voice.

Let's look at the backdrop behind this bill in the province of Ontario. The backdrop behind this bill is a province that is experiencing record poverty levels, unprecedented homelessness and waits for affordable housing. The backdrop to this bill is a record number of bankruptcies in small business. The background behind this bill is joblessness and people who are in very precarious employment, good manufacturing jobs lost for precarious part-time contract labour, minimum wage labour. That's the backdrop behind here.

By the way, the health care backdrop behind this bill is waiting lists, a half a million Ontarians without a family doctor, nurses being laid off and our seniors—seniors who might be the ones who are in some ways recipients of the concern of this bill—sitting in emergency rooms in hospitals when they should be in long-term care or be sent home but they don't have home care, but there aren't long-term-care beds waiting for them. So that's the backdrop.

Now, against that myriad of problems, that horrendous scene I've just described, which, for someone who was born in Toronto, raised in Ontario, we have never seen before—it's never been this bad in my lifetime. It was this bad in my father's lifetime—it was called the 1930s—but it's not been this bad in my lifetime.

Against that backdrop, we have this little bill. It's a very little bill. It's a miniscule bill. It's a bill that gives people what they probably, in most cases, already have, which is time off from work to look after somebody who is extremely ill or dying or dead. That's what this bill gives. It doesn't pay them. It doesn't give them any money for doing it. It doesn't provide home care. It doesn't provide long-term care. It doesn't provide any of the supports medically that they need; for example, equipment or pharmaceuticals or anything else that might be weighing down the finances of that family. No, all it does is give them time off work so that they won't be fired.

Now, Madam Speaker, this is cynical. I would sort of second the motherhood and apple pie, but I would say it's pretty cynical. It's not really motherhood; it's kind of guest parenting. And it's not really apple pie; it's some synthetic variation of the same. I mean, this is a cynical bill. This is a little bill that gives to someone dying of thirst a teaspoon of water and then expects them to survive a little bit longer. That's this bill.

But, of course, it's a teaspoon of water, isn't it, Madam Speaker? So we can't vote against it. But, boy oh boy, can we say some things about it, which is what I intend to do.

Okay. You know what they could have done? Let me tell you about another jurisdiction in the world, Madam Speaker, where, if you have someone at home who has a disability and needs ongoing help or, for example, Alzheimer's—any of the problems that might ask for somebody to come home, and some relative might want to take care of this individual full-time. In Sweden, do you know what they do? In Sweden, if you have a relative who needs your help full-time at home, the Swedish government will send you on a course so you know how to look after that person; get you involved in a union, so you're a union employee; and then pay you a full-time salary to go home and look after them.

Now, that's not a teaspoon of water. That's actually enough water to bathe in and have some left over to cook and never go thirsty again. That's dramatic. The distance from that kind of reality to this kind of reality is an ocean's worth, quite frankly. It is an ocean's worth, to be literal about it. But surely we can do a little bit better than this.

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By the way, to again paint a picture of the backdrop, Ontario is a province where Workers' Action has told us that about 50% of the employers that they surveyed weren't even matching the labour code such as it is. That is to say that these employers weren't paying minimum wage—and by the way, I hear these complaints in my constituency office all the time—but the employees were frightened to complain about it because they'd be fired.

This is a province where migrant workers are killed. By the way, did their relatives get compassionate leave to come up and be with them? Did they get anything? What's happening with that case? What's happening with migrant workers and their lack of any kind of labour oversight?

But for the rest of Ontario, let's look at those employees who don't even get their regular vacation time pay. There's lots of them, and they're frightened to complain. Why? Because they might be fired.

Here is a province where only one in every 100 employers ever gets a visit from somebody who's going to enforce labour standards—ever—one in 100. I'm not even talking about the employers—and we all know about them in our immigrant communities—that fly right under the radar, that aren't even picked up by the Workers' Action survey. These people are simply employing illegals, paying them illegal amounts, subjecting them to all sorts of abuse—that goes on here too, and we don't do nearly enough about it.

We have the Ontario Federation of Labour in the building today about other matters, but they can tell you that one of their campaigns, "Kill a worker, go to jail," has been met with deaf ears from this government. So workers have been killed in this province and nobody has gone to jail—nobody has gone to jail. Why were they killed? Lack of safety, lack of safety enforcement—we know that our construction sites are dangerous places. Again, where is this government on that file?

So in light of the labour backdrop, this is a cynical little piece of legislation; again, the teaspoon of water

when the patient is dying of thirst. This is a cynical piece of legislation in light of the reality of provincial life, of the life of the average Ontarian.

I don't know anybody, including the members of this chamber, many of whom could afford to take eight weeks off without pay—now, the member across said, when I said that the first time in my two-minute hit, “Well, they don't have to take eight weeks.” That's nice. What if you want to take it; what if you have to take eight weeks? Ontarians can't afford to take eight weeks off without pay. How out of touch can this government be?

We know that most Ontarians are a paycheque or two away from being impoverished themselves. We know that the record levels of debt in this province are unprecedented. I couldn't afford to take two months off without pay. Can I imagine how someone of middle income or lower could take two months off without pay? Maybe I could take a week. Come on.

Against the great needs of those with great health needs, this bill is sad. It's sad; truly, it's sad. Against the huge problem in our labour force with actually enforcing any kind of employment standards whatsoever, this bill is sad. It's sad.

I don't know anybody—I actually don't know anybody of my friends and family who could afford to take advantage of this bill. Now, if I don't know that, who does? In a large company with a union, this bill is irrelevant because they probably, in many instances, already have this. For most compassionate leave, even small business employers—if someone is deathly ill, most small employers will make do. I know I've had two in my family. I used to be a small employer, a small business person; my son is a small business person. Would they work around something like this? Absolutely; they would do it already. They would do it already. This bill is not going to—I mean, how many people?

Do you know what would be really, really interesting? What I challenge this government to do—I challenge them to do something that they rarely do around these kinds of bills—is to actually do a follow-up study and to actually report back to this House—because I assume this bill will pass, hopefully with some necessary amendments—about how many people have actually taken advantage of this bill after it has been in place for a couple of years.

Now, I suppose the government has the out that they may not be in place in a couple of years, so there's always that. But to be a little less cynical than they are, let's assume they are still in place; let's assume this bill does pass. Let's ask them, “Show me the numbers.” Show me the numbers of people that actually get any kind of benefit out of this tiny, little bill, a teaspoon of water when the patient is dying of thirst. Show me the numbers. I would love, love, love to see them. It's interesting.

Now, the member, of course, as they always are wont to do in the loyal opposition, talked about the impacts on small business. The members opposite quite rightly pointed out that this bill exempts some small business

owners. But let me tell you that small business is also really hurting in this province, and unless this bill is very carefully administered and very carefully communicated, it's going to be hurt even further.

You know, I had some garage owners, Madam Speaker, come into my office the other day and talk about how much the new Drive Clean program is going to cost them in this province. The average independent garage owner—it's going to cost them between \$6,000 and \$20,400 a month. And they have to purchase their equipment from a sole source and, trust me, it sounds very suspicious, a sole source company. They've been told they have to do this by the government. They were given about two months' warning in January about this. So the government doesn't care about them, because this will drive some of them over the edge into bankruptcy as well.

This government didn't care about independent butchers. Remember that situation long ago? I had a couple of independent butchers go out of business in my riding because they were smoking their own sausages, and although the Toronto Board of Health had for years told them they were fine, this government said, “No, no, you're not fine. You have to spend \$200,000 to update your butcher shops.” Guess what? They're all out of business now, too. And of course, in that instance, talking about a health concern, who was responsible for the listeriosis scare? It wasn't small butchers. It was Maple Leaf Foods, a contributor to the Liberal Party.

So that's where this government sits, and let's make no bones about it: This government is not a friend to small business. It never has been. It probably never will be because they're not the ones who can afford a \$10,000 seat at a fundraiser. It's banks and insurance companies, let's face it, and developers, too—very good friends of developers.

So small business was not on their radar when the bill was developed either. And it'll be interesting again to track—but note, I'm challenging them to track too—how this bill, once implemented, actually impacts anybody in the community. I would say to my colleagues in the PC Party and also to those small businesses in my riding and across Ontario, though, I don't think you have much to worry about, quite frankly, because I honestly don't think that much is going to come of this bill whatsoever except public relations.

Public relations is something that this government tends to excel at, Madam Speaker, hence they're still across the aisle. Public relations bills like this and others that sound good, look good at first blush, accomplish extremely little but make a sound bite, are how they've been governing for the last eight years.

To go back to where I started at the beginning of this, that is what's led to the backdrop behind which this bill is invoked—the backdrop of loss of jobs, loss of manufacturing, delisting of essential health services, challenges to the health care system, unenforced labour standards, a terrible labour record and, again, no dollars in at the bottom to help people up; rather, huge corporate

tax giveaways at the top, hoping that that will trickle down.

Of course, we saw as well that this government is still—presumably, who knows? They voted against our bill that asked them to stop the next round of corporate tax cuts, but then they seem to be in favour of it. So, typically Liberal: yes-no-maybe is the answer—absolutely on the fence on that one. But it looks like, Madam Speaker, they're going to go ahead with even more corporate tax cuts, which will then—again—steal from the tax base, the revenue base that goes to afford any kind of health care, education or social services that we already have. So this is all behind this little cynical bill. This is all behind this little cynical bill.

You know, it makes one weary. It makes one feel a little old when you get up and you talk about the same things over and over again. For me, it's been six years without seeing much change. But I have to—you know, credit where credit's due: They're masters at this kind of bill, absolute masters at the kind of bill that purports to do something and does nothing; that looks good but doesn't benefit anyone. This is the latest of the Liberal offerings.

I should also add that the other backdrop behind this bill, of course, is the Ornge scandal, a scandal on which, of course, they're desperate to change the channel, because when \$25 million of taxpayers' money is missing from the health care file, when the OPP is probably knocking on the Premier's door or the Minister of Health's as we speak to find out what they knew and when they knew it, you'll want to change the channel. You don't want to have the focus on that—and the focus has been on that in this House ever since we came back, every single day. I suspect today won't be much different.

They want to change that channel. How better to do the changing of the channel than with, you know, as my friend from Timiskaming–Cochrane said, a motherhood-and-apple-pie bill that—eh, not a very good mother and a store-bought apple pie, but at least it sounds nice. It sounds nice; it purports to help somebody. Certainly not the people who are relying on an air ambulance service; not the people who relied on the eHealth card either; not the people—when I was first elected, \$35 million went out the back door to a cricket club. We've all forgotten that when we moved on from there to the scandal of eHealth, and moved on from the scandal of eHealth to the scandal of Ornge. But hopefully a little bill, a little cynical bill will, you know, get some media play and kind of—just maybe—people won't think about what's going on behind the bill.

So, Madam Speaker, I'm going to stop there, and I'm going to say, “Oh yeah, we'll probably vote for it.” I mean, a teaspoon of water to a person dying of thirst is better than nothing. But it's cynical, it's shady and hopefully it'll go to committee where we will make some necessary amendments before we bring it back to this House. But at the end of the day, even with the necessary amendments I doubt that this bill will really help many. I

doubt it will really cost much, which of course is what they're also counting on as well, because if it doesn't help many, of course it won't cost much.

I also, of course, challenge them to rethink their whole approach to employers and start to think that, you know, 90% of jobs created are small business. Start to think about them a little bit, which is just to echo the words of my colleagues to the right here.

So: eight weeks, no pay, good luck. Nobody will take it. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I believe we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear purple ribbons in recognition of Epilepsy Ontario and the Epilepsy Cure Initiative's Epilepsy Action Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister has asked for unanimous consent. Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'd like to welcome some guests who are here for Epilepsy Action Day: Margaret Maye; her husband, Gary Neumann; her son Thomas Drag; and his friend Margaret Aniol. They are all here to raise awareness about the issues surrounding epilepsy.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am very delighted to welcome all of the representatives of the Epilepsy Cure Initiative and Epilepsy Ontario.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'd like to extend a warm welcome this morning to some family members of our page Katie: her aunt Sheila Burkman is with us today, as well as her grandparents Patricia and Richard Gorwill.

Mr. Frank Klees: I would like to extend a welcome to the grade 5 class from Aurora Senior Public School, along with their teacher, Ms. Lindsay Clement.

Mr. John Vanthof: It's my pleasure to introduce the mayor of Temagami, John Hodgson.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I want to introduce some guests from Thunder Bay: the president and vice-chancellor of Lakehead University, Dr. Brian Stevenson, and director of alumni relations, Richard Longtin. Actually, I also see the president of the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce, Harold Wilson.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, Lakehead University will have the first northern Ontario faculty of law coming in 2013—the first new law school in Ontario in 42 years. So welcome. We're very excited to have you here.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'd like to welcome the students from Our Lady of Good Counsel School from my riding who will be joining us momentarily.

Miss Monique Taylor: Today, I'd like to introduce Mr. Todd Downey, who is here from Energy and working really hard and who would like to meet with many MPPs of this House regarding the retrofit program.

I'd also like to—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Don Valley East.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do you have further guests?

Miss Monique Taylor: I was also fortunate enough to meet with Epilepsy this morning, and I would like to introduce Ms. Cynthia Milburn and Ms. Kristin Welton. Thank you very much, and welcome today.

Mr. Michael Coteau: I'd like to welcome back to the House former member of Parliament from Don Valley East David Caplan.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to introduce members of Epilepsy Ontario's action day here at Queen's Park: Dianne McKenzie is the executive director of Durham region, Deanna MacDonald is the outreach coordinator, and Thom Appleby and Miranda Zeppieri.

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm happy to introduce to the House today Katie Monat. Katie is part of the grade 5 class from Aurora Senior Public School. She's the niece of my executive assistant, Josh Arnold.

I'm also happy to welcome the president of Lakehead University, Brian Stevenson, and the president of our chamber of commerce, Harold Wilson.

Mr. Steve Clark: It gives me pleasure to introduce in the west members' gallery Ruth Kitson, the executive director of Community and Primary Health Care in my riding. Welcome.

Mr. Jeff Leal: I'd like to introduce today—they'll be arriving shortly—Lynn Zeppieri, who is with Epilepsy Peterborough and Area, and Thom Appleby, who is the executive director of Epilepsy Peterborough and Area.

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm pleased today to introduce John Spencer. John is the vice-president of operations at PGI Fabrene, the last remaining operation of their multinational here in Canada, North Bay's largest manufacturer and largest user of power.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: The Minister of Natural Resources probably forgot this, but I wanted to also welcome Dr. Brian Stevenson here today. We have central Ontario's university in the city of Orillia, and it's Lakehead University.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It gives me great pleasure to introduce the family of page Katelyn Hochgeschurz. Katelyn is having her page captain day today, so it's a very special day for her. In the members' gallery is her mother, Colleen Hochgeschurz, and Colleen's sister Linda Warren, who's the aunt of Katelyn, and Katelyn's grandparents Ric and Jan Latimer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further introductions? The member from Leeds–Grenville, on the last second.

Mr. Steve Clark: Thanks, Speaker. I mentioned them this morning in one of my addresses, but I'd like to

recognize the group from Epilepsy Ontario who came and met with me earlier: Peter Andrews, Pamela Murray and, last but not least, Susan Harrison, who's a constituent of mine. She's with the Epilepsy and Seizure Disorder Resource Centre in Kingston. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Premier. Premier, in March 2011 you signed a memorandum of understanding with Mayor Rob Ford to invest \$8.4 billion from the province of Ontario in subways. We in the PC caucus believe that was the right thing to do; world-class cities build subways.

Premier, are you now backing away from your signed memorandum of understanding to build subways with Mayor Rob Ford here in Toronto?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this issue. It's very important to all of us, not just those residing in the Toronto area but to all of Ontario, that Toronto work well for the benefit of not just this community, but all Ontarians.

My colleague references a memorandum that I entered into with Mayor Ford, which is true; we did. But there is a specific provision in that agreement that stipulates that the mayor must seek the approval of the council. This is a matter of respect for the expressed will of the municipal council.

So we're looking forward to continuing to work with the council. We are determined to invest in better public transit, as I say, not just for the benefit of people living in this community, but for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier has been backing away from what we think is the right thing: an investment in subways here in Toronto. In 2008, the \$8.4 billion had been set aside. We have a major gridlock problem here in Toronto and the GTA, among the worst in North America.

Premier, you lack a jobs plan. If you want to attract jobs and invest in the city of Toronto, if you want to see a world-class city building subways, we should invest in subways, not tearing up existing streets and taking away lanes permanently. Premier, any good jobs plan will involve a subway investment—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I'm going to remind the members on the government side that, quite often, what we were having was a question placed without interruption. I'd like to continue that trend and remind members of the opposition that when the answer—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Since all members are making comments, I will take the time to restate what I was saying without interruption, please.

Up until recently, the members on the government side have been relatively quiet while questions are being put. I'd like that to continue. On the government side, when the question is put, I would like quiet for the answer. All members need to hear the question and the answer.

Premier?

1040

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's hard to keep up with my honourable colleague's position with respect to subways. There was a time when he wanted to bury subways, and now he wants to give life to subways, so it's hard to keep up with where they stand on subways.

I think our shared responsibility at all times is to respect the expressed will of our municipal councils. The council has spoken on this matter. We think we are getting very close to a decided position. We look forward to working with the council in that regard.

My honourable colleague is late to the party but he is welcome nonetheless. We are strong champions of public transit. We have investments that we're making in this community, in Kitchener–Waterloo and in Ottawa. We want to expand GO Transit throughout much of southern Ontario.

I welcome my honourable colleague's support for the first time for—

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, here's the reality of this situation. This is \$8.4 billion that has been allocated since 2008 flowing through the province of Ontario—100% provincial dollars. It flows through Metrolinx, an agency of the province of Ontario. Clearly, the province has a very important role to play here to make the right decision: to invest in subways, to build underground, not rip up existing streets.

Premier, I don't think you standing on the sidelines is good enough. You standing outside of this is not leadership. If you truly want to break gridlock and attract investment and create jobs, you invest in subways. Will you do the right thing and direct Metrolinx to work with the city to invest in subways in the province of Ontario, not tearing up more and more—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, we on this side of the House happen to believe that local democracy is pretty important. So unlike the party opposite when they were in government—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Peterborough, come to order. Minister of Transportation, come to order.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Unlike the party opposite when they were in government, we are not forcing

municipalities into amalgamations that they don't want. We are not downloading new responsibilities. In fact, we're uploading; we're reversing the damage that they put in place.

I ask my honourable colleague, what other considered positions of municipalities across the province of Ontario is he now prepared to disregard and substitute his own personal discretion? I just don't think that is the way to run a railroad. I don't think it's the way to run a provincial government. I think what we have to do is respect local—

Interjections.

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

New question.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: We in the PC caucus believe world-class cities build subways. It's the right thing to do. It will help bring jobs and investment to the province of Ontario.

Premier, just to make sure the record is clear, you did force Innisfil into Barrie. You forced the amalgamation base of Innisfil into Barrie without compensation. When you announced the expansion of the subway network into Vaughan, you didn't go through this process; you made the right decision to extend it into Vaughan. We think the right decision today is for the Eglinton crosstown route underground, not tearing up streets.

I think the mayor was very clear in the most recent election that he was going to stop the gravy train and he was going to build subways. He had vast support across the city. It's time for some leadership on this issue, Premier. Will you invest in subways and help—

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I think the Leader of the Opposition should know that many of the transit systems in major world-class cities have hybrid systems. They have subways, buses and light rail. Let me just review some of the world-class cities that have subways and LRT: These include Boston, Paris, Geneva, Sydney, Calgary, Edmonton, Jerusalem, London, Houston, Berlin, Dublin, Tokyo, Vienna, Brussels, Prague, Bordeaux, Amsterdam, Oslo, Barcelona, Stockholm, Edinburgh, Ottawa, Baltimore, San Francisco and Adelaide.

And you know something? Toronto is a world-class city. Toronto has a hybrid system, and this is the right decision to make.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Hold on a second here: Now you're saying this is the right decision to be made. This has been a change in position, I say to the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure. Now you're saying it's the right thing to rip up city streets, to take away lanes per-

manently on Finch, on Eglinton, on Sheppard. That's what the minister has said.

So, clearly, if you think that that's the right decision, you'd better tell the Premier, because the Premier seems to say he has no opinion on this.

We have an opinion. We're clear. We believe you should invest in subways. We live in Canada. You should build it underground to break gridlock, and it's what commuters prefer. Minister, your own Metrolinx chairman, Bruce McCuaig, said on February 6, 2012, in the National Post that the subway version of the Eglinton crosstown delivered better results.

We think it's the right thing to do. You want to tear up city streets. I ask you to reconsider: Will you support the right thing and build underground, not—

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker—

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, we believe in the democratic process. We respect municipalities.

I'm going to choose my words very carefully: In 22 years as an elected official, the resolution of the Leader of the Opposition is the most intellectually shallow, uninformed and politically opportunistic I have ever seen. He asks us to respect the memorandum of understanding. The memorandum of understanding was signed by the mayor. The mayor knowingly put a condition in respecting city council, by making the agreement conditional on city council approval. So the mayor is showing disrespect for his own agreement that he negotiated and signed.

We are showing respect to the city council and we are showing respect for the memorandum of understanding that we signed with the mayor.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, the minister talks about respecting democracy. Mayor Ford ran in a race of 40 candidates and he said two things: He said he would stop the gravy train and he said he'd build subways. He received 47% of the vote on that in a 40-field race. So for the minister to say that that position is intellectually shallow is an insult to the voters in the city of Toronto who endorsed this plan.

Clearly, Minister, the right thing to do for convenience for travellers, to attract investment to the city, to attract more jobs and to break gridlock is to build subways; to build underground. This is a time for provincial leadership. It flows from the province of Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's a provincial agency. Will you do the right thing to help create jobs in Toronto and our province and endorse the plan supported by—

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

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Speaker, we support local government. We support local government by being fiscally responsible, by supporting—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I absolutely want to know what you guys had for breakfast.

I have asked all sides and all members to tone it down a little, and I'm asking one more time. I will tell you, to make it perfectly clear: When I name someone, it's as a result of one and only one warning. That's all I do, and I think you know that.

I'm asking you: I'd like to hear, as do most members, and I don't like it when somebody's answering and then someone on the same side is heckling or someone is asking a question and someone on the same side is shooting comments. At least let the questions get out.

1050

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I don't need the reminder.

Carry on.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker, our Toronto Liberal caucus advocated for, and was able to obtain, a commitment of \$8.4 billion for the transit users in the city of Toronto. That's a tremendous commitment to local government.

Something the Leader of the Opposition likes to gloss over, having taken fiscal responsibility in his own mind, is that building entirely underground transit on Sheppard, Eglinton and Finch would cost more than \$15 billion, at least \$7 billion more than the \$8.4 billion that we have on the table. Will the Leader of the Opposition—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean–Carleton, come to order.

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: —support additional taxes to pay for the subway that he is now saying he wants—

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

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. In February 2011—

Interjection.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: —the government signed a contract with Silicon Knights in St. Catharines to the tune of \$2.5 million. They promised to create 90 jobs and sustain a further 100 jobs. Instead, they laid off 45 employees. Last November, the Premier told this Legislature that one instalment of provincial money had been provided to the company.

Exactly how much money has Silicon Knights received to date, and have further instalments since been made?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation.

Hon. Brad Duguid: As is becoming a pattern with NDP questions, they continue to ask questions about investments that have been made, expecting, Mr. Speaker, that perhaps we shouldn't be working with businesses across this province, we shouldn't be working to attract foreign direct investment, that we should be ignoring that responsibility to create jobs and promote economic growth.

Mr. Speaker, we've been working very closely with Silicon Knights. It actually is a very fascinating company, a company with great potential. We'll continue to work very closely with them. They're in a field, Mr. Speaker, that's a challenging field, that does have ups and downs. We're willing to continue to work with them. We'll ensure that anything that would be invested in that company—and nothing has been yet, but anything that would be invested—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the government has censored the contract that we obtained through freedom of information. It's also refusing to release the jobs targets for the support of the multi-billion dollar hedge fund, Apex funds. In fact, the copy of the Silicon Knights contract that we obtained contained one appendix, consisting of only 26 censored pages.

Don't the people of Ontario have a right to know how their money is being spent and whether companies that are getting public money are meeting their job creation targets?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition brought up the Apex application or the Apex grant yesterday. Let me talk about that a little bit. This is a \$350,000 contribution over five years. Mr. Speaker, this just was approved in November, so this is something that's over five years. Again, no money has flowed to Apex yet. They will be creating 50 jobs, but they'll be investing \$17 million in our economy. That's a pretty darned good leverage rate for the \$350,000 that we're investing, and they're investing it in our financial institutions sector, a sector we are a global leader in. This is creating jobs in the financial services sector. It's important—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, I have to say that initially we were told there were going to be 90 jobs created, and now the minister says there's going to be 50 jobs created. I guess they really don't know whether there are going to be any jobs created whatsoever.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member from Durham, come to order.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: You know, the government did censor our contracts; they're not giving us the information. I think it's pretty clear that what we need in Ontario is a much more targeted approach to job creation. There are far too many examples where companies that

are taking the public's money are firing rather than hiring here in Ontario.

Can Ontario families expect anything at all from this government? Can they expect jobs to actually be created from their financial support? Or do we see more examples of things like Silicon Knights, where good money seems to be going after bad?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The strategic jobs and investment fund has invested \$206 million in Ontario businesses. It has leveraged \$2.8 billion of investments from the private sector. It has supported or created 5,400 jobs. I think that's good for Ontario's economy. I think that's good for Ontario workers.

I want to thank the NDP for supporting the southwest Ontario development fund yesterday. I want to thank them for supporting the eastern Ontario development fund. But, Mr. Speaker, if they support those funds, why would they not be supporting the strategic jobs and investment fund that's bringing foreign direct investment into—

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

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. A targeted approach to job creation means rewarding companies that actually create jobs that will last in Ontario. Unfortunately for families in Niagara, Silicon Knights isn't the only example of a company that has taken public money and cut jobs. Last month, St. Catharines-based New Food Classics took a government grant of \$1 million and then closed up shop. Why is public money going to companies that are laying people off in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Economic Development and Innovation.

Hon. Brad Duguid: As I've said many times, there are accountability mechanisms within all of these grants that are forwarded, and indeed, Mr. Speaker, we take those accountability mechanisms very seriously. But when you look at the amount of grants that go out, our economic development funds have leveraged \$8.6 billion of private sector investment in our economy. Imagine where our economy would be without that \$8.6 billion. That's created 12,000 new jobs in Ontario and protected 19,300 jobs.

Where we may be able to agree with the leader of the third party is that we feel we need to do something that the Drummond report recommended: We need to consolidate some of these programs. We need to look at a one-window approach. We've been very clear that that's the direction we plan to go in. Mr. Speaker, we're looking forward to doing that, and I welcome the support of the leader of the third party in accomplishing that.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Families in Niagara, in London, in Toronto, in Thunder Bay are all concerned

about jobs. Not only are there nearly 600,000 people without a job in this province, but a recent poll found that more than one quarter of Ontarians are worried that somebody in their family is going to lose their job. Instead of a jobs plan, we are seeing example after example of companies taking public money and closing up shop. Isn't it time for tax measures in this province that really reward the job creators?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, let me just use a few examples of companies that have worked with us, partnered with us to create jobs:

—in the riding of Carleton–Mississippi Mills, Ciena Canada: 353 new jobs, supporting 967 million jobs; that's with a grant from the province of \$25 million;

—the General Electric Smart Grid: We're providing \$7.9 million, and the number of jobs being created is 146; that's in the riding of Mississauga–Streetsville;

—Huawei Technologies Canada: They're announcing a \$6.5-million investment, with 164 jobs in all being created; again, that's in the riding of Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, come to order, please.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I could go on and on and on, Mr. Speaker.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I just asked for order, member.

Hon. Brad Duguid: On this side of the House, we're concerned. We're determined to continue to create jobs. We'll continue to partner with companies and make smart investments—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There's an unemployment rate of 9% and 25,000 people without a job in the city of London. Windsor's unemployment rate is nearly 11%, and 15,000 people can't find work in Oshawa. For families in these communities, stories of companies packing up after taking public money leave them shaking their head in absolute disbelief. Will families soon see a job creation program that actually works for them, or is it going to be more of the same in Ontario?

1100

Hon. Brad Duguid: This government is going to continue to invest in our people. We're going to continue to ensure that we have the best-trained workforce in the world.

It's not by accident that we're the second most desirable destination for foreign direct investment. That's not by accident. That's because we've put in place the fundamentals to build a strong economy, the strongest workforce in the world, one of the most competitive tax environments in the world, investments in infrastructure and a commitment to an agenda on innovation. All of these things combined helped us create 121,000 net new jobs last year in the province of Ontario. All of those

things combined helped us ensure that we created over 300,000 net new jobs since the recession.

We're going to keep creating jobs. We're going to keep moving forward—

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

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health: Yesterday, the Minister of Health admitted that she knew nothing about an international directive that issued warnings about the structural integrity of the 10 AW139 helicopters in service at Ornge. Today, I want to ask the minister if she is aware that an Ornge-contracted PC-12 medivac Pilatus fixed-wing aircraft crash-landed at the Timmins Airport on January 13 of this year. The reason: Its single engine failed.

What does the minister know about this incident? And can she tell us what she thinks about the decision by Ornge to purchase 10 Pilatus fixed-wing, single-engine aircraft to serve in our air ambulance service?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, what I do know is that the member has made various allegations in this House and outside this House. We always follow up to ensure that whatever steps can be taken have been taken. Most often, those allegations turn out to be completely unfounded, as was the allegation the member opposite made yesterday.

We have put in place very strong leadership at Ornge, and I thought it might be helpful to actually inform the people who are concerned about this issue about the calibre of people who are now in charge at Ornge. Ian Delaney, who is the chair of the corporate governance committee and chair of the board, is the chairman of Sherritt International Corp. and he served as president and chief executive officer. He has also served in executive positions at Viridian, the Horsham Corp., Merrill Lynch Canada Inc. over the past—

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

Mr. Frank Klees: The allegations I made yesterday were confirmed by people at Ornge. It shows what the minister knows about this.

Once again, we have to marvel at how much the minister can be kept out of the loop about what's going on both at Ornge and in her ministry. Once again, we have to question the decision of the leadership at Ornge for making the decision to purchase those single-engine aircraft. No other jurisdiction in this country uses single-engine aircraft for their air ambulance services. BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Quebec and Newfoundland all use twin-engine aircraft. When the minister and her cabinet colleagues travel, they use twin-engine aircraft.

I've been asked by the pilots and the paramedics of our front-line service to ask the minister if she would venture a guess as to why two engines would be better than one?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I think it's important that the people of this province understand that the plane that the member opposite refers to—he tried to leave the impression it was an Ornge aircraft. It was not an Ornge aircraft.

However, let me talk some more about the people who are now in leadership positions at Ornge. Charles Harnick is a member of the corporate governance committee, human resources and compensation committee and the audit committee of the board. Charles Harnick, Q.C. is a founding principal of Counsel Public Affairs Inc. He's a mediator and arbitrator on the panel of Yorkstreet Dispute Resolution Group. He served as Attorney General of the province of Ontario and minister of native affairs from 1995-99 and as MPP for Willowdale. He was awarded the law society medal in 2005 and sits as—

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

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre.

Premier, I have been asking questions about Ornge for quite a few weeks now, but unfortunately many of these questions remain unanswered. In order to move on, in order to rebuild trust in our air ambulance system, we need to know who knew what, when.

My question is simple, Mr. Speaker: When did the Premier learn that at least three employees in his office, including his principal secretary, were aware of Ornge for-profit schemes and ventures?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's on the public record that there was a meeting in January with Ornge and members of my staff and my ministry that reviewed some of the changes that were being made at Ornge on the corporate side.

Unfortunately, we did not have the tools we needed to prevent that from happening; this work was under way.

I will be introducing new legislation very shortly that will require the minister to approve any changes that could have prevented what we have seen.

The OPP is investigating the financial irregularities. The Auditor General is releasing his report. I've asked them to release that as quickly as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. My question was not to the Minister of Health, my question was to the Premier, so back to the Premier.

In January 2011, we all know that a 35-page briefing note was given to the Premier's office, including Jamison Steeve, the Premier's right-hand man. It detailed a complex web of for-profit companies connected to Ornge and

its executives. It referred to extra pay for some of its executives, including Dr. Mazza.

When was the Premier made aware that these schemes were going on, and why the delay before action?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, there was no delay in action. We were aware that there was a complex web of corporations that was being created. We received assurances from Ornge that there was no intermingling of public funds and private funds. We attempted to get answers to questions to verify that assertion by Ornge. We failed to get those answers. They did not provide us with the information we needed, which is exactly why a few months later, we took the action we did: We sent in a forensic audit team; we replaced the CEO; we replaced the entire board of directors. This matter is now with the OPP.

WOMEN'S ISSUES

Ms. Dipika Damerla: My question today is for the minister responsible for women's issues.

As we all know, this is International Women's Week. As a matter of fact, International Women's Day has now been observed for 100 years.

As we all know, the 1900s were a time of great change in the status of women because that's when women began to agitate and advocate for equal rights. Since then, International Women's Day has gained broad acceptance across the developing world and the developed world. As a matter of fact, it is an official holiday in many countries such as: Armenia, Burkina Faso, Cambodia, Cuba, Georgia, Eritrea and Zambia.

This week, I believe, is a recognition of how far women have come but also a time to reflect as to how much further we still have to go. For instance, women still experience much higher rates of poverty.

Mr. Speaker, can the minister tell this House what the government is doing to improve the economic status of women in Ontario?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Thank you very much, Speaker, and I want to thank the member for Mississauga East-Cooksville for raising this important issue and bringing the importance of International Women's Day and International Women's Week to the floor of this Legislature.

Issues surrounding the economic independence of women are very complex, and that's why I'm so proud to have been part of a government, to be part of a government, that deals with these issues in a cross-ministerial fashion.

There's excellent work being done by the Ontario Women's Directorate with respect to ensuring that women have programs for IT training, for skilled trades and technical programs. Whether it's at Mohawk College in Hamilton, Conestoga College in Waterloo or Collège Boréal in Timmins, women are receiving the skills and training that they need to lift themselves and their families into a better future, and that's something that everyone in this Legislature should—

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

1110

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Minister, there are challenges around women in the core working age group, from 25 to 44, and participating in the workforce, something I'm sure some women in this Legislature might be able to relate to. Women also remain significantly under-represented in leadership positions in the private sector. For instance, men are more than twice as likely as women to hold senior management positions. This hasn't changed in almost 20 years. Men are also one and a half times more likely to have positions in middle management.

Many of the women are not working because of the high costs of child care. Speaker, will the minister tell us what this government is doing to increase access to child care?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to be part of a government that invested \$63.5 million per year to permanently fill the child care funding gap left by the federal government. Through the investments we've created, nearly 43,000 more children are receiving fee subsidies each year. We've created 22,000 new licensed child care spaces. We've increased investments in child care over the past eight years by 46%, and that's in addition to the investments in all-day kindergarten: \$1.5 billion at full investment, Speaker.

We know that there continues to be work to do with respect to modernizing child care, but I can tell you that we are proud of the record of this government. We stepped in when government stepped away, and we did not see allies in the fight for child care.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health: Speaker, the minister continues to refer to the leadership team that is now in charge at Ornge and expresses great confidence in their ability. The truth is that there is a new volunteer board and a CEO who has no experience in air ambulance. However, we also know that the two individuals who are in control of the day-to-day operations at Ornge are Mr. Rick Potter and Mr. Steve Farquhar. Not only were these two individuals intimately involved in the helicopter purchase that's now under criminal investigation, they were involved in the decisions that resulted in operational decisions that put patients and crews at risk.

I ask the minister this: Why has she embraced Mr. Potter and Mr. Farquhar as key members of the so-called new leadership team at Ornge? Knowing their role in the past, why has she endorsed those two individuals?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I have complete confidence in the new board of directors at Ornge, and there was a time when the member from Newmarket-Aurora also had confidence in that team.

Let me introduce the people of Ontario to yet another member of this new board of directors: Barry McLellan.

He is the chair of the medical oversight committee at Ornge and a member of the corporate governance committee. He's the president and CEO of Sunnybrook Hospital. Prior to this position, Dr. McLellan was the chief coroner for Ontario. He's a professor in the department of surgery at the University of Toronto. He's a graduate of the University of Toronto, with a medical doctorate, in 1981. He subsequently trained in emergency medicine, receiving a fellowship in 1985. He was the director of the trauma program and vice-president of specialty services at Sunnybrook and was also the director of the—

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

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, anyone watching the proceedings here today will know that a board of directors has nothing to do with the day-to-day operations of an organization.

The minister's credibility is wearing thin. She has publicly denounced Mr. Potter for falsifying his credentials. When asked what she would do if a member of her own staff resorted to the kind of behaviour that Mr. Potter demonstrated, she said, "I would fire him." She's heard repeatedly that Mr. Potter and Mr. Farquhar were at the centre of decisions that put patients and crews at risk, and yet the minister continues to herald them as key members of her leadership team.

There's nothing new at Ornge. The same people are in charge. Why does the minister refuse to see that and continue to endorse people who quite frankly have the credibility—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have complete confidence in the new board at Ornge. I tell you, I have a lot more confidence in them than I do in the member from Newmarket-Aurora.

Let me introduce another member of the board, Patrice Merrin. Patrice is the chair of the human resources and compensation committee. She's a member of the corporate governance committee and medical oversight committee. She's the chairman of the board of CML Healthcare Inc., a leading provider of medical laboratory testing services in Ontario and the largest provider of diagnostic imaging in Canada. She's a former president and CEO of Luscar Canada, Canada's largest thermal coal producer. She's a director of the Climate Change and Emissions Management Corp. and is a former director of the NB Power Group. She has served on many not-for-profit boards, including as a trustee of her alma mater, Queen's University.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, Ontario's auto insurance companies—

Interjection: To whom?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: My apologies, Mr. Speaker. This question is to the Minister of Finance.

Ontario's auto insurance companies are reporting huge profits, in fact, while accident victims are suffering due to government cutbacks in 2010. For example, Co-operators reported profits of \$150.3 million in 2011, up 100% from the year before. Co-operators explained, "Significant improvements year over year can be attributed to favourable claims experience in the Ontario automobile insurance portfolio."

Will the minister admit that slashing auto insurance coverage benefits big insurance companies and not drivers and accident victims?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, Ontario's coverage is as robust as in every other province in the country. Now, the member opposite doesn't want to acknowledge that insurance rates have come down considerably, doesn't want to acknowledge his own party's checkered history on these issues.

I think you have to listen carefully. They spoke this way prior to becoming a government, Mr. Speaker. They said that public auto insurance was the way to go. Then, lo and behold, they became government, and they rejected public auto insurance.

Our record is different. Our record is a record of bringing down insurance premiums. Our record is making auto insurance more accessible to people. It's a record of building a better insurance system for all Ontarians that's saving all Ontarians money each and every day of the year.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Through you, Mr. Speaker, again to the Minister of Finance: Let's talk about the Minister of Finance's and Ontario's track record. In December, I raised the fact that insurance companies are basing their premiums not on drivers' records but on where they live and what neighbourhood they live in in Ontario. The same driver with the same age, gender, marital status, driving record and car model will pay over 150% more simply based on where they live in Ontario. That's simply unfair.

When will this minister put an end to this practice so that people's premiums are based on their driving record, not based on where they live and what neighbourhood they come from?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, assessment procedures are the same in virtually every jurisdiction.

What the member opposite doesn't recall is that when his party was in power, insurance premiums went up almost 27%, as opposed to ours, which have been at or below the rate of inflation over eight years.

My most recent package of reforms gives people more choice. Choice is important. For instance, the type of car you drive is important. If you drove a Chrysler that was made in Windsor or Brampton, you'd probably get a lower rate than if you drove an expensive sports car like a BMW. I think that kind of choice, Mr. Speaker, is extremely important to consumers. We're seeing rates coming down day in and day out.

I welcome the member's further questioning. I can assure him that under this government, insurance rates—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock, please. I point out that I stopped the clock—a little unorthodox, but the Speaker does have a little bit of leeway in this.

As invited guests of mine, in the Speaker's gallery today we have His Worship Rev. Mark Curtis. And the dad of all dads, Walter Gretzky, is with us—

1120

Mr. John Yakabuski: Is he taking over Joe Peters's club?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): He's my other brother.

I thank you for your indulgence and move to a new question. We'll start the clock.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. David Zimmer: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I'm hearing from my constituents up in Willowdale, especially the seniors and their children. They're getting anxious about long-term care. The seniors expect and, indeed, their children expect that when the seniors need it, they'll get it. Their clear sense is that they've earned it over the years, and they're entitled to it.

I understand and I realize that we've made some great progress in long-term care in recent years, but those seniors and their parents in Willowdale still want to hear and know that we're going to guarantee long-term-care availability for them when they need it, that we're committed to long-term care.

Minister, what are you doing to assure seniors and their families that you're committed to long-term care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the wonderful member from Willowdale for this thoughtful question. I'm very happy to take this opportunity to talk about what we've done for residents in long-term care.

We've made significant progress in creating new beds and improving services and care in long-term care. We've opened 9,100 new beds across the province, and we've redeveloped thousands more. We've increased funding—because funding does matter when it comes to long-term care—by almost 80%. We spend \$3.76 billion each year on long-term care.

We will continue to invest in long-term care, but our healthy change action plan is shifting our focus to provide more supports in the community. We'll be creating more capacity in homes and in the community, because that's where people want to be for as long as they possibly—

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

Mr. David Zimmer: Minister, here's what triggered the concerns up in Willowdale from seniors and their children. There have been a number of recent reports, particularly this last fall, that brought really significant attention to some of the long-term-care issues and raised

a whole lot of concerns about the safety of seniors in the homes. The reports dealt with things that no one ever expected to hear about and no one wants to hear about and, indeed, should never happen in Ontario or anywhere.

Since these reports have come to light, there's been this new anxiety about the future of long-term care and our government's commitment to it. Minister, what are you doing to deal with the issues that raised these concerns? And how are we going to assure the seniors that we've dealt with the issues so they are confident in our long-term-care prospects?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We all have very big expectations of long-term-care homes. After all, they have the responsibility to care for the most vulnerable people in our health care system, to provide them with care and to treat them with respect and with dignity.

The reports that the member refers to demonstrated that we must continue to do better, and that's why I called together representatives from the parents' associations, the residents and the long-term-care providers, and they have now launched a task force. That work is under way, focusing on what we need to do to further protect the residents in long-term care. This task force is open to the public for comment. The task force website is longtermcaretaskforce.ca. I would encourage anyone who wants to contribute to this work to take the time to do that.

They will be reporting back by the end of April. That report will be made public. We all have a shared—

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

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Health. On October 25, 2011, the emergency health services branch of the ministry was notified that Ornge is violating the Ambulance Act.

Ron Smith, director of transportation for the union representing paramedics, wrote your ministry and called for an investigation into understaffing at Ornge. Mr. Smith said, "The actions of Ornge allow for potential harm and injury to both patient and paramedics. We feel that this is a violation of the Ambulance Act, land ambulance certification standards, and basic and advanced life support patient care standards."

Can the minister confirm she is aware of this allegation that patients and paramedics are being put at risk, and will she inform us about the outcome of the investigation?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite. The ministry has a very robust process. They follow up on absolutely every complaint that comes to them. They do it in a thorough way, and they do not close the file until they are satisfied that the appropriate steps have been taken.

But we do think there's more we can do. That is why, under the new legislation and the new performance

agreement, we will actually be putting in place quality improvement performance measures, just like we have done in our hospitals. We know that if we measure quality, we can improve quality. So we look forward to improving even further the quality of care that is provided at Ornge.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Again to the minister, because the minister did not respond to the question. I repeat: The date of the request was made on October 25, 2011, not all that long ago. It was under your watch. It was for an investigation to be made by your ministry, not Ornge, and I quote again from the letter: "We believe (this) to be a violation of the Ambulance Act and request that your ministry investigate these allegations and take action as necessary to stop this practice."

Minister, I ask you today: Are you aware of the many, many issues within your ministry and the concerns at Ornge, and will you now acknowledge, since obviously you've not indicated your awareness of them, that it's time for a select committee to be set up in order that we can get to the bottom of it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Part of the responsibility of the emergency health services branch of our ministry is investigating complaints that come from air ambulance but also from land ambulance. They do their work in a very diligent and systematic way. I can tell you that the number of investigations that my ministry undertakes has been fairly consistent over the past several years. But I want to make it very clear that every incident that is reported is investigated. It's important that we learn from problems, that we learn from mistakes, that we continue to improve the quality of care.

I am very much aware of the work of the branch, of this particular unit that does investigations, and I can assure you they are very, very diligent in their work.

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. Last year, the government changed the way low- and modest-income people received their income tax refunds. You made the change without consultation with the people who were affected, and they had literally no idea of your change of regulation.

Robin Smith, a working mother of two, wrote to me last week. She was going to use her tax refund to put a down payment on a car so she could take her children camping or to visit relatives.

Will this government work with Ontarians who choose to have their refunds paid as a lump sum and give them the choice by simply changing the regulation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite is absolutely correct. It wasn't just income tax refunds; in fact, it was tax credits. We made the deliberate choice to flow money throughout the year, so every month people of more modest means will get their cash flow rather than have the province sit on it. So, yesterday, I indicated I

will be bringing forward a regulatory change to give people choice.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

1130

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you very much to the Minister of Finance for agreeing to do that.

The question, though, still remains: Why did the government choose to pass this regulation in secret, and why did they withhold this from the people who were affected? Why did they have to find out when they were expecting their income tax?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: There was overwhelming advice to do this, Mr. Speaker. Again, when you look at the sales tax credits that people get, with now the Ontario Trillium benefit, people have cash flow every month. This is designed to help people as they deal with their monthly expenses.

Interjection.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: A member opposite reminds me it is, in fact, their money, Mr. Speaker. We didn't think it was appropriate to continue to hold on to that money. I've heard from others since we introduced this benefit—and remember, Mr. Speaker, most of the tax credits contained in that were passed by this government and voted against by the Conservatives. That's energy and property tax credits for seniors, that's a whole range of credits.

This is all about making sure people, particularly of more modest means, have income flow. But yes, we have announced that we will be giving them choice.

ENERGY POLICIES

Ms. Helena Jaczek: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, just last week, it was made public that Environment Canada is exploring the possibility of reducing coal use in Canada. As a physician, I know there are serious health concerns, but there are also economic costs associated with burning dirty coal. I'm pleased to see that the rest of Canada may be following Ontario's lead by phasing out dirty coal-fired generation and replacing this source of power with cleaner sources like wind and solar.

Minister, can you please share with the House the economic impacts of getting out of this dirty form of electricity?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member from Oak Ridges–Markham, as a former medical officer of health and a physician, has rightly identified a very important fact here. Getting out of coal is not only the right thing to do for the environment but, most importantly, it's the right thing to do for our health. When we talk about the \$4 billion a year it costs Ontario taxpayers in their health system by burning dirty coal, it's important to know what is behind that \$4 billion.

Getting out of coal will mean 668 or more fewer premature deaths every year. It will mean over 900 fewer hospital admissions. It means over 330,000 fewer illnesses. This is an incredible human cost that's being

avoided, a cost that is borne not only by those people affected and their families, but by the taxpayers. That's why getting out of coal is the right thing to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Thank you, Minister. My constituents in Oak Ridges–Markham and all Ontarians expect clean air, but they also need a strong and successful economy. We need to do everything we can to ensure they have good-paying jobs in stable industries, and that is why it's so important to ensure that Ontario's clean energy economy remains a global leader and continues to attract jobs and investment.

Despite the official opposition's constant call to end green energy in Ontario, companies continue to succeed and create jobs. Minister, can you please tell us what the future of our clean energy economy looks like?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Once again, the member is absolutely right. We're getting out of coal in a way that not only brings on clean, green energy, but helps create an economy here in the province of Ontario that is green.

We have solar manufacturers from Welland, throughout the north GTA part of Toronto into the east. We have wind manufacturers who are not only located in Tillsonburg, but down in Windsor. We have the related electricians and the plumbers. But we're building on that. There are already 20,000 jobs directly related to green energy; we're on the route to 50,000. That's 50,000 families who are benefiting from our investments in clean energy in Ontario.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Victor Fedeli: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Good morning, Minister.

Minister, there are two words on every employer's energy bill that were not there a couple of years ago: global adjustment. This new charge is to pay for your solar and wind subsidies.

In the first year, Ontario employers paid \$700 million in global adjustment. The Auditor General told us they will pay \$8 billion in global adjustment in 2014.

Minister, your failed energy plan is bankrupting Ontario businesses, costing us thousands of jobs. How many more families have to suffer before you cancel the FIT subsidies?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Speaker, we know where we started in 2003. We started with diesel generators on the street corner, we started with coal production at 25%, and we started with a transmission system that had been left alone for years.

Ontario families and businesses need reliable power, and Ontario families and businesses have been doing a lot of work the last eight years: doing work that should have been done under the previous government.

We also recognize, as the previous question indicated, that Ontario families and businesses were paying the real cost: the real cost of burning that coal, \$4 billion, and all the thousands of illnesses that hurt productivity and hurt families. We refuse to pay the health costs. We refuse to

have an unreliable system. We're investing in a clean, reliable, jobs-producing system in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Speaker, earlier I introduced John Spencer in the gallery, from North Bay. Fabrene is the multinational's last remaining operation here in Canada. Their global adjustment bill last year, that new line item on their bill, was \$1 million. So instead of hiring 15 new people, they used that money to pay for the Liberal failed energy plan.

Minister, if you can't answer me about global adjustment, will you look John Spencer in the eye and tell him why he should pay you a million dollars in global adjustment next year?

Interjections.

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

Minister?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Thank you very much, Speaker.

We very much believe not only in reliable but in affordable power that is good for the people of Ontario and good for our industry. That is why we took some steps just within the last year with respect to the global adjustment charge in businesses that help them greatly reduce the overall cost of power. That is why we have taken additional measures for businesses to find ways to conserve through retrofits, to make sure that they can reduce the pressure on their bottom line, and that's why our overall strategy with respect to tax reductions, with respect to the harmonized tax, with respect to one collection point, with respect to the reduction of the cost of machinery and investment, the tax cost, is all to make sure that—

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

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have two people standing. I saw somebody first. The member from Parkdale–High Park for a point of order.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I call your attention to a breach of standing order 37(d) by the member from Oak Ridges–Markham: "In putting an oral question, no argument or opinion is to be offered nor any facts stated, except so far as may be necessary," etc. So I would ask for your ruling on that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for the point of order. It is indeed a point of order, but I would also suggest to you that if we stood by that particular rule, we would ask no questions in the House, and I would also suggest to you that there are other rules in the House that say that when someone is standing, there is to be no talking. And I also remind the members on the government side—and all members, for that matter—that we do try to honour the orders as they're written, and I remind members to design their questions such. Thank you for the point of order.

MINISTER'S COMMENTS

Mr. Frank Klees: My point of order is with regard to standing orders 23(h), (i) and (j), and I refer you, Speaker, to the Minister of Health's response to one of my questions today, in which the minister stated very clearly that the so-called—I quote her—"allegations" that I made yesterday were "unfounded."

According to our standing orders, a member cannot make allegations against another member. She's essentially saying that I put forward in this House an allegation that was without fact, which is not the case.

Standing order 23(i) refers to one member imputing "false or unavowed motives to another member." As I listened to the Minister of Health, clearly that's what she was doing. The reality is—the truth is, Speaker—that the allegations that I brought were factual. If, in fact, the minister has any evidence of any issue that I have brought before this House relating to Ornge or any other issue, I would ask the minister to provide that evidence rather than imputing motive to me and making allegations about my motivations in bringing these matters before the House.

I would ask you, Speaker, to take this matter up. I look forward to hearing from you in terms of the appropriateness of the minister's comments relative to the questions I have put to her.

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

I had listened carefully and I did not hear the reference to the standing orders that the member said, but I would also suggest to you that if one says one thing and one says the other thing, that doesn't necessarily translate into impugning one's motive.

I would also suggest to you that I would use the same comment I said with the previous order, and that is to please ask all members to guard themselves against that and make sure you make yourself familiar with the standing orders, particularly those three that often get quoted, to ensure that members are making their discussions based on the questions of the day, and making sure that the answers of the day try to answer the questions. Thank you.

Mr. Jim Wilson: On the same point.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On the same point of order, the member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: On behalf of our caucus and the honourable member from Newmarket–Aurora, we understand, perhaps, that you didn't hear the minister's comments. They were quite clear in impugning motive against a colleague, and we would ask you to review Hansard and further deliberate on this matter.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As I indicated, I believe there's a disagreement between what was heard in the form of whether or not they were applying to the standing orders. I repeat myself again: I did not hear that, and I've made my ruling.

Same order? I've made my ruling. If it's a different order—

Mr. Frank Klees: No, Speaker, if I might. I respect the challenge that you've put forward to members, and that is to familiarize themselves with the standing orders. It's precisely because over the last 17 years here I have familiarized myself with those standing orders; I make every effort to respect them. What I'm concerned about is that we have yet one more circumstance here where a cabinet minister has offended those standing orders, and I am asking you—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you, member. I believe I've made it clear that I've made my ruling on this, and that will be the end of it.

There are no votes. This House stands recessed until 3 o'clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1144 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

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

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: High Park, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

They've been introduced already in part, but I just want to introduce again members from the epilepsy action group; in particular, Margaret Maye and her son Thomas, who are here, and Gary Neumann, who is, I'm sure, coming—just to thank them for all their hard work.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I apologize to the member from Parkdale—High Park. I have to start doing this. What I'm doing is putting a “P” in the front of my head, or the letter. It's working, but in yours, I apologize.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an impossible riding to forget.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EPILEPSY

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I would like to take the opportunity to acknowledge that today is Epilepsy Action Day at Queen's Park. Two extremely important organizations, Epilepsy Ontario and the Epilepsy Cure Initiative, are here to raise awareness about the need to improve standards of care and access to treatment.

I'd like to point out that, according to a recent survey, 82% of people living with epilepsy say they depend on medications to help manage seizures. Many of them have been prescribed an average of four different medications since their initial diagnosis.

Lack of seizure control severely impacts one's independence, productivity and overall quality of life. These medications play a vital role in providing epilepsy patients with the ability to live satisfying and productive lives. We need to do all we can to ensure that people with epilepsy are able to live independently, build careers and make contributions to their communities.

Unfortunately, it's difficult for them to do so without access to the necessary medications. Since 2003, only

two new drugs have been approved in Canada for epilepsy treatment. Epilepsy medication is often only available through the Ontario exceptional access program, thereby reducing accessibility. The level and standard of care that we provide to Ontarians with epilepsy must improve.

EPILEPSY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I couldn't agree more with the preceding statement, and I'll add my own.

March is Epilepsy Awareness Month, and International Epilepsy Awareness Day is on March 26. We should know that, next to headaches, it's the most common neurological disorder. In Ontario alone there are 65,000 people with epilepsy, and that is more than the number of people with multiple sclerosis, cerebral palsy, Parkinson's disease and muscular dystrophy all combined. While there are treatments for seizures, there is no known cure.

The asks of Epilepsy Action and the people here today are twofold. Number one: Ontario's employment support programs do not currently recognize the unique needs of people with epilepsy in the workforce. Despite uncontrolled seizures, many are denied ODSP support because epilepsy is not considered a “substantial” impairment. That has to change.

Number two: Ontarians who suffer from epilepsy should have universal access to quality, evidence-based comprehensive health care through the development and execution of the proposed Ontario epilepsy strategy, as suggested by the Ontario Health Technology Advisory Committee already.

We would ask of the government side that they act on these two asks—and also of the member from Kitchener—Waterloo—and that they really make this a day that we not only remember those with epilepsy but actually do something about it.

EPILEPSY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: Later today, I will table a private member's bill for the Ontario government to recognize the International Epilepsy Awareness Day of March 26 of every year here in Ontario.

March is Epilepsy Awareness Month. Over 250,000 Ontarians are directly affected by this brain disorder, and 1.2 million more people are indirectly affected.

Epilepsy is a seizure disorder brought on by sudden bursts of electrical energy in a person's brain. It can bring on seizures of all types, with the length and severity varying from person to person. While anyone of any age can develop epilepsy, it more commonly appears during the childhood and senior years.

Today, Margaret Maye, my good friend and president and founder of Epilepsy Cure Initiative, and her son, Thomas Drag, are joining us at the Legislature to meet with MPPs to raise awareness of epilepsy in Ontario. Also joining us here at Queen's Park are Rozalyn

Werner-Arcé, the executive director of Epilepsy Ontario; and Dr. Mac Burnham, also of that organization. I urge you to meet with these representatives, who are dedicated to improving the lives of individuals and families affected by epilepsy here in Ontario, and I will be asking for your support of my bill to make March 26 of every year Epilepsy Awareness Day in Ontario.

DONALD STEWART “CHIP” GORDON

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I’m rising today to pay tribute to Donald Stewart “Chip” Gordon, a long-time community activist and volunteer from my riding of Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

Whether it was setting up a community fundraiser, organizing a local Christmas dinner, offering political and government expertise, developing a doctor recruitment program or organizing the Canada Day firework celebration, Chip was always there to help.

He was named the Wallaceburg Citizen of the Year in 2009 by the Wallaceburg and District Chamber of Commerce and won the chamber’s Good Neighbour Award in 2011. Chip served as a hockey coach and was an inductee into Wallaceburg’s Sports Hall of Fame in 2006.

He served his community as a Chatham-Kent municipal councillor from 2000 until 2006 and ran for mayor of Chatham-Kent in the 2006 election. Chip worked tirelessly to promote and organize WAMBO, the Wallaceburg Antique Motor and Boat Outing, since its inception in 1989.

A devoted family man, it was a common sight to see Chip wheeling around WAMBO in a golf cart with his granddaughter. Chip Gordon was the husband of Darlene and the father of Heather and Donnie. He had three grandchildren and was a friend to everyone in the community. Along with the entire Wallaceburg community, we are so thankful for Chip’s service over the course of his lifetime.

Thank you, Chip. You will be greatly missed by the province of Ontario and the municipality of Chatham-Kent.

ROYAL CANADIAN LEGION PUBLIC SPEAKING CONTEST

Mr. Michael Mantha: The Royal Canadian Legion zone H-4 held their youth public speaking contest in Blind River last Saturday. I want to highlight a group of outstanding youth from Algoma–Manitoulin and Sault Ste. Marie who took part in this event.

After speaking to a crowd of over 150 listeners, four of the 27 participants were advanced to the district competition in Sault Ste. Marie to be held on March 31. The youngest winner, grades 1 to 3, was Evan Johnson of Sault Ste. Marie. Evan gave an amusing presentation, coincidentally, on the importance of oral presentations. Eoin Leahy of Sault Ste. Marie won grades 4 to 6 division and spoke on his fabulous trip to India. Maya

Werner from Bruce Mines won the grade 7 to 9 division for her impassioned speech on food insecurity close to home. Maya drove home the point that many people are in need of food in the Algoma–Manitoulin region and that local food banks need help throughout the year.

Perhaps the most emotional moment of the competition came during the speech by grades 10 to 12 division winner Tamara Tait of Wawa. Tamara bravely delivered a powerful speech detailing her private battle with depression and the effect that it had on her young life. Afterwards, Tamara admitted this was the first time she was able to finish her entire speech, but this was in the hope that it would help people understand what people with depression go through.

I want to thank the Royal Canadian Legion for hosting such an event, which helps develop the self-confidence of our young people. I would also like to wish Evan, Eoin, Maya and Tamara the best of luck on March 31 at the district competition.

PRIX BERNARD GRANDMAÎTRE

M. Phil McNeely: Le 23 février dernier se tenait le 12^e gala du Prix Bernard Grandmaître, organisé par l’ACFO d’Ottawa. Ce prix a pour but de mettre en lumière les réalisations professionnelles et individuelles d’une personne ainsi que son engagement social dans le domaine de la francophonie.

1510

Nommé en l’honneur de Bernard Grandmaître et créé en 1999, ce prix lui rend hommage publiquement pour son dévouement et son apport indéniable auprès de la communauté franco-ontarienne.

Je tiens donc à féliciter personnellement les gagnants de l’année 2011 :

—Laurier Jeunesse de l’année : Chanel Fournier, d’ailleurs résidante de la circonscription d’Ottawa–Orléans;

—Laurier Organisme de l’année : Espoir UMOJA Hope;

—Laurier Francophile de l’année : M^{me} Kathleen Stokely;

—Laurier Intervenant/Intervenante en éducation : M^{me} Najat Ghannou; et

—Laurier Citoyen/Citoyenne de l’année : M. Gilles Laporte.

Le récipiendaire du Prix Bernard Grandmaître est l’honorable Jean-Jacques Blais.

Alors, félicitations à tous ces gagnants et gagnantes, et merci pour leur apport à la francophonie d’Ottawa. Merci, monsieur le Président.

Le Président (L’hon. Dave Levac): Merci beaucoup.

DON LOBB

Ms. Sylvia Jones: Too often we spend a disproportionate amount of our time in this Legislature opposing and debating each other on opposing points of view, so it is therefore my pleasure to rise today to recognize the

contributions of a Caledon resident who has led a no-till movement that has recently been recognized internationally.

At the Ontario Soil and Crop Improvement Association conference Don Lobb received the L.B. Thomson Conservation Award. This is particularly significant as Don is the first farmer outside of western Canada to receive this prestigious award.

Don has been working since 1970 to adapt this farmland from conventional tillage to no-till and has shared his findings and knowledge with the industry, universities and government. He has participated in programs focusing on soil quality and crop management, and contributed to the Canada-Ontario Soil and Water Environmental Enhancement Program and environmental farm plans.

Because of his vision and hard work, farmers across Canada are benefiting from the changes in soil management and conservation tillage practices. I'm pleased that Don was acknowledged for this effort in enhancing agricultural food production. Innovative leaders like Don are an inspiration and deserve our recognition, praise and thanks. Thank you, Don.

WINDSOR-ESSEX ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CORP.

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: This past Friday, March 2, I had the pleasure of attending the Windsor-Essex Economic Development Corp.'s report card for the first year of its five-year regional economic roadmap. Collaboration and investments were the key to the success of this strategy.

Over the past year, the Windsor-Essex Economic Development Corp. has announced 1,862 new jobs, \$73 million in new investments, retained over 6,000 jobs, consulted with 1,700 small businesses and responded to 28,000 small business inquiries: clearly a success story by any standard.

The collaboration did not stop there. The region's first prosperity council, WE Prosper, a volunteer collaborative dedicated to addressing community priorities, was also established. Due to their hard work and efforts with its partners, which include our government, my community has benefited from many national and international recognitions, such as a Top Seven Intelligent Community of the Year, highlighting Windsor-Essex as a leader in broadband connectivity, knowledge workforce, innovation and marketing; the Conference Board of Canada's recognition of Windsor-Essex as the region to lead the nation's economic growth—that's right; the region hardest hit by the economic downturn in the province was ranked to be the fastest-growing metropolitan economy in Canada—and Site Selection magazine recognized Windsor-Essex was one of the top five best to invest in in 2011 and as the green tech capital.

The list of successes of my community go on, and the Windsor-Essex Economic Development Corp. can be

credited for being a critical partner in this amazing development.

SUICIDE PREVENTION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: On occasion in this chamber I have risen to talk about two topics that have hit my community: bullying and suicide. In November, a group of very well-respected and knowledgeable people came together through the Ottawa Community Suicide Prevention Network to make real change in our community and make real progress so we could have a suicide-safer city of Ottawa. I was proud to be part of that with my colleague from Ottawa Centre, Yasir Naqvi. Although we come from two very different political mindsets, we agree that suicide and suicide prevention is not a political issue; it's not partisan. So we worked together with some very great innovative thinkers from our community.

That culminated on February 8 with a symposium of over 250 people from our community—from school boards, hospitals and other service providers—to map the path forward. What we came out with was a mapping system for parents whose kids are struggling with suicidal tendencies and depression.

We also put an action plan together—and I shouldn't say "we," because Mr. Naqvi and I were just very proud to be a part of this. Those experts put that together, and they came out with five pillars. They wanted to talk about leadership, training to improve mental health literacy, suicide bereavement for those who are affected, mental health promotion, and the creation of a community action plan to be completed within a year. Speaker, we are doing that.

I know my time has been exceeded, but if the chamber would indulge me to actually name the people that were part of that I would like to do so. I'd like to say, in particular, thanks to Councillor Allan Hubley, whose son died tragically of suicide earlier this year. The Premier's assistant in Ottawa, John Fraser, was a very integral part of that as well. Two great people, George Weber and Joanne Lowe, co-chaired the suicide prevention network, and many of their staff, like Nicole Loreto and Janice Barresi, were there. Steve Madely, who is a morning voice in Ottawa from CFRA, was our moderator. Ian Manion, Peggy Austen, Cathy Curry, Alex Munter, Ann Fuller, Eva Schacherl, Ben Leikin, Raj Bhatla and Renée Ouimet were all part of bringing this community organization together and seeing results.

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

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I can tell you, Mr. Speaker, if there's one thing that I'll be proud of when my time in politics comes to an end, it will be this event.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thought it was a list.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: And I'd like to thank the Speaker—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, you'd better.

Thank you. The time for statements is over. I will now move to reports by committees—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Whip her into shape, whip.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT (CONCUSSIONS), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION (COMMOTIONS CÉRÉBRALES)

Ms. Broten moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 39, An Act to amend the Education Act with respect to concussions / *Projet de loi 39, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation en ce qui a trait aux commotions cérébrales.*

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'll make my statement during ministerial statements.

EPILEPSY AWARENESS DAY ACT, 2012

LOI DE 2012 SUR LA JOURNÉE DE SENSIBILISATION À L'ÉPILEPSIE

Ms. Jaczek moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 40, An Act to proclaim Epilepsy Awareness Day / *Projet de loi 40, Loi proclamant la Journée de sensibilisation à l'épilepsie.*

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Ms. Helena Jaczek: The intention of this bill is clearly to bring some notice to this disease, epilepsy, by recognizing it each year on March 26, in particular, to recognize the toll that it takes on individuals and their families; the importance of research and best practices; and, probably most significant of all, to address the stigma that is associated with this disease.

1520

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CONCUSSIONS COMMOTIONS CÉRÉBRALES

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I rise in the House today to discuss an issue we've heard a lot about over the past year: concussions. Concussions don't discriminate. They can derail the professional career of the best hockey

player in the world just as easily as they can derail the academic career of one of our youngest learners.

I'm proud that this government has, time and time again, shown its commitment and dedication to supporting student success and well-being, and we know that the health of our students is critical to their ability to succeed at school.

In 2009, almost 20,000 emergency hospital visits in Ontario were due to concussions, and some experts have estimated that as many as one in three high school students will sustain a concussion: experts like Dr. Charles Tator and Dr. Paul Echlin, who joined me this morning at the Legislature to talk about this important issue. We've also heard from two impressive and courageous students, Justin Rizek and Molly Tissenbaum, who told their personal stories of how concussions have affected their lives.

Mr. Speaker, only recently has research shown us that multiple concussions may be a more serious matter than what we previously thought, with the potential to cause long-term harmful damage. That is not the future that we want for young people in Ontario.

Monsieur le Président, les professionnels de la santé et les chercheurs s'inquiètent de plus en plus des effets des commotions cérébrales sur la santé, le bien-être et l'apprentissage des jeunes.

There is growing concern among health care professionals and researchers about the effect that concussions can have on young people's health, well-being and learning. Symptoms of a concussion can appear immediately or several hours after an incident, and they vary. They can be physical, causing headaches, dizziness, nausea or even loss of consciousness; cognitive, making it difficult for some people to concentrate, focus or remember; or even emotional, making it difficult for kids who have suffered from concussions to learn new skills and attend to their school work. There is no doubt that head injuries can have a huge impact on learning.

Although most children recover completely from a concussion, sometimes there are major risks and consequences for children returning to play or to learn before they have completely healed. Mr. Speaker, as a mother of two young boys and as Minister of Education, I can tell you that this is a real cause for concern. But there are actions we can take. If head injuries like concussions are identified early and enough time is given for kids to recover, we can make sure that our students succeed in school athletics and, most importantly, succeed in the classroom.

As we have learned more about concussions, we have learned that we are compelled to act. Head injuries like concussions are a serious issue, and we will treat them that way. We all have a role to play—students, parents, teachers, coaches and volunteers—to prevent and manage concussions in our kids. And there is a role for us as a government to play too.

Nous sommes déterminés à assurer la sécurité de nos enfants et à veiller à ce que chaque enfant puisse tirer parti de l'éducation de classe mondiale offerte ici en Ontario.

We're dedicated to keeping our kids safe and making sure that every kid can take advantage of the world-class education we offer here in Ontario. That is why, along with my colleagues the Ministers of Tourism, Culture and Sport and of Health and Long-Term Care, we're implementing a new strategy that will address the seriousness of concussions for students engaged in school sports and in health and physical education classes. That is why today, as part of that strategy, we are introducing legislation that, if passed, will increase public awareness of the potential severity of concussions and the need for preventing, identifying and managing them properly.

This legislation, if passed, would also require school boards to put in place policies and guidelines that are consistent with the provincial policies to be developed. For example, these policies would provide students, parents, school board employees and volunteers with information about concussion prevention, identification and management, and would address when a student suspected of having sustained a concussion should be removed from or prevented from further participating in interschool or intramural athletics or in health and physical education class. They would address when a student suspected of having sustained a concussion can return to interschool or intramural athletics, to physical health education classes or to their learning, Speaker. They'll establish clear responsibilities for those involved in interschool or intramural athletics or physical health and education classes.

As part of our strategy, we will also be looking at what tools can be provided to schools, community organizations, and provincial sport and multisport organizations to help build awareness about concussion prevention, identification and management inside and outside of schools.

We will establish a subcommittee of the Healthy Schools Working Table to provide advice on concussion prevention, identification and management in schools and examine how evidence-informed resources can be used most effectively.

We will continue to work to make Ontario schools the safest and healthiest places to learn.

Mr. Speaker, I also want to acknowledge that this legislation will build on the great work that many boards have already done, working with the Ontario Physical Health and Education Association in awareness and prevention about concussions in our schools.

La santé, le bien-être et la réussite de nos élèves sont d'une importance extrême pour nous tous. Nous voulons les aider à devenir des adultes en bonne santé.

The health, well-being and success of our students are extremely important to us all. We want to help them to grow into healthy adults and we want to do everything we can to make sure they have the best possible chance to succeed at school.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I find it incredibly poignant that today we're talking about concussions, and Canada's greatest hockey player currently was cleared to play today. Meanwhile, in our gallery today, the greatest

hockey player of all time's father is here as we debate this important issue that affects not only all of our—

Mr. John O'Toole: Walter Gretzky.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Walter Gretzky is here, ladies and gentlemen. It's incredible to have him in the chamber, because obviously we know hockey has had its fair share of concussions. We also know that many pro athletes outside of hockey—for example, in football—have also dealt with this. But that does not mean it has not been an issue that has confronted parents, because it is happening in our schools. So it is my pleasure to join this discussion today on behalf of Tim Hudak and the Ontario PC caucus.

Head injuries and concussions have dominated many headlines in recent months in North America and particularly here in Canada of late, with many pro athletes speaking out about their struggles with recovery, including, of course, mental illness as well as suicide. That, of course, is very important. That is actually a natural reason for us to want to contemplate how we can address this issue ourselves in this Legislature and talk about ways to prevent it. And when I say “ways,” it doesn't necessarily mean it needs to be legislation. However, that is what is before us and that is what we will talk about today.

So it is important, of course, that adults who are charged with the safety of children, whether that is a coach, a trainer, a doctor, a parent, a volunteer or a teacher, are able to do their best to prevent and, if necessary, identify the trauma.

Many have heard the term “concussion” over the years and, of course, I don't think many of us were fully aware of the issues. I point to the fact that in January, the Minister of State for Amateur Sport, Bal Gosal, a newly appointed minister from Ontario who serves in the federal House, estimated that 90% of severe brain injuries were preventable if parents, coaches and kids themselves knew more about the risks. So I think that as we emerge as a society to deal with this issue and we talk about it more, we'll understand it a lot better. Information provided by his department says that more than 40% of brain injuries in children and youth between the ages of 10 and 19 who are treated in emergency departments are due to sports and recreation activities. So it is relevant to this debate. Of course, I'm citing a CBC News article of January 19, 2012.

We also know that kids who sustain concussions can usually recover quite quickly, within a week or two, without lasting health problems, by following certain precautions and taking a breather from sports. As kidshealth.org suggests, a child with an undiagnosed concussion can be at risk for brain damage and even disability.

That's exactly what an Ottawa pediatrician told me earlier today when I called Dr. Judy Van Stralen about this issue. She points out that concussions can lead to long-term brain damage, behavioural issues, attention issues and learning problems. And like Judy, we just want to make sure that when we're dealing with

legislation, it is appropriate legislation. So I look forward to reviewing the bill in full detail.

I know, for example, in my own community I had a staff member, a young person, who I talked to earlier today—and she has given me permission to use her name, Alanna Fernet—who has had multiple concussions. She is a first-year university student at the University of Guelph. I am very concerned about her health and the long-term impacts of this.

1530

I know that recently in my community in Ottawa there was an assembly in December talking about the big issues of the day and talking about the fact that concussion can lead to a number of symptoms in players, including depression and, as I mentioned, in some cases, suicide.

All this to say, Speaker, that we know that interesting things have been happening in North America and throughout the world. Right here in Canada, as I mentioned, our federal government announced in January its plans to work with major sporting organizations to fund educational programs to reduce the instances of concussions. They, in their \$1.5-million injection of funding, have approved an application to allow our friends, our parents and our coaches to help assess whether or not a child has been hit with a concussion.

Mr. Speaker, just this to say that this is a first reading of the bill. I look forward to the debate on it. There are many pressing issues we have to deal with in this assembly, and children's health of course is one.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in all chambers to move along with this bill and see where it takes us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Responses?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This bill that has been presented today will oblige schools to develop guidelines for the prevention and management of concussions. As you may well be aware, Speaker, the legislation only applies to schools and not to community-based sports leagues.

Currently, there are voluntary guidelines already in place through the OPHEA to help elementary and secondary schools deal with concussion assessment and management. It's unclear to us, and I hope that it will become clear during debate, whether these guidelines will be strengthened and changed through the introduction of this legislation.

It's estimated there are some 27,000 children with acquired brain injury, or ABI, in Ontario's schools. A concussion is classified as a traumatic brain injury, and it is one of the most common forms of acquired brain injury. Close to 500,000 people in Ontario live with an acquired brain injury, yet reliable and up-to-date statistics on the rates of concussions in school- or community-based sports are hard to find. The studies that we've looked at provide only a patchwork knowledge, but it does point to a growing problem.

Traumatic brain injury is the number one killer and disabler of young Canadians under the age of 40. There are almost 18,000 emergency room visits and/or hos-

pitalizations for traumatic brain injury in Ontario every year. Speaker, those numbers alone talk about a very substantial issue that needs to be addressed.

Acquired brain injury is growing in prevalence and has a huge impact on the lives of those affected. For far too many Ontarians, the seriousness of a brain injury only becomes clear after a tragedy impacts someone that they know. We need to be aware that the bill being introduced today is only a small piece of the work that needs to be done. We need a comprehensive approach to prevention and management of concussions and other acquired brain injuries.

Note, Speaker, that when we look at other initiatives to deal with these sorts of health problems—anti-smoking campaigns, seat belt campaigns—there is a combination of education, of resources allocated, of legislation, of incentives. We need a full range of strategies, including education; training of coaches in vigilance and coaching methods to prevent concussions; funding and guidelines for equipment; rule changes in sports to limit danger, for instance limiting body-checking; and rules and cultural approaches to deal with over-aggression. We need that change in culture, away from winning at all costs, away from glorifying fighting and towards education of the serious nature of acquired brain injury.

Research published in the *Marquette Sports Law Review* talked about the current guidelines in Ontario in 2011. It said: "For the programs to be effective and to ensure that the decision made to permit a young athlete to return to play is a sound one and in the best interests of the young athlete, it is crucial that all those involved, including athletic administrators and parents, work together in a collaborative way to that end."

Speaker, we have to ask: What is going to be built into this legislation to ensure that this will happen? Will the initiative around this bill provide the resources, training and support that schools need to implement guidelines? What consequences will be imposed if schools don't follow those guidelines? How will this bill help young people and adults engaged in non-school sports? How will the bill deal with the shortage of funds for safe fields and equipment in schools?

New Democrats look forward to hearing the response to these important questions through second reading and in committee. We look forward to a full debate on this bill and hearing from all the stakeholders and Ontarians who are concerned about children and brain injury.

PETITIONS

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm so pleased to have a position here to represent my riding of Durham effectively. This is a petition that reads as follows:

"Whereas Solray Energy Corp. has given notice of its proposal for a class 3 solar power facility known as

Epsom Solar Farm to be located” in my riding “in the township of Scugog; and

“Whereas the site is on prime farmland that has been in production for many generations; and

“Whereas we consider productive farmland to be of vital importance to farm and rural communities by providing healthy, locally grown food and ensuring the sustainability of Canada’s food supply; and

“Whereas class 1 to 5 farmland and land that is zoned rural or agricultural should be protected from the current proposal and similar projects that may be considered in the future; and

“Whereas other sites of less value to agriculture”—lower classes—“are better locations for solar power developments” and, for that matter, wind;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Ontario Legislature not to allow ... industrial solar farms on prime agricultural land, and we further express our support for giving local communities, through their elected municipal councils, the power to control and approve large-scale renewable energy” projects and energy developments of all sorts.

I’m pleased to sign and support this and provide it to Mariam, one of the pages here in their last week in the Legislature.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Jonah Schein: I would like to introduce a petition today to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Toronto Transit Commission will have an estimated ridership of 503 million in 2012;

“Whereas the TTC received only \$91 million from the province of Ontario for operations in the 2010-11 fiscal year with a total TTC budget of \$1.5 billion;

“Whereas fare boxes account for 70% to 80% of total TTC costs, making it one of the highest fare-recovery ratios in North America;

“Whereas the TTC recommended another 10-cent fare increase to all riders again this year;

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

“That the province of Ontario pledge stable and long-term funding of the TTC and other municipally run transit authorities in Ontario and ensure that provincial funding be restored to 50% of the operating subsidy; and

“That transit authorities who accept that restored funding freeze or reduce their fares.”

I agree with this petition. I will affix my name to it and give it to page Patrick.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Todd Smith: The following comes from residents of Prince Edward county.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the proposed Gilead Power project in Prince Edward county is currently planned for an area that the municipality has designated for another purpose; and

“Whereas it’s the opinion of real estate experts in Prince Edward county that the installation of the Gilead industrial wind factory will negatively impact property values and the tourism sector, which is vital to the economic success of Prince Edward county; and

“Whereas other jurisdictions have recognized that it is environmentally counterproductive to put industrial wind factories in important bird areas, such as the one that exists on the south shore of Prince Edward county; and

“Whereas that recognition was also accepted by the Senate of Canada through a unanimous resolution;

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

“That the public consultation period for the EBR project..., also known as the Gilead project, be extended to April 1 to allow the community sufficient time to make clear their arguments as to the negative impact that the project will have on the people, economy and ecology of Prince Edward county.”

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

1540

HYDRO RATES

Mr. Michael Mantha: This petition is from members from Algoma–Manitoulin.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario taxpayers have been paying over millions in extra charges on their hydro bills to help retire the debt. The amount collected to date, as per the Auditor General’s report, is \$8.7 billion, but the amount owing was \$7.8 billion;

“Whereas Ontario taxpayers are asking, “Where is the money being invested?”;

“Whereas Ontario taxpayers are asking why this was not addressed at the time the debt was paid;

“Whereas electrical rates have increased with the new creation of green energy coming online to include solar and wind, refurbishment of nuclear plants and deregulation of Hydro One;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows to obtain answers to the following questions:

“How much of the debt remains?

“When will it be eliminated from Ontario taxpayers’ hydro bills?”

I agree with this petition. I will affix my signature.

EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Phil McNeely: I have a petition here from the parents and children at Avalon Public School in Ottawa–Orléans.

“To the Legislature of Ontario:

“Whereas the current enrolment of Avalon Public School is 687 students;

“Whereas the student capacity of the school is 495 students, as determined by the Ministry of Education’s own occupancy formula;

“Whereas the issue of overcrowding and lack of space makes it impossible for Avalon Public School to offer full-day kindergarten until the overcrowding issue is addressed;

“Whereas Avalon Public School is located in a high-growth community;

“Whereas the enrolment at Avalon Public School is expected to continue rising at a rate of 10% to 15% a year for the foreseeable future;

“Whereas the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board has made building a new school in Avalon a top capital priority;

“We, the undersigned, call on the province of Ontario and Ministry of Education to provide the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board with the necessary funding to build an additional school in Avalon, to open no later than September 2014.”

I agree with this petition and send it forward with Rachel.

CURRICULUM

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Education has deemed music an essential subject in elementary schools and the ministry arts curriculum states that high-quality instruction is key to student success in arts education; and

“Whereas, according to a 2010 Coalition for Music Education study, 58% of all elementary schools in Ontario are without a qualified music teacher capable of teaching the ministry curriculum; and

“Whereas, due to classroom capping and staff cuts, school boards are unable to provide this essential subject with teachers who have the expertise to ensure student success; and

“Whereas protecting music in elementary schools would ensure children benefit from the many positive aspects of this essential subject;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Education to declare music in Ontario elementary schools a protected subject, thus ensuring teachers delivering the program are familiar with the elements of music, can read and interpret music and are able to communicate in a musical way.”

I’m pleased to support this petition for my constituents. I will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Grace.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: It’s my pleasure to present this petition from the people of the northeast, and it reads as follows:

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

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

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

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

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

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: I’m very pleased today to present a petition on behalf of Ashley McQuade, who lives on Walnut Street in the beautiful community of Omemee, Ontario.

A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

“Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada;

“Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bioartificial kidney;

“We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bioartificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States” of America.

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Shirley.

CHRONIC JOINT PAIN

Mr. Victor Fedeli: We have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas Synvisc (Hylan G-F 20) is a trademarked injected medication for the treatment of chronic osteoarthritis, hip, ankle, knee, shoulder and other joint pain approved for use in Canada; and

“Whereas this treatment is not currently insured under OHIP but it is an alternative to costly surgeries which could drive up the cost of health care expenditures for Ontario taxpayers; and

“Whereas the cost of this treatment—\$600 for three injections—is prohibitive and unaffordable for many Ontarians who suffer from chronic joint pain, thus leading to unnecessary pain and suffering;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the government of Ontario to include Synvisc in its list of treatments to be insured under OHIP and remove the financial burden currently faced by those who are prescribed this treatment to ease their chronic pain."

I agree with this, sign my name to the top and hand it to page William C.

CHILD PROTECTION

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

"Whereas Ontario is one of the few provinces that does not have independent oversight of child welfare administration; and

"Whereas eight provinces now have independent oversight of child welfare issues, including child protection; and

"Whereas all provincial ombudsmen first identified child protection as a priority issue in 1986, and still Ontario does not allow the Ombudsman to investigate people's complaints about children's aid societies...; and

"Whereas people wronged by CAS decisions concerning placement, access, custody or care are not allowed to appeal those decisions to the Ontario Ombudsman's office;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario "to enact legislation in support of the Ombudsman of Ontario to have the power to probe decisions and investigate complaints concerning the province's children's aid societies (CAS)."

I fully support this petition, Madam Speaker, will affix my name to it and ask my trusty page Patrick to bring it to the Clerk.

WIND TURBINES

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Petitions? The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you; I'm very surprised at that honour.

A petition from my riding of Durham which reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas there is a growing body of evidence confirming industrial wind development has serious adverse effects on host communities;

"Whereas over 135 people in Ontario have reported serious negative health effects from industrial wind development, and at least a dozen families have been bought out of their homes;

"Whereas Ontario's Green Energy Act"—it's a Liberal bill—"has ended local planning control by stripping municipal councils of their rights;

"Whereas 80 municipal councils, representing two million Ontarians, called on the government to put in place a full moratorium on industrial wind development until an independent epidemiological health study is

completed, proper environmental regulations and protections are put in place, and local democracy is restored;

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

"Immediately put a moratorium on all industrial wind proposals; fund an independent epidemiological health study to develop safe setbacks; legislate those findings; develop stringent environmental protection standards for natural areas; and require all projects to comply with regulations based on science" and not politics.

I'm pleased to sign and support this and give it to David, one of the pages here.

DENTAL CARE

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

"Whereas people need teeth to stay healthy;

"Whereas a lack of universal dental care has resulted in an epidemic of poor dental health, and many people are living and working with no teeth;

"Whereas there is only very limited support for denture care for those on social assistance and no support for the working poor;"

They call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario "to increase funding to assist people on social assistance and the working poor to access denture care."

I support this petition, will affix my name to it and ask page Sophia to deliver it to the Clerk.

1550

KIDNEY DISEASE

Mr. Jeff Leal: Today, I have a petition from a great guy, Paul Knott, who lives at 14 Spice Street in beautiful Port Hope, Ontario. It's a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, Canada, draw the attention of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to the following:

"Whereas kidney disease is a huge and growing problem in Canada;

"Whereas real progress is being made in various ways of preventing and coping with kidney disease, in particular the development of a bioartificial kidney;

"We, the undersigned, call on the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make research funding available for the explicit purpose of conducting bioartificial kidney research as an extension to the research being successfully conducted at several centres in the United States."

I agree with this petition, will affix my signature to it and give it to page Grace.

VISITORS

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order: I'm sure that the Speaker would want to know that we have some

distinguished visitors from northwestern and northeastern Ontario.

We have with us Chief Sonny Gagnon; Chief Elijah Moonias from the reserve of Marten Falls; Roger Wesley, Chief of Constance Lake, along with Raymond Ferris, who's from Constance Lake but is with Nishnawbe Aski as the Ring of Fire coordinator; and Renald Beaulieu, who's the mayor of Greenstone. Leading up the back of the pack is Bobby Narcisse, but don't be kidded: He's the guy with all the power. We'd like to welcome all of you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): While it's not a point of order, we welcome you here today.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Madam Speaker, it might not have been a point of order, but it was a matter of interest.

OPPOSITION DAY

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Mr. Tim Hudak: I move that the Legislative Assembly calls upon the government of Ontario to endorse the Sheppard subway extension and honour its \$8.4-billion commitment to the city of Toronto for construction of the entire Eglinton crosstown line underground.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Mr. Hudak has moved opposition day number 2. Mr. Hudak.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Thank you, Speaker. It wasn't that long ago when the famous actor the late Peter Ustinov said of Toronto that it's like New York city, but run by the Swiss. Torontonians and Ontarians love that line. We quoted it for years. We took it as a badge of honour. It was the city that works.

For the most part, Toronto still does work, particularly for a city of its size, its diversity and its complexity. Toronto is still a great place to live, to work and to raise a family. The Ontario PC caucus says we're proud of the neighbourhoods here in Toronto and we're proud of the fact that we've managed to avoid many of the problems that plague a lot of other major urban centres, things like a hollowed-out downtown core, the flight to the suburbs and so on.

But, Speaker, I think we all agree that there's one area of our civic life here in Toronto where things have ground to a total, absolute halt—literally—and it's traffic. According to the Toronto Board of Trade, our traffic now in Toronto and the GTA—

Mr. Rob Leone: It's terrible.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Not only is it terrible; it's the worst in North America. According to the Toronto Board of Trade, it's even worse than the historical benchmark for gridlock: the city of Los Angeles.

Here is an important point that I hope members opposite will hear: Since it was first elected almost nine years ago, this government has spent hundreds and hundreds of billions of dollars, including \$75 billion in infrastructure, and we have the worst traffic gridlock in

all of North America. We wonder where all that money went.

The problem is, there was no strategic approach to making those investments in the city of Toronto and the GTA on a strategic basis. And now, nine years later, this traffic congestion is taking an increasing toll on average women and men in Toronto and the GTA. It eats up hours of our days that could otherwise be spent at home with our loved ones. It eats up hours of our days that could otherwise be spent engaged in our studies, our jobs, our careers, our recreation. And the cost to our economy as a result of this lost time, the clogged streets, late deliveries and missed meetings is incalculable. Some have suggested it could be as high as \$6 billion annually as a rough guess.

Those watching and listening get the point. People in the city of Toronto and the GTA are spending far too much time stuck in traffic, but we haven't seen anything from the Liberals to break that. In fact, in his recent report, Gordon Chong, the head of Toronto Transit Infrastructure, calls gridlock the number one threat to Toronto's global competitiveness. Mr. Chong ought to know; he heads up the TTC's advisory body on the feasibility of expanding our subway system. And he says what we say: Build the subways. This has to happen. It's the right thing to do.

But to do it, we need a plan and we need a solid commitment from this government.

Right now, since 2008, the province of Ontario has fully \$8.4 billion on the table to fund new transit development. Again, it's been there since 2008. I think we all know this isn't a typical one third/one third/one third infrastructure program; this isn't like deciding what road to pave or what kind of bridge to paint. This is the biggest infrastructure investment in Canada and one of the biggest in all of North America. That's why we have to do it right, why this motion stands here today, and why we in the Ontario PC caucus say that to create jobs, to break gridlock here in the Toronto area, you build underground. You build subways. You don't tear up existing streets and take away lanes, which will make traffic congestion even worse.

Here's an important point that's often missed in this debate: Those \$8.4 billion that have been set aside all flow through the provincial treasury—it's not city money; it's \$8.4 billion flowing through the provincial treasury—and those dollars are flowing through Metrolinx, a provincial body created to make strategic decisions, if I follow the government's own words. It was never meant to be a lending agency simply to give out money to whatever projects were deemed appropriate at the local level, no matter how they fit in. It was quite the opposite: to actually have a regional strategic approach to break gridlock, help families spend more time together, and make Ontario and Toronto open again for investment and job creation. That's what Metrolinx is all about. It's not a lending agency. It's there to actually implement a plan. That's what's been missing. Despite the \$75 billion in total investment, gridlock is getting worse because they never had a strategic plan.

Metrolinx is a regional transit authority, and it needs clear direction from the Premier of Ontario, his cabinet and the Liberal members who live here in Toronto who aren't standing up for their own constituents in Scarborough, in Etobicoke, in north Toronto. This means, Speaker, that the approach we should take to the biggest infrastructure investment in Canada is to spend that money strategically, to make sure it fits into a plan.

The question then becomes: If this is a once-in-a-generation-or-more investment, what are we going to build? What's the right thing to do?

I used to think that we actually knew the answer, because it was back in March 2011 that the Premier signed a memorandum of understanding with Mayor Ford to build the subway line, crosstown, on Eglinton. It was signed. Mayor Ford, of course, as Madam Speaker will remember, campaigned on basically two things, stopping the gravy train and building subways in the city of Toronto, and despite having I think 40 candidates in the race or something like that, won with 47% of the vote: a clear endorsement of the subway plan. We're proud to say that we stand with the people of the city of Toronto to do the right thing and invest in subways.

1600

Premier McGuinty was actually on the right course with his MOU last March, but where does he stand today?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, he turtled.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Whether my colleague from Renfrew is correct, we're not absolutely sure. The Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure seemed to endorse LRTs today in question period. The Premier did not say where he stood.

But I believe, Madam Speaker, that the Eglinton crosstown line stands as the biggest infrastructure project in Canada. It's one of the biggest in North America. It is absolutely crucial that we do it right, and I believe the people in the city of Toronto, those who are following this issue, do believe that the best approach is actually to build underground. I think it's reasonable to say that the people of Toronto expect this. It was a major campaign issue. They voted for it in the last municipal election campaign.

So we are gathering today as a PC caucus and inviting members opposite to join us to say, "Let's just get on with it, do the right thing and build subways here to attract jobs and break gridlock in the city of Toronto."

Applause.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm still—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Oh, sorry.

Interjections.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Further debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: It's time, I say to my colleague and neighbour from St. Catharines. I just believe it's time for the Premier, and his Toronto MPPs particularly, to stand in their places today and show leadership and to say what is right for the folks in their ridings; for the city of

Toronto. I just believe the Premier should direct Metrolinx, a provincial agency flowing provincial dollars to work with the city, to build subways, not tear up existing lines.

Let me illustrate why we believe subways are the right thing to do. They are a once-in-a-generation investment that clearly offers the best return when it comes to speed, quality and value. But more than that, they are the lesson on offer from many of the world's largest and most successful urban centres that you don't permanently take out lanes on major thoroughfares with aboveground transit: LRTs, streetcars. That's exactly what the Minister of Transportation's plan that he talked about today would do. It would tear out those lanes for LRT.

Let me argue about this, Madam Speaker: So if you were to do that, if you were to follow that plan, you rip out existing lanes permanently for streetcars, LRT, what have you. You're going to make gridlock worse, you're going to cause more congestion, you're going to further depress productivity and you're going to throw up another barrier in the face of small businesses who try to make a living along these sensitive corridors.

We don't have to think that long back to that long-running mess on St. Clair West with that streetcar project. I know some of my Liberal colleagues across the way—

Interjection.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The member for St. Paul's says he loves it. That's not what I've heard; not about you, but I mean from the people of the city of Toronto. They say that St. Clair was a disaster, it was a mess. It depresses the business along that area today, and we in the PC caucus don't want to see the St. Clair disaster repeated on Finch, on Eglinton, on Sheppard. We think that will make matters worse, and that's why we stand in support of subways instead, Madam Speaker.

Here's the reality: This matter has been studied to death. Close to 40 years have gone by assessing the feasibility of extending Toronto's subway system, and the same conclusions have come up over and over again:

(1) Subways are more cost-effective in the long term. The long-term capital, operating and maintenance costs of subways are cheaper than those of light rail transit;

(2) Subways decrease congestion and commuter time. Light rail transit, by taking out existing lanes, has the opposite effect by narrowing traffic. They actually increase congestion;

(3) Subways have a smaller environmental impact. Light rail taking out existing lanes will increase gridlock, which will cause greater tailpipe pollution; and

(4) Subways accommodate long-term ridership growth, unlike glorified streetcars.

Those are the facts. That's where we stand, and they don't leave a lot of room for sentimentality. I know a lot of people feel strongly about streetcars in this city. They have been part of our urban landscape for 100 years, but it isn't the 20th century; it's the 21st century—it's 2012. Our streets are jammed, and it just makes no sense what-

soever to permanently take even more car lanes away to build yet more street-level transit.

So the purpose of our motion here today is to bring some clarity at last to the position of the Premier and his government on this issue critical to the success of the city of Toronto and the GTA, on the need to build subways.

I'll say it over and over again, Madam Speaker: World-class cities build subways. They build underground. They don't rip up streets. They don't make congestion worse.

We believe that Toronto's reputation can be built even stronger. We believe it is a great place to live, to invest and to create jobs. We want their support on our motion here today to make sure that Toronto continues to grow, continues to prosper, to bring back jobs and to break gridlock in the city of Toronto. I invite you to share in support of our motion here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I have to say, that is one of the most extraordinary speeches I've ever heard from a Conservative, and it's my hope that the Leader of the Opposition will retain that speech writer, because to those who oppose his policies, that is the best exhibit I've ever seen for the false premise that Conservative economics is built on.

Madam Speaker, I was around on Toronto city council when Mr. Mike Harris visited his tender mercies on our city. Prior to the Harris attack on the city of Toronto, we did have New York run by the Swiss, but the huge transfer of financial resources out of the city crippled Toronto.

The approach to the city of Toronto, destroying local autonomy, demoralized the city, and now, today, we have a proposal from a party that speaks endlessly about cost-effectiveness but has not looked at the cost of building and operating subways in a city that has low density throughout the inner suburbs and then into the outer suburbs.

The current Sheppard subway costs about \$8 in subsidy per ride for every rider. So, you pay \$3; the city of Toronto has to put in another \$8—11 bucks per ride. Is that cost-effective?

Madam Speaker, I would argue that, based on those economics continuing, the building of all those subsidies would cripple the Toronto Transit Commission and its ability to run its buses, its streetcars and its subways in other parts of Toronto.

I find it extraordinary that the Leader of the Opposition has not actually looked at the real costs and the real experience in this city with transit. If you look at the history of building subway and transit in Toronto, the old centre of the city had enough density, and still has enough density, to support extensive streetcar systems that came to their carrying capacity, and when they came to that carrying capacity, there was enough density to pay for the construction and operation of a subway system.

The inner suburbs—North York, Scarborough, Etobicoke—were built at a density that didn't support transit—

still don't. If you're going to actually run transit there, you have to invest in more than transit; you have to invest in the intensification of those urban areas.

We have sprawl in the GTA, we have density outside the 416, that is equivalent to Los Angeles or lower. That means the cost of subsidizing transit is extraordinary. If you're going to cost-effectively provide the people of Toronto with transit in a timeline that will make sense to most people's lives, get moving on light rail, get it on the ground and get people into those light-rail trains so they can get around this city at a cost that Toronto and the province have a better chance of being able to carry, and in a timeline that will make a difference to those who spend a big part of their lives stuck in traffic today.

1610

Speaker, if we were to proceed with this resolution and we were to put in place subways that didn't have the provincial subsidy needed for operation—and there's no suggestion of a provincial subsidy for operation—the Jane bus, which already at rush hour is so packed that bus after bus after bus passes transit stops without people being able to get on, would become even worse. For my constituents who work downtown, who try to get on the King streetcar at rush hour—passed by streetcar after streetcar after streetcar that is packed. Frankly, if, in fact, we went forward and made sure that even more money was drained out of the surface transit in this city, it would be impossible to get on the Queen streetcar.

Speaker, what has been put before us today is a proposal that has been championed by a mayor who has now lost the confidence of his council; who cannot deliver the votes of his council. And the last time I looked, legally in Ontario, council is supreme. Council is supreme.

I have to say to you, Speaker, that in the city of Toronto, people want rapid transit. They want it now. They want it at a price they can afford. This resolution doesn't give them what they want. It doesn't give them what they need. It should be, it must be, defeated.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: This is rich. Incredible: It's like finding a subway on the road to Damascus or something.

I sat here in this House when the Conservatives and Mr. Hudak—you were here, Madam Speaker—killed subways. They had already started building the Eglinton subway and spent the \$100 million over two years, digging it all up—some of the Tory backbenchers weren't here. For two years, you paid to dig it up, building the station at Eglinton West. Mike Harris and Tim Hudak get elected, and what do they do? They say, "Subways are no good. We're cancelling the Eglinton subway."

Now, to hear Mr. Hudak here now, today, talk about, "Subways are the next best thing since sliced bread. It's a golden opportunity and they do everything"—in 1995, he was holding Harris's shovel as they were filling in the hole again. That's what he was doing, saying, "We can't use subways. Subways are no good. It's a waste of money."

You know, the interesting thing was that we could have built that subway—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

We could have built that subway to the airport for \$800 million.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

Mr. Mike Colle: They don't want to hear the truth, Madam Speaker. Eight hundred million dollars it would have cost in 1995 to build a subway, a full subway to the airport along Eglinton. Now we're talking about \$8 billion to build transit on Eglinton. If we had built it in 1995, we would have gotten rid of the congestion, the congestion Mr. Hudak is so concerned about today. If he had paid attention to the people of Toronto in 1995—they were right. The people of Toronto said, "Build transit. It creates jobs. It cleans the air. It gets rid of congestion." No, they didn't listen.

There was no debate in this House about cancelling the subways in 1995; not one minute of debate. It was a unilateral decision—probably the worst transit decision made in the history of public transit in North America—in 1995.

Now the guys who made that decision in 1995 are saying, "Oh, we support this plan"—whatever it is. And you know, this plan—the member from Trinity-Spadina knows—is a Ponzi scheme. It's a Ponzi scheme, because—do you know what he says in the motion, Madam Speaker? Do you know what he says? He says to build the Eglinton LRT completely underground and build the Sheppard subway.

Madam Speaker, what the motion doesn't mention here is that—Mr. Hudak's resolution doesn't mention that you need another \$7 billion to build the Sheppard and to bury Eglinton from Laird to Kennedy and from Black Creek to Jane. Where is he going to get the other \$7 billion? It's not in here.

Does he support—

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: And he said, "Don't ask his friends from Ottawa."

Mr. Mike Colle: And his friends at city—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

Mr. Mike Colle: The few friends at city—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'm going to ask you to refrain.

Mr. Mike Colle: Anyway, Madam Speaker, just in conclusion: This is a phony plan. It is not a plan; it's written on the back of a napkin. This is the party that destroyed transit in Toronto. Never mind that he talks about Toronto being world-class, New York run by the Swiss; in 1995, the Tories tried to turn it into New Jersey run by Neanderthals, and they almost did it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I want to start by saying, Madam Speaker, that a vision without action is a daydream, an action without vision is a nightmare, and the past eight years of Dalton McGuinty's government have been a nightmare.

The transit vision for Toronto—indeed, the transit dream for the GTA and even the GTHA currently—is only a daydream. The action apparently desired by some—building surface transit on rails—in an area like this one, in a climate like this one—well, that's also a nightmare.

Today, we must speak of a daydream that can and must become a reality, and for that we need a plan and we need action. Subway construction for Toronto, for the GTA, is decades behind. For Toronto to be the world-class city that we all know it can be, we urgently need to catch up. We have to build subways. We have to connect people, we have to connect businesses and we have to do so in a regional context.

We can erase the sins of the past. We can build a greater Toronto and Hamilton area. We can make sure it is a world-class metropolitan area for the next 100 years. I call on every member of this House to vote his or her conscience today and drop the partisanship. So many have missed this opportunity before. Residents in Toronto are tired of city streets being ripped up, and they want the higher-quality service that subway transportation provides: faster trips, bigger passenger cars, and an underground transit system that brings Toronto to the level of a Paris, a Tokyo, a London, a New York, a Chicago, a Boston.

Those who promote light rail as a model for transit forget that the jurisdictions where light rail proves effective over the long term are, by way of example, Portland, Oregon, a northwest city where it barely snows and where fewer than 600,000 people make their home. Building light rail is the advice of convenience. We cannot afford to listen to that advice. We cannot miss a crucial opportunity.

Just 18 months ago, Rob Ford asked people what they wanted, and they said, "Stop the runaway spending and focus on underground transit." Who cares what people think of Rob Ford in the long term? They're thinking about their welfare and the welfare of their children and of their children's children. As elected members, we all have a responsibility to listen to that message, a responsibility that is more than catering to re-election prospects, as some councillors seem to be doing in their wards. They think about what will happen to them in 30 months instead of what will happen to the region in 30 years. In 30 years, the GTA and the GTHA region, in that time frame, will be home to eight million people—less than 30 years. We have a responsibility to plan for that future now. It will be too late to prepare for that growth in 30 years.

Do you know what the most ready-to-go subway extension is, Speaker? It's the Yonge Street extension north from Finch to Highway 7 through my riding, because real people there want it and real people need it. Why doesn't it get built? Too many jurisdictions, silos.

1620

What similar urban area has so many transit companies? The answer is, none. York Region Transit, TTC, GO, Mississauga Transit, Durham transit—how many different and duplicative organizations do you need to serve one area this size? The answer, ultimately, is one, and I plan to do my best, with my party, to get us to that point, Speaker.

But it all has to begin somewhere: pieces of a long-term vision that must be doing what the people—the people, Speaker—in their numbers want in Toronto, in the GTA, in the GTAH. People who have to travel long distances every single day from Scarborough, from North York, from Etobicoke—and I'm not even mentioning Markham and Vaughan and Richmond Hill and Mississauga and Brampton—frankly, they're tired of being held hostage by Toronto city council.

It starts here, and it starts now—not some above-ground system where people freeze in the winter and wait while snow is removed from a track or where neighbourhoods are ripped in half like St. Clair and Spadina. The province has to honour its \$8.4-billion commitment to the city of Toronto for construction of the Eglinton crosstown line and to endorse the Sheppard subway extension. Research shows that in excess of 60% in the affected areas I named want the subways.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Shurman: Our job, your job, member from Eglinton–Lawrence, is to make that happen, and we can do that.

My party is clear: We want expanded transit to clear gridlock. We want the province to step up; we want them to do it now and act expeditiously.

In closing, Madam Speaker, I want to quote a politician who, in taking credit for a trans-jurisdictional subway jump from Toronto into York region, said, “The McGuinty Liberals have committed funding to the people of the GTA for the York subway expansion because we know that it will play a vital role in helping to lessen the problems associated with gridlock, help commuters, students and others to get to where they need to go quicker....” That was said on April 12, 2007, by Brad Duguid in Ontario Hansard.

There are many more people to quote but no more time for me to speak today or for the people of this city and this region to wait, Madam Speaker.

Let us vote in solidarity. Let's get on with the future. Let's expand underground transit as quickly as we can and move on.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'd like to welcome friends I notice up in the gallery, friends who actually live in the city of Toronto, who take public transit. I welcome them here.

I would like to encourage folks across the province to actually come down to Queen's Park. One thing that has been inspiring in recent months has been that Torontonians have actually come into city hall. They've come and

they've spoken to the folks who represent them, and I think that it has brought a degree of common sense to city hall. In fact, it has helped city hall come up with a transit plan that works for the city, that brings public transit to all corners of the city. I'd like to bring that kind of spirit—grassroots, common sense—into this building here. So I encourage you to bear with it, friends, and stay here with us. This building can seem inaccessible, but we need you here.

Transit has hit a nerve in this city, and I think that's why we're talking about it today. I think it has been very polarizing. I don't think it has to be quite as polarizing as it has become. It shouldn't be about “subways or streetcars.” I wish that the debate would be a bit more informed. We're not talking about building more streetcars in this city; we're talking about building a light rail plan in this city, and I can show you pictures of what that will look like. It won't look anything like streetcars.

Transit has touched a nerve because it speaks to our health; it speaks to our environmental concerns; it speaks to issues of equity. There are folks in this city who actually just cannot access the city. If you look at the way that wealth disparity is spread out across the city, the further you are from good transit, the less money you have and the less the city becomes accessible to you.

As we heard from the opposition, as well, it is a matter of prosperity and economic development. We are stuck in traffic in this city, and we all owe it to each other to get down to work and get this city moving. We are losing billions of dollars every year in this city.

We should know that the NDP always stands up for public transit—consistently stands up for public transit. We did start to build a subway line back in the day here—and it's hard to be lectured to about fiscal conservatism when you can spend that much money burying a transit plan; filling in a hole.

But the government itself has waffled on this too. We've supported the light rail plan in this city since its beginning. It was a well thought-out, a well-studied plan. It had widespread approval—and it had a lot more funding at one point, too. But the Liberals, after supporting this plan, then went ahead and cut \$4 billion from the transit plan; \$4 billion that we could have used to get people to the airport, for example. Instead, in my community in Davenport, the only access to the airport is going to be a diesel train: a diesel train that only the most affluent folks will be able to access. Instead of paying \$3 for a fare, it will cost \$30.

Anyway, so folks always say that the mayor says he wants subways. You know what? I hear from riders—and I am a transit rider. I take the TTC every day. People just want to get to work on time. Right? I hear it from folks here: They want monorails. I have young friends who said they want jet packs. We want a transit system that works for this city, and we can't talk in fantasy at this point. We cannot talk in fantasy at this point, because the \$8.4 billion that's on the table, if we use it all to put in—and it's not going to be a subway, folks. Even what you're asking for is not a subway; it's a light rail system that

you're asking for. It's not a subway. If we put that all underground on Eglinton, that will be the only project that we have funding for. So what's important to me is that we actually build a project that funds the entire city.

I do think we need to respect council in this case, and council has made a decision. They have lost the support of the mayor because he simply did not have a plan that stood the smell test. It did not deliver public transit to all corners of the city.

But you know, what concerned me is a lack of leadership from the province. I'm proud to be with the NDP. I'm proud that during the campaign we were the only party to talk about public transit. We're concerned about how you operate this system, going forward. We used to have 50% of the operating costs. We used to subsidize operating costs 50%, and it's down to 18% now. Since we've lost that subsidy, friend, costs have gone up. It costs more to ride the subway than it ever did, and we're losing routes all the time. So this is a provincial issue, but we need to respect the wish of council, who can plan the city.

Last week, we heard from our friend here from Timiskaming-Cochrane. He was talking about respect for the north and he was talking about how the north has a particular knowledge of its community. It would be disrespectful for me, I think, to weigh into my colleague's knowledge, right? To tell him how to run his farm and community, right? And I have to say that I'm not sure why we have a whole caucus over here with not a single seat in Toronto who's going to come and tell citizens of Toronto how to run a transit program.

So I would invite you to come and ride transit with me.

Mr. Mike Colle: Come and ride the Dufferin bus.

Mr. Jonah Schein: Come and ride the Dufferin bus.

But Speaker, that goes for all members here. Back in December, a group from Rexdale, who spends hours every day just trying to access the city, challenged city councillors to ride transit for a week; they challenged MPPs to ride transit for a week; and I was ashamed it was only the NDP caucus, only Toronto members from the NDP caucus, who would actually accept that challenge and ride transit. And I would challenge the rest of you: Get on the subway. Get on the streetcar and see how this place works, okay?

We're sick of politics. What we need to do is get down to the real business of getting this city moving again.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Scarborough-Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: This government's position has been very clear: We have committed \$8.4 billion to invest in transit in the city of Toronto. We must respect the will of this Toronto city council, its rights and responsibilities in making decisions on city transit plans.

This government has a proven record in investing in transit. Since 2003, we've invested more than \$3.8 billion to improve or expand transit in the city of Toronto. In investing in transit, we have moved forward in partnership with the city of Toronto. A vote for the opposition

leader's motion would override Toronto city council's decision-making process. As the city still needs to discuss and vote on the expert panel's report on the Sheppard corridor, it is reckless and premature of the opposition to jump to the conclusion before city council has reached its decision. This motion shows the opposition's fundamental disrespect for Toronto city council as a legitimate, democratic and legal order of government.

1630

Voting against this motion is not a vote against subways. We realize that there are benefits to underground transit, and nobody is suggesting that subways are not a great form of transportation. In fact, many of my constituents have told me they would like to have a subway. But this decision is up to Toronto city council to make, and I continue to let my constituents know that they must let their concerns be known to council.

If we are to move forward in improving transit in the city of Toronto, we must do so in partnership with the city. Part of that means we must respect its will and its decision-making process. The opposition leader's motion disregards this reality, and that is why I am not supporting this motion, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Steve Clark: This is a very important debate in this House, regardless of what riding you represent. Coming from rural eastern Ontario, I have to say, Speaker, that sometimes there's not a lot of love for Toronto. We tend to use this wonderful city as a scapegoat for a lot of things that drive us crazy. In my riding, you don't get a lot of votes talking about Toronto in downtown Athens or Mallorytown or Westport, but I think that's in large part not to the city but to this government. In our heart of hearts, all of us recognize how important this community is to the ultimate success of the province, even if some of us may not want to admit it.

So, Speaker, it should concern us all when Mayor Ford, who was elected in large part for his commitment to end gridlock on city streets by building subways to move people, should have his plans bogged down by political gridlock at city hall. Let's remember that the province has a very large stake in this debate at Toronto city hall, which is clearly being driven more by ideology than what's best for transit.

We committed, across the way, to \$8.4 billion in transit development in the city and it's incumbent upon us, as stewards of the public purse, to ensure that we're getting the best bang for our buck. We have a responsibility to show some leadership and demonstrate our support for subways as the best fix for Toronto transit problems plaguing the city today. Our leader, Tim Hudak, is attempting to do this with his motion. We're simply calling on the government to do the right thing: to endorse the Sheppard subway extension and honour the commitment to construct the entire Eglinton crosstown line underground.

I want to turn people's attention—I want to re-quote. I know our leader quoted Dr. Gordon Chong, who noted,

among other things, that if we want to get people out of their cars and onto public transit, subways are the only option that will do that. Given the choice between light rail and their cars, people are going to stay behind the wheel, and that's one of the main reasons why light rail simply doesn't deliver to commuters the travel time savings that a subway will.

The TTC's own estimates, Speaker, show that an underground trip from Laird Avenue to Kennedy station would take 14 minutes. By light rail, the travel time is nearly double, at 24 minutes, only slightly better than a bus at 28 minutes.

Speaker, why would the province invest so many tax dollars and cause so much traffic chaos—disrupt business, basically—to make a travel time that isn't much better than a bus? It just doesn't make any sense to build a system that's so slow, drivers are going to opt to stay behind the wheel.

I think it's important, too, that when we talk about the cost of light rail versus subways, we don't lose sight of the long-term operating costs. Subways cause less disruption to traffic and businesses during construction, are almost twice as fast as light rail, and are the only true option if rapid transit is your goal. They're the most proven way to get people onto public transit, and they cost less to operate in the long run, as the Leader of the Opposition talked about today.

This is an important debate. It's a once-in-a-lifetime investment in infrastructure, and as a major partner in this endeavour, the provincial government has more than the authority to speak clearly in favour of constructing subways. Quite frankly, Speaker, I think they have an obligation to do so. To remain silent and to allow the clear will of voters in the last provincial election—who supported the plan for the subway—to be shoved aside for those whose only agenda is to frustrate Mayor Ford at any cost would be irresponsible for us here in the Legislature.

As our critic, I feel—I want to urge the government to support this legislation. I think you're going to do the right thing and vote for Tim Hudak this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Trinity–Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I have to declare something: I really like subways. I always did. And I want to say to the Leader of the Opposition and to so many other friends, from Simcoe–Grey, Kitchener–Waterloo, Wellington–Halton Hills, Oxford, Parry Sound–Muskoka, Durham and Newmarket–Aurora: You guys are 18 years too late.

But I want to say, I love the arguments the Leader of the Opposition has made today. I support all of you fine Tories today for all the good arguments you've been making on subways. Except for someone like me who was there in the 1990s, when you guys filled those subways on Eglinton—and I know the member from Eglinton said \$100 million, but I think you guys spent \$160 million to fill the holes.

I just wonder where my good friend Tim Hudak, the Leader of the Opposition, was that day and what he

might have said, because I know he came in 1995; he wasn't there in the 1990s. But in the 1990s, I would have loved to have heard those arguments that the Leader of the Opposition would have made then. I would have loved to have been part of that discussion, because I'm assuming the arguments he made today, he made then, and that clearly he was shunned by his caucus and that clearly all the other members I listed were also shunned by Mike Harris and the other new guy. I could be wrong. I don't know.

But I love the arguments. The Leader of the Opposition listed five, and they all make good sense. And then I tried to figure this out. I say, "Okay, they loved the Drummond report"—they love it. There are some things they don't want to cut, to be sure, but there are many other things they would cut. The Drummond report isn't enough by way of cuts. They want to do more. "Okay," I say to myself, "that's interesting. But they now want to build subways."

We have a deficit. Under them, we wouldn't have a deficit, because they would cut severely. Under them, they wouldn't give any subsidies to anyone who is creating jobs, although we want guarantees from the Liberal government with respect to job guarantees and we're not getting them. This is true. But I want to say that if you really believe in subways, make a strong commitment that you will deliver on the money should, God forbid you ever get elected. Make a commitment that the money will be there, and tell us where you are going to get the money, because I don't see it.

For years, we had a plan from then-Mayor Miller. And understand this: It takes four or five years to even think of a plan, to agree on a plan, then it takes another four or five years to even get the shovels in the ground. And through the Miller administration, they probably spent \$160 million or more just to do the preparatory work for his idea, supported by council. Then Rob Ford comes along. No, he's got a better idea: "Scrap that plan. Scrap all of the investments. We've got a new one: We want to build subways." This is the guy who loves cars. He loves cars. There won't be a war on cars, not under Ford. But he had a plan: the subways.

Now, we slowed down the other plan, we put it aside, then sanity prevailed at city council. They're taking control—God bless. So some sanity has been restored, and we hopefully will have a plan so we can get the shovel in the ground.

Now, I say to the Tories: I would love to build subways; I really would. This is not a war of subways versus LRT. It isn't. We are building subways and we are building LRT. At the moment, we just don't have the commitment from the federal Conservatives—God bless them—to build subways. There is no commitment. We do not have the money, because the revenue side is not there. And rather than talking about where we're going to get the money, both political parties are talking about how much we're going to cut in the next little while. There isn't the money. The Sheppard subway line is simply too expensive to build. Developers don't want to

build unless you give them a whole lot of money to do it. The money is not there for the subway line, and the people are not there for the subway line on Sheppard.

So while you make good arguments—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Build it and they will come.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, they didn't go to North York. They thought that the folks would rush to North York, because they predicted 60,000 people would be there. Only 12,000 ended up travelling up in those areas. The point is the folks are not there; the money is not there. I just want you to be a little honest—not too much, God forbid. But, just a little bit of honesty, please.

1640

Let's build subways if you put up the money. If you don't have the money and you're not committing to how you're going to raise that money, please, let's be sensible. Mercifully, Toronto city council has found a balanced approach and has found sanity once and for all, so I'm hoping that we're going to move on the right path.

Today's motion: I will not be supporting it. It's not sane, it's not honest, and it's a bit pandering to some of Mayor Ford's supporters out there. Maybe you might get some. I don't know. But I will not be supporting it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Mario Sergio: While the Leader of the Opposition was speaking and promoting the wonderful side of building subways, I couldn't help but look into the gallery behind me here. It was kind of interesting because I saw a gentleman going, "No way," and then saw another one saying, "Yes." It was completely split, according to the views of the Leader of the Opposition.

Let me say this, Madam Speaker: The motion is totally coming here in a way that is way too early. I think you should have waited maybe until the March 21 results from city council. Then maybe you could have come to this House and said, "Now that the legitimate council of the city of Toronto has voted in support, in a majority way, for subways"—because we have three lines here, not one—then it would have been much better at the time to come and say, "Are you putting the money on the table?" The money is on the table. We never said no. But the fact is that we don't have direction from an elected, legal, legitimate council, democratically elected by the people. This is the only thing that we want; this is the only thing that we expect. I would say that the Leader of the Opposition would respect the decision of the council elected democratically in the city of Toronto.

You know, since 1979, I have been working and fighting to get the subway extension to York University, which, by the way—my friend from Davenport was not here—the NDP did not support.

I love subways. I think they are another wonderful mode of transportation. But this is not what this city of Toronto is asking us to do. When we put the \$8.4 billion on the table, we didn't say, "This is for the Finch subway, the Sheppard subway or the Eglinton subway." It is for improvements to Toronto transportation, but we have to have a direction. Unless we do that, I think that we

should go and respect the decision that they have made, I believe, two or three weeks ago. Now that they approved having this particular panel that is going to deliver on March 21, let's wait, see what they say and then we'll come back and talk more about it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: It's kind of ironic to have heard the speakers here today, apart from the member from Scarborough—Agincourt, but all of the other speakers actually have subways running through their ridings, so quite brave of them to stand up.

Also, I would like to say, it's fitting to be speaking today as well to this issue and to this motion because today is Toronto's 178th birthday, so, great to be speaking today.

The issue of the TTC and the failure to move forward on this project is something that is of great concern to myself, my fellow PC caucus members, our leader, Tim Hudak, and, most importantly, to the people of Toronto and throughout the GTA. We actually heard today from Gary Yeung, the spokesperson for SubwaysTO, and he said clearly this, Speaker: "Subways TO stands behind Tim Hudak's motion and Torontonians' preference to create real rapid transit in this city, by finishing the Sheppard subway and building Eglinton underground to Scarborough."

If we want Toronto to be the world-class city it can be, to help drive the economic indicators and create jobs and growth in Ontario, then Toronto needs to build subways. Truly world-class cities build underground, not on street level. World-class cities have learned to avoid permanently taking out entire lanes with above-ground transit, further snarling traffic and harming productivity, commerce, and quality of life—world-class cities like Madrid, Hong Kong, London, Paris and New York.

The sooner we can get clarity from Dalton McGuinty and his Liberal government, get this project under way and get the shovels into the ground, the sooner the residents of Toronto, Scarborough and the entire GTA can begin to reap the rewards and benefits that additional subway lines will bring. The potential rewards are great: things like increased productivity, reduced gridlock, reduced traffic emissions and, importantly, more jobs, development and economic growth for the city of Toronto and for the entire province of Ontario.

Speaker, the city of Toronto estimates that these projects will create 100,000 new jobs—100,000 new jobs—this, when we have a Dalton McGuinty jobs crisis in Ontario, with more than 600,000 men and women unemployed. We know that Toronto gridlock costs our economy over \$6 billion each year and that gridlock is the number one threat to Toronto's competitiveness. We also know that time spent behind the wheel is time spent away from your family, away from your children and away from your community.

Our motion here today calls on the Dalton McGuinty Liberals to push forward with plans to address traffic congestion in the city of Toronto by building under-

ground transit. I am pleased to support this motion. I am asking all MPPs on the government side to stand up for Toronto and for the greater good of the province and make Toronto a world-class city. Support Tim Hudak and our PC motion here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: You know, there are times in this House where you have to laugh because otherwise you would cry. This perhaps is one of those times. I mean, here we have to my right, both literally and figuratively, a party—not one member of which, by the way, comes from Toronto—that purports to speak for Toronto and has hitched its wagon to Rob Ford, who, in my memory, is the most unpopular mayor ever in the city of Toronto, whose own council is rising up against him. At the very least of it, I don't get the strategy behind it.

But let's talk about the reality and the ethics of it. I took the challenge. I travelled on the TTC for that week. I can tell you that I got on the Queen streetcar to come to work and then the subway to get to work from there. If I travelled on the TTC every day to get to all of my appointments within Toronto, I figured I would add one whole day to my week in terms of time. This is absolutely unacceptable.

I want to quote my friend from Trinity–Spadina: This isn't a war between LRT and subways. Lord knows, some of us have been to London and New York. I would love to have the London public transit system and get on the subway and get off and travel everywhere. I've met MPs in London, England, who never drove anywhere. They didn't have to—it would be insane to; ditto New York.

But the cost for such a venture is in the billions. I would happily vote for my friend's motion over here if the federal government, which last time I checked was a Conservative government, stepped up and paid for this, or if, again, the Progressive Conservatives in Ontario brought forward a budget that actually would put in something in the order of \$15 billion to pay for it too. So that's them.

But wait; it doesn't stop there. It doesn't stop there; it gets even weirder—surreal, one could say—in this House, because my friends across the aisle, they yanked \$4 billion out of the transit city plan before Rob Ford was ever elected. Had that money gone forward, maybe we wouldn't be having this conversation. Maybe the proverbial shovel would be in the ground and we'd have some transit.

1650

My friends across the way know full well that we used to fund 50% of Toronto's transit operating budget, and now it's only 18%. You can't run a transit system on property taxes. No city does that. Why should we expect this city to do that? That's what they are purporting.

Here we have two parties, both guilty of inaction on the transit file; guilty as charged, and we members who actually live and work in Toronto are stuck in our cars because there's simply no other way. That is criminal.

That's criminal to the environment. It's criminal to those low-income folks who need to take transit, who cannot afford the transit as it is, and watch car after car on Queen Street go by full. I see them in the morning. My goodness, we're going to have to start shuttling them in our own cars soon because they'll never get on.

We are at an impasse, and yet, miracle of miracles, Toronto city council rose up, Madam Speaker; they rose up against the most unpopular mayor in the world, and they actually decided, with some degree of sanity, to go moving ahead with what they've got and with what they can accomplish. I say: My goodness, anything is better than nothing, and this is anything.

Now, would it be better if they would ante up their fair share? Would it be better if the federal Conservatives would ante up their fair share, because the federal Conservatives are equally guilty of not investing in this city—in terms of all of our cities—in transit. The Liberals provincially are guilty of not investing in our transit system. I say, Madam Speaker, to quote Shakespeare: “A pox on both their houses.”

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate. The member from Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Before you begin—order. Order.

The member from Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: For over 23 years, I've had the honour and privilege to serve the people of Scarborough, first as their city councillor and now as their member of provincial Parliament. I have always stood firmly in support of the wishes of the vast majority of my constituents who support the underground transit option for Scarborough. This is the plan that we believe will most effectively work to reduce gridlock, improve air quality and help build a stronger community here in Scarborough.

However, since the signing of a memorandum of understanding, or an MOU, between our Premier, Metrolinx and the mayor of Toronto, our government has honoured its commitment to fund the expansion of rapid transit into Scarborough along Eglinton Avenue.

It is in this context that the Leader of the Opposition's motion contains so much irony, when one considers that he was part of the last Conservative government that actually cancelled the Eglinton line after construction had already started in 1995. Had his government not done this, there would be no need for any debate here today.

Last year's memorandum of understanding called upon the province, Metrolinx and the city of Toronto to seek approval from the province, the Metrolinx board and Toronto city council respectively. The first two obtained their approval; the city did not. Toronto city council has since voted to move to an above-ground option for part of the Eglinton line.

The Leader of the Opposition's motion maintains that the will of Toronto city council should be ignored. Let

me be clear: I fully support the below-ground option, but I also fundamentally believe that the will of democracy is that elected institutions must be respected. We will maintain our strong commitment to public transit for Scarborough and for municipalities across Ontario.

Today's motion, as well as the events at Toronto city council, confirm that the time has come to stop moving agendas and start moving people.

I want to end with this one question: Since when does an opposition party with no representatives from Toronto decide what is best for Toronto? Shame on you.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. Order. Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I'm not a member from Toronto, and we don't have any members in the city of Toronto, but I will say to the member for Scarborough Southwest, based on that speech and if that's the way he believes and he believes in not representing his constituents and in taking his orders from the Premier, there's likely going to be a few less members from that party in Toronto after the next election.

As I said, Madam Speaker, let's be clear: I am not from the city of Toronto, but I've had the honour of being a member in this Legislature—I'm in my ninth year now. And I've spent my entire life—my father was a member here before. I know the city of Toronto a little bit, as much as someone who comes from rural eastern Ontario possibly could.

But I'll tell you what I want. I'm in this debate because I want Toronto to continue to be the world-class city it is, it should be and it can be. But if it's going to be a world-class city in the 21st century, it has to stop thinking like the 19th century. It has to start realizing that if you want to move ahead, you've got to use the best technology and the best form of transportation possible. The reality is that a subway is the most efficient, long-term, cost-effective and environmentally friendly way of transporting mass numbers of people.

How are you going to talk about efficiency in transit when you put more streetcar lines on the streets of Toronto and you've got more gridlock and cars stopped, going nowhere, because they cannot move?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It doesn't make sense.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It makes no sense. You put your transportation infrastructure under the ground and you move the most number of people most efficiently. This is about the future of Toronto, this is about the future of Ontario, this is about the future of Canada, because this is our biggest city, it is the engine of Canada, and we can't be going backwards in the way that we design a transit system.

I say to the Minister of Infrastructure, I say to the member from Scarborough Southwest, the members from Etobicoke—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Economic development.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The Minister of Economic Development; I'm sorry.

Mr. Robert Bailey: As well.

Mr. John Yakabuski: As well—used to be infrastructure. If you really believe in what your constituents are telling you—and if you don't, maybe you'd better spend more time in your communities and start talking to them, because they want to be able to move in this city in the most efficient, cost-effective, environmentally friendly way. The subway is the way to go. If you believe in Toronto, the future of Toronto, you will support this resolution.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'd like to be very frank. I'm a big supporter of the Eglinton crosstown line and I've been clear and consistent in supporting an underground Eglinton crosstown line since the beginning, since the inception of the original transit plan, in particular for the west portion of the project in the riding of York South–Weston.

This area would be subject to the highest number of expropriations on the entire line if it were to be built above ground, so area residents and I were therefore heartened by the fact that a new memorandum of understanding foresaw an environmental assessment that would have looked at extending the line underground till Jane Street. Whether it's subways or LRTs, the majority of my residents support underground transit—whether it's subways or LRTs. This motion, in my opinion, is therefore not—

Interjections.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Just a moment, please. It's impossible to hear from one end of the chamber to the other. I'd ask the members to have their conversations outside the chamber or listen to the speech.

The member has the floor.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I think we all realize the benefits of underground transit, and I don't think that anyone in here is against subways, but I think that a world-class city needs a variety of options, not just one in particular.

In my riding of York South–Weston, as it was pointed out earlier, we have been waiting for a subway to arrive since the 1990s, and that's ever since the Conservative government of the day filled the hole with dirt and cancelled the Eglinton West subway extension. Now the shovels are in the ground again, so we need to move forward.

The motion before us today links the Eglinton crosstown and the Sheppard line. As far as I'm concerned, the Sheppard line—and for the Sheppard line, I consider this motion to be premature, first of all because city council has not yet received the results of the report that is due on March 21.

I also think that we need to point out—it's a point that needs to be made—a financial plan to finance these projects is not on the table and does not exist at this point in time. The resolution doesn't account for billions of dollars. We have put \$8.4 billion on the table, but for this

motion, over \$7 billion is missing, and that needs to be said, Madam Speaker. We have to be honest with our residents and with taxpayers.

My hope is that we will continue to work to find resources that would allow us to go forward and get transit expansion built here in Toronto.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, I'm pleased to rise to address this motion before us. I believe that this motion is really about leadership. I believe that what has been missing on the discussion about infrastructure development, and especially transit, for many years now in this province, is leadership. We continue to allow infrastructure projects and transit projects to be partisan and political footballs. Unfortunately, what has happened here is exactly that, once again.

There was a time when there was very strong support for a subway project as it's presented in this resolution today. And then what happened? What happened is, as a result of a political debate on this issue, Mayor Rob Ford was elected with an overwhelming majority. He spoke about the need to deal with Toronto's traffic congestion, and he spoke about the need for leadership, and he spoke about the need for vision, which was to do what many in the past have talked about but never got around to doing, and that is to give Toronto, at the very least, the beginning of a major infrastructure project that would see it become a world leader in terms of its planning for the future when it comes to transit. Mayor Rob Ford was elected with that mandate.

And then what happened? Well, Speaker, here's what happened—and we have seen this so many times. When the money is committed, \$8.4 billion by this province—look, I give credit to this government for having made that commitment. Then what happened? The money is committed, the vision is there, and then the political infighting begins around the table at the Toronto city council chambers. What brought that on? Individual councillors started to look at this proposal, to say, "Wait a minute. If we put all of that \$8.4 billion into this dedicated line, I may be left out. I'm going to start lobbying for my ward. I want to see my little piece of the action happening here."

The next thing we know, Speaker, what should have been a major commitment and a focused commitment on the part of the Toronto city council began an infight that resulted in what we've seen for the last number of weeks. It's a disgrace. It's an embarrassment. It's an embarrassment for me, as an elected member of this Legislature, to see what is happening in that council. Everyone wants their piece of that pie, but what happens on a project like this when that happens: We get, as the member who spoke previously said, just anything. Anything is better than nothing. No, Speaker, anything is not better than nothing. What is the best is what is right, and what is right here is that we commit that the government of this province show some leadership and say, "Enough is enough. We're going to do this project because it's the right thing to do."

Speaker, I want to point out that Metrolinx was appointed for the very moment that we're seeing today. There is a reason that there are no elected officials on the board of Metrolinx. Why? Because we knew that the minute that you get elected officials on to a board like that, they begin the infighting, and we can never get on with the implementation of a major project because everyone wants their little piece—and while the pieces are taken out, we have nothing left and we're back to the rhetoric of "anything is better than nothing." Well, it's not. Metrolinx has a responsibility to implement, and at the end of the day, what we have a responsibility to do in this chamber is to show the leadership that is not being shown at Toronto city council. We have a responsibility to ensure that provincial infrastructure dollars, some \$8.4 billion, are focused and are used in the best way possible to provide the best possible transit project for the city of Toronto. That's what our responsibility is.

And I'd like to suggest this while we're having this discussion: that I believe it's important for this Legislature to look very carefully at the governance structure of how we plan and how we implement transit projects, not only in the city of Toronto but in the greater Toronto and Hamilton area. Because as long it's fragmented, as long as we have a fragmented governance structure, we will repeat this scenario over and over again: municipality fighting municipality, ward fighting ward. Everyone wants their little piece. We have a responsibility, and from what I am hearing it's going to fall to this caucus, to the Progressive Conservative caucus of this province, to show leadership on that very issue. And what we will promise the people of Ontario and certainly the greater Toronto area is that we will show the leadership that this government has refused to show; we will ensure that infrastructure projects are focused; and that we will lead the greater Toronto and Hamilton area into the future with good planning, good governance structure and good, solid leadership decisions. That is what this motion proposes for the Legislature today.

Speaker, I would encourage members of the government and members of the third party to look at what the objective of this motion is and join us in ensuring that a strong message is sent, not only through this Legislature, but to the council at the city of Toronto and to people throughout the greater Toronto-Hamilton area—hat the future of transit rests with this caucus, with the leadership of Tim Hudak and the Progressive Conservative Party.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Etobicoke Centre.

1710

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker. I'm pleased to be able to rise.

I listened with great interest to the members across who speak about really believing in what you are being told by your constituents, about representing your constituents—Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and other members who stood and said there needs to be consultation.

Interestingly enough, if you read this particular motion, it says, "the entire Eglinton crosstown line

underground.” Well, I don’t know if anybody is quite aware yet, it stops at Jane Street, but Eglinton continues to Mississauga. That part which is in my riding hasn’t had the discussion on what’s going to happen—above-ground, underground, El, it doesn’t make any difference. So I would think there should be some opportunity for the constituents to have some input as to what they might like to have in their communities, since they are part of the city of Toronto.

And by the way, I do not have a subway in my riding. There’s a good example of where it would be premature to determine ahead of time, without public consultation, due diligence, if you like, by an elected body represented by Mr. Holyday, the deputy mayor, in one case, and not have the opportunity to have that conversation and dialogue.

So here we are in a position where we’re being asked to preclude without consultation, to preclude without having a discussion, and then that doesn’t even come to a very complex area before we get to the airport, which has Highway 401, Highway 427 south and north, much less one of the most congested crossroads at Eglinton and Martin Grove, with the third-highest incidence of collisions in Toronto. You need significant study before you can just determine one way or another that it will be aboveground or underground. It may be a combination of cut and tunnel, it may be underground, it may be above, but you cannot do that without having a conversation with the people it impacts and affects who live in that community.

As difficult as democracy is, as messy as it can be, it’s far better than benevolent dictatorship, or dictatorship of any kind, where you just go in and say, “Because I know best, this is what you’re going to do.”

Mr. Todd Smith: It was a clear mandate.

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: There is no clear mandate. The clear mandate lies with the council who are duly represented to work on behalf of the people who elect them.

For me, again, it does not represent my community, and that’s exactly what the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke said: Listen to your community. I’m listening to my community.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments? Further debate?

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: I want to begin by saying I find it interesting that members opposite raising this motion talk about frustration and embarrassment when, in fact, it’s incredibly frustrating to see \$8.4 billion sitting idle on the table, ready to be invested to keep our people of Toronto and the greater Toronto area moving more efficiently. It’s incredibly frustrating.

I can speak uniquely from the perspective of both Durham and Toronto in the riding of Pickering–Scarborough East. The call I get the most every day is not whether people are for the subways or for LRT. The call I get the most from my constituents is, “When are we getting on with transit? We need the transit plans to go forward to get us to work, to school and other places.” So that’s what’s frustrating.

This motion is very vague, it’s inappropriate, it’s fiscally irresponsible, and it continues and contributes to the delays experienced and the frustrations we are all experiencing and witnessing. As the MOU says, it is the mayor of Toronto and the council that must approve the plan going forward. The process needs to be respected through thoughtful planning and council discussions. This shouldn’t be one-up gamesmanship and bumper-sticker sloganeering.

Today, the PC Party refuses to respect that due process. It seeks to overturn a council decision, a 25 to 18 vote. This is completely unacceptable, and we will not be supporting this motion on that basis.

We will, however, work with Toronto. We’ll continue to have open and honest dialogues and we’ll be working with them in partnership, as we have done for the last eight years.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It’s my pleasure to come into the chamber and speak a little bit about the motion that has been under discussion for the last little while here in the chamber. I have to say, I find it quite surprising in many, many ways that we’re having this debate on the floor of the Legislature, because we’re in a situation where we have a provincial government that was very quick to pull \$4 billion out of Transit City not so long ago. So really, when you think about who the first people were, in recent times, to turn their back on transit plans for the city of Toronto, it was the McGuinty Liberals. I think they’re the ones who sent out the first signal that all was not well with making sure that the people of the GTA or the people of Toronto were able to get back and forth around their community in an effective way.

I spent some time on the transit system a little while ago talking to people who ride the system day in and day out, and it’s pretty shocking to see the kinds of days that folks have to endure trying to get from one place to another in Toronto. Unfortunately, it’s the people in some of the lowest-income neighbourhoods, the people who are struggling to make ends meet, struggling to find work and to keep work, who are having to take the longest transit trips of all.

I bumped into a young man on a bus who was carrying an infant, and he had two toddlers with him. He was telling me that he invests, in terms of the time that he spends on transit every day, seven hours. He invests seven hours a day on transit, because the system is so poor and does not meet his needs. It takes him seven hours because, for three and a half hours in the morning, he has to go in one direction to take his kid to child care—his youngest—then he has to go in another direction to take his other kids to school and then in yet another direction to get to work. He has to spend that three and a half hours in the morning and in the afternoon to be able to make his family function.

Speaker, that is unacceptable. So here we are, talking about transit again, when this government did nothing to make sure that Transit City was enshrined in the city of Toronto, because they pulled their funding out of it.

Now we have the opposition weighing into this debate by saying that there have to be subways in the city of Toronto, notwithstanding the fact that the Transit City plan actually had both, and in fact I think the plan that city council now has on the table, which the city has had a majority of members supporting, actually includes both underground and aboveground lines. It shouldn't be that we're once again stalling off the development, the building of more transit in this city for the people who need it simply because of this political bickering that's going on and the political one-upmanship that's happening between the Liberals and the Conservatives. It's absolutely unacceptable.

We have a Premier that signed an agreement with the mayor when the mayor decided to ignore the council and go in his own direction. Now all of a sudden the Liberals are saying, "Well, we think we're going to do something different again." Part of the problem is that nobody is paying attention to the fact that transit—the more we fight, the more it's being delayed.

So here we have a situation where even though the Liberals like to talk the talk around transit, they're certainly not walking the walk in terms of the funding. They walked away from their commitment, and that put everything into uncertainty, which opened up the door for the new mayor who got elected to say, "Well, gee, the province has already backtracked on its commitments. I think we need to go in a totally different direction." That's what he did. He went in a totally different direction.

All the while, the horizon for the transit needs of the people of Toronto, the people of Scarborough, the people in Malvern—all the while, these folks are watching their future in terms of access to decent transit become further and further and further and further away. So shame on everybody for making this a bigger mess instead of actually getting our heads together and getting transit built in this city, because that's what's necessary.

Speaker, there are other members of my caucus who are going to speak to this issue, but I have to say that it's a sad day when, for political points, we end up muddying the waters here once again.

1720

New Democrats will not be supporting the motion. New Democrats did support the Transit City plan in its original form when it first came forward. We think that there are ways to affordably and reasonably get people moved around this huge community of the greater Toronto area, and we think that we need to get down to that work. So we are looking forward to a clear, clear signal being sent for once, for a change, from the government as to what they're planning to do to make sure that there is transit built in the city of Toronto.

I'm telling you, these people that I met on the transit system have been waiting far too long. There's no way that people should be missing the opportunity to make dinner for their children, to have time for them to deal with their homework and do all of those things after work, simply because they're stuck on transit and they

can't get home in time to have a decent life with their kids. It is unacceptable, it has gone on for far too long, and I would say shame on a lot of people in this room who have made it worse.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: At the outset, I want to tell you that when I first got elected to city council in 1988—from then until today, I've always fully believed that an underground transit system in our country, with the weather conditions we have, is the best way to go. But I just want to state a couple of facts after listening to my friends on the other side.

The member from Newmarket–Aurora says you should implement the best. I want to remind the member from Newmarket–Aurora that when I was a member of the TTC commission, that party made us rebuild our old GM buses by buying rejects from the Caribbean. It was shameful. We had to buy the Caribbean reject buses to rebuild the Toronto buses to keep them running until they were 18 years old. My friend from Beaches–East York will remember that.

They said we should respect Mayor Rob Ford, that he ran on the basis of better transit for Toronto. I would like to remind them that when they got elected, Mr. Mel Lastman, the mayor of the day, whom I served under, ran on the same premise. And what did they do to him? They cut off the agreement between the province and the city for any funding to transit.

So for those members on the other side to lecture us about transit today—I would like to just remind them a little bit. Stand up in front of the mirror and look at yourself again.

Madam Speaker, the member from Thornhill said that we have so many regional transits; we should have one. I will remind him that his party created the Greater Toronto Services Board to manage transit in the GTA, but they strangled the association without any money, so it died within two years. They should be embarrassed about that. They made sure the organization failed.

So I don't know what they're saying. They seem to speak on both sides.

I will remind all of them: They all talk about world-class cities' transit services. Well, I want to let you know that in world-class cities transit is built by the federal government, with major funding from their federal governments, in all parts of the world. We don't have a federal government at the table. At least the provincial government is at the table.

The Leader of the Opposition spoke and said he loves Toronto, but this is not about a one third/one third/one third. He's talking about provincial money. He's willing to forgive Mayor Rob Ford for his third. And he's willing to forgive his friends in Ottawa for their third, because they used to be here, and he can't disappoint them.

So don't lecture me about subways. I'm sorry to tell you that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. David Zimmer: Speaker, I'm going to vote against this. I'm going to vote against this because this motion shows no respect for the will of the city of Toronto council. What it does show is that that party opposite—here is the motive for why they're involved in this: They've got zero seats in Toronto. The Liberals have 23 seats. The NDP have five seats. The PC Party of Ontario has zero seats in Toronto, and they're wading into this issue and choosing sides with the mayor in this case, rather than sitting back and respecting the will of council. Council has spoken on this issue several times in recent weeks. Just the other day, the new TTC board was constituted, and it looks as if the makeup of the TTC perhaps is not—I don't expect it is going to be synonymous with the mayor's point of view on this.

So why has the PC Party waded into this Toronto issue? They have never paid much attention to what goes on in Toronto. That's why they can't win a single seat in Toronto in the last 10 years. Why can't they win a seat in Toronto? Because the people of Toronto, the voters of Toronto, know that the PC Party just does not understand Toronto issues in any way whatsoever. And this whole business of what to do with Toronto transit is just further evidence of—and I use this word in the technical sense—true ignorance of what's going on in Toronto civic life.

So I come back to my question: Why wouldn't the PCs, like other responsible politicians, in their dealings with another level of government, in this case the city of Toronto, say, "Look, here's our contribution. Our money is on the table, \$8.4 billion. Now, you, city of Toronto, sort out what you want to do. Get back to us with a collective view of what the city of Toronto wants to do with its transportation issues. Then we'll sit down and go from there."

We've got this bizarre situation where the mayor of Toronto is at odds with the majority of his council. We've got this bizarre situation where the mayor of Toronto is at odds or was at odds with the chief executive officer at TTC. So rather than sit down around the table and try to figure out what's going on, he fires him. Then what happens? Well, the rest of the council gets upset about that, and they end up discharging everybody from the TTC board and constituting a new board, which is more in sympathy with the will of the majority of the members of council.

Why would the PC Party want to wander into that and stir that up by choosing sides with the mayor, rather than sitting back and saying, "Council, collectively, let us know what you want to do"? It's divisive politics at its worst. They can't win a seat in Toronto—not one of the seats in Toronto have they held in the last 10 years.

What's their fallback position? Is their fallback position in any way trying to bring the parties together, to resolve the issues? No. They want to wade in there, all of those members from outside of Toronto, and they want to stir up the pot in Toronto. They want to dictate what Toronto should do, just the way they dictated what Toronto should have done on the amalgamation issue.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

The member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to my friend the leader of the official opposition when he began. He began with a very famous couple of lines from Peter Ustinov, that Toronto is New York run by the Swiss. In fact, that was probably true when Peter Ustinov coined that famous phrase, because people came from all over the world when I was a mayor and when some of the people who are in this room today were serving on council in Toronto. They came from all over the world to study a city that worked.

But this was before amalgamation. Once amalgamation came, nobody came to study us anymore; nobody came and said, like Peter Ustinov, that this was a city like New York that's run by the Swiss. What they came to see is a city that is increasingly dysfunctional, a city that is very difficult to govern and a city with multiple, multiple problems.

I feel sorry some days for Mayor Ford, as hard as that might be for some people to believe. I feel sorry because he has an impossible job that cannot ever be done by a person with his capabilities or with perhaps any capabilities at all.

1730

We have a city that just doesn't work, and, thrown into this, we have a dysfunctional system of transportation. We have a system that could have and should have been fixed many years ago. When I was on the council, along with the member from Scarborough–Rouge River, with the current member of economic development, with Eglinton–Lawrence and Scarborough Southwest—we were all there, and they will vouchsafe what happened.

What happened is that there was a proposal for four subways to be built—four subways. We had a big debate and the council agreed in Toronto that we would support all four subways being built. All of a sudden, along came a government that said, "We don't have any money and we're not going to build it anymore. It's too expensive, and the people can't afford it."

I remember that debate. We were told to choose. We were told to choose one, and the one that was by far and away the best was the Eglinton line. There is no doubt. It was supported by all of the six mayors who then existed because that line ran through the centre of what was then the city of Toronto. It went to the airport, but more importantly, it started in Etobicoke, went through the city of York, then it went through Toronto, then it went through East York, then it went through North York and then it went through Scarborough.

Mr. Mike Colle: Etobicoke.

Mr. Michael Prue: I started with Etobicoke. You should be listening. I started with Etobicoke.

It was supported because it had the potential for ridership, and that is still true today. It is the ridership that is important for building a subway. It isn't, as was said today—and I heard one person say it. I know Doug Ford, the famous councillor who occasionally advises his

brother what to do, says, “Build it and they will come.” I think he watches too much of the movie *Field of Dreams*—because if you build it, they don’t come.

We know that because that’s what Mel Lastman convinced council to do: to give up on the best option, which was Eglinton and to build it along Eglinton, because he had the dream, and it was a good dream. I’m sure to this day he has the dream of that nodule up there that is in North York, around Sheppard and Yonge, which was building and really booming in those days. He was talking about building a subway that would connect that dream because that was going to be the new headquarters of the city of Toronto. That’s where all the building was going to take place, and council, I think, reluctantly bought into it. Because we did, Eglinton was filled in, and to what avail?

I look today because we have a motion before us saying, “Build it and they will come.” Well, the people are still studying this. We have sort of a panel. I read the *Toronto Sun* every day. I read it because I want to know what Conservatives think or at least where they’re getting their ideas from. I read it and see where they deadpan all of the people who are on that board—you know, former mayors, people who have no experience, people who are left-wing hangers-on and all these other things.

But people around there who know a bit about this, including Dr. Gordon Chong, for whom I have great respect—because we all worked with him. We all worked with him. He was there, and he has a pretty good idea. But he has already told the mayor, “If you’re going to build Sheppard, if you’re going to do it at all, a whole bunch of things have to happen.” First of all, you’re going to have to have development levies, and who wants to pay those development levies? Then, you’re going to have to have parking levies, and who wants in the city to pay a parking levy?

Mr. Mike Colle: “Noobody.”

Mr. Michael Prue: He’s doing a good Mel over there. Then you’re also going to have to have road tolls, and all of these things are going to have to come together in order for Sheppard to be financially viable. The reason is because there is no possibility at this time, or in the near future, that we will ever have enough people get on that subway to make it viable.

We’ve gone back and taken a pretty good look. In 1986, when the study for Sheppard was first done by Mayor Lastman and his people, it was estimated that there would be 64,000 jobs in the North York Centre created as a result of the Sheppard subway. Well, they built that little portion. It was supposed to create 64,000 jobs in that nodule. Do you know how many were created in the last 20 years?

Mr. Mike Colle: Thirteen thousand.

Mr. Michael Prue: No, 800. There are 13,000 there but there were 12,000 before. There are 800 additional jobs that have come to the North York Centre.

He also said that the Scarborough centre was going to increase by 50,000 jobs after that section was built. Do

you know how many jobs were created in the Scarborough centre?

Interjection: How many?

Mr. Michael Prue: None. Actually, it’s down 700. Then the estimate was that Toronto, as a result of the building of the Sheppard subway, was going to create 670,000 extra jobs. The reality is that Toronto has only created 70,000 jobs since the Sheppard subway was built, so it’s down 600,000 jobs from the estimate.

I don’t buy into what is being said: Build it and they will come. You build a subway when you know there’s going to be ridership. You build a subway when you know that people are going to get on it and pay the fare, and it’s going to pay its own way and is not going to be subsidized forever.

There is a subway station called Bessarion. People might know where that is. It’s like a ghost town. Of all the subway stations in North America, it has the least number of people entering it on a daily basis. That’s the reality. And here we have a motion saying just go ahead with it anyway. Well, I think that the people of Toronto don’t deserve that; they don’t deserve a white elephant.

In terms of burying Eglinton, you know, I would gladly support burying Eglinton if it served the right purpose and if it was not to the exclusion of everything else in this city. But if you bury the whole of Eglinton, if you do what Mayor Ford has requested and what his council has rejected, then you are going to rob Peter to pay Paul—I don’t know how else to put it—because when you do that, everybody else does not get the kind of system that they need.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Finch. Finch gets nothing.

Mr. Michael Prue: You’re not going to have Finch. Now, this is the most important one. That whole Finch corridor is home to a lot of people, nearly a million people, and they are so underserved. If you look at what runs along Finch in this city, you will see you have nodules like Jane-Finch and Malvern, which tend to be amongst the poorest people in our city, people who desperately need a better way to get to work, people who desperately need some kind of transportation so that they can go on their own business. They will be getting nothing if we bury this whole subway—they will be getting nothing.

I hate to tell everybody here, but I don’t think that there’s any money. There’s not enough money to do what dreams are made of. I’d like to quote Royson James—maybe some people like him, maybe some don’t, but I’ve known Royson for many years.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: He went to Harbord Collegiate with me.

Mr. Michael Prue: Yes, he went to Harbord Collegiate.

You know, he’s been a writer—he writes for the *Toronto Star*, that bastion of liberalism. But he also says a lot of good things, and I quote him: “Anyone who supports subways—including the mayor, his greedy developer friends, Ontario opposition leader Tim Hudak

and you, reader—but is not prepared to contribute tax dollars, is living a fantasy.

“Wake up, people, I beg you. Please.”

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to say, I am happy to follow His Worship the former mayor of East York in this debate. I make that comment advisedly because I remember being in a small TV studio with the former mayor of East York. I guess it must have been 1996, and we were engaged at that point in a pretty lively debate in the city of Toronto about the fate of the city and the future of the city because of the Conservative government and the policies that it put in place. I like to say to people that Mike Harris made me because it was the policies of that former government that really encouraged me to get involved in provincial politics and to battle against those.

1740

So, on this subject, let's talk just a little bit about the history. The member from Beaches–East York has gone through the transit history, but what was going on at that time under that previous government really puts this issue into relief: the amalgamation of the city of Toronto—nobody wanted that amalgamation. There was a referendum, and 76% of people voted against that amalgamation. No investment in transit—the filling in of the hole on Eglinton that the member for Beaches–East York has just talked about. And the downloading of services on to the city of Toronto, to the detriment of the city's ability to pay for those. That is a little bit of the history that I think is an important backdrop to what we're talking about today.

So what have we done? We've already invested nearly \$4 billion in transit in Toronto, including the rebuilding of Union Station and the building of the York-Spadina subway. We have made serious investments in the city of Toronto. On top of that, we are investing \$8.4 billion, and I just want to be clear: That's 100% provincial dollars. That is money that is going into the city of Toronto. And I have to take issue with the leader of the third party when she talks about \$4 billion coming out. That isn't what happened. It was a cash flow issue. That \$8.4 billion is still committed to transit in Toronto. So that is what we're doing.

The other myth that I think is floating around is that there is nothing happening right now. The fact is, on the Eglinton line, shovels are in the ground, the launching hole has been dug, the boring machines are being built, and that work has been ongoing, because one of the things that we said in the memorandum of understanding that was signed by the mayor was that we didn't want to lose time on the Eglinton line. That was one of the principles that we operated on, so that work on the Eglinton line has been ongoing.

What happened when the mayor was elected—and I was a newly minted Minister of Transportation: We knew that we needed to negotiate with the new mayor. There was a plan in place to spend the \$8.4 billion. A new mayor was elected, and we realized that we needed

to respect the democratic will of the city of Toronto, so we entered into a negotiation with the new mayor of Toronto, and a memorandum of understanding emerged from that. I just want to be clear, because I was the minister at the time and I was very, very adamant that in that memorandum of understanding there must be a responsibility and an obligation for the minister to take to cabinet the decisions that were being made, and for the mayor to take to council the decisions that were being made and that were in that memorandum of understanding.

Let's be clear, Madam Speaker: The mayor could have taken that memorandum of understanding the next day to council; the mayor could have built consensus and could have taken that memorandum of understanding to council. The mayor chose not to do that. So now we have a situation where there has been a lot of confusion that has been sown about this issue. I believe that the motion today sows further confusion, and I think it's probably in the best political interests of the party opposite, of the Conservatives, to sow that confusion, because they actually have no credibility on transit. They have not any credibility on support for the city of Toronto. That is what this motion is about as far as I'm concerned.

What we are about is a couple of things: getting the transit built in Toronto; investing that \$8.4 billion in Toronto, because we know how critical it is to the gridlock in the GTA that we get transit right in Mississauga, in Durham, in York region and in the city of Toronto. So we're investing in all of those areas to make sure that people have an option and that culture shift of getting people out of their cars and getting them on to transit can continue. So we're going to continue to invest.

But, Madam Speaker, we have been very clear from the time we were elected that we respect the will of local government, we respect the will of council, and that was part of the memorandum of understanding. That is exactly what we will continue to do: respect that vote at city council. So I hope that the party opposite will have an epiphany and they will join us in supporting council's will as they decide what they believe is best for the city of Toronto in investing that \$8.4 billion. We are at the table, we are their partners, and we're going to continue to work with them.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Let me begin by stating unequivocally, like my colleagues from Scarborough have throughout this debate, that I support the notion of expanding the Sheppard subway line to the Scarborough Town Centre and beyond if that's needed. That's nothing new for me. In fact, that's a position that I've advocated for over 17 years. Let me also state unequivocally that I prefer the underground option for the Eglinton crosstown line, like all of my colleagues from Scarborough.

I want to tell you, I'm really proud that all of my colleagues from Scarborough here on this side of House have stood up today and taken that position, and we've done it consistently. I want to thank them for their contribution to this debate.

But, Madam Speaker, let me also state unequivocally, regardless of our personal view, that I believe this motion before us today is an insult to people of Scarborough, and it's an insult to the people of Toronto because what it does is it arrogantly suggests that the wishes of the city of Toronto and the people of Toronto simply don't matter, that they're absolutely irrelevant, that it just doesn't matter here in this place. We take a different perspective on this side of the House.

That's not new for those guys over there in the PC Party. We've seen that before. That was the same attitude that the current Leader of the Opposition had and former Premier Mike Harris, when they imposed an unwanted amalgamation on the city of Toronto years ago. We've seen it before. Obviously, with that Leader of the Opposition, some things just never change.

I and my fellow Toronto MPPs have worked very hard to ensure that that \$8.4 billion committed to expand public transit in Toronto is maintained, despite challenging fiscal times. It has always been the responsibility of municipalities to determine their transit priorities, and the role of provincial and federal governments has always been to provide the funding. Ironically, that tradition was destroyed at one time by the now-Leader of the Opposition when he served in that previous government, when they walked away from public transit. That mistake resulted in eight lost years, and we're still trying to catch up those years.

This McGuinty government has invested in public transit like no government before us. We're in the midst of one of the largest transit builds in Canadian history. This \$8.4 billion commitment to Toronto is an important commitment to Toronto's future.

The problem is—I think we can probably all agree on this—the mayor and city council have dropped the ball on this. The province is here with our commitment, and the council and mayor cannot get on the same page. That, to me, is an embarrassment to the city. They've let Toronto residents down.

What we should be doing here today is celebrating one of the most significant investments in Toronto's history. Instead, what we're doing is we're acknowledging the fact that there's a Gong Show happening at city hall these days. The Leader of the Opposition's attempt to exploit this situation through his selfish motion just adds fuel to the fire. It doesn't help one bit.

Let's be real here: How does the Leader of the Opposition think the province can build a transit line if the city refuses to support it? You can't do that. It's not possible. As much as I remain a supporter of subways, I don't think it's right nor do I think it's ethical for the province to run roughshod over the will of Toronto city council. That's what this motion purports to do. That's why many of us on this side of the House cannot support this motion. You want to run roughshod over the rights of city council, which means you're totally disrespecting the people of the city of Toronto.

As I said earlier, you've done it before, and you want to do it again. The people in my community of Scarborough—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. Carry on.

Hon. Brad Duguid: —the people in Etobicoke, the people right across Toronto remember what you did to us when you brought us the megacity, remember the downloading that followed. They're not going to put up with it again.

We're here to build a strong city of Toronto. We're here to support strong city-building. We're here to invest \$8.4 billion, a record amount of investment, into the city of Toronto. We won't be hoodwinked by these foolish motions. We're here to build and that's what we're going to do.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. Mr. Hudak has moved opposition day motion number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1750 to 1800.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): All those in favour will please rise—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order. All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	Leone, Rob	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLaren, Jack	Shurman, Peter
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd
Dunlop, Garfield	McDonell, Jim	Thompson, Lisa M.
Elliott, Christine	McKenna, Jane	Walker, Bill
Fedeli, Victor	McNaughton, Monte	Wilson, Jim
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Witmer, Elizabeth
Harris, Michael	Milligan, Rob E.	Yakubuski, John
Hudak, Tim	Nicholls, Rick	Yurek, Jeff
Jackson, Rod	O'Toole, John	

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): All those opposed will please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	Moridi, Reza
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Duncan, Dwight	Murray, Glen R.
Balkissoon, Bas	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Naqvi, Yasir
Bartolucci, Rick	Forster, Cindy	Natyshak, Taras
Bentley, Christopher	Gerretsen, John	Oraziotti, David
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gravelle, Michael	Piruzza, Teresa
Best, Margaret	Horwath, Andrea	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Hoskins, Eric	Qaadri, Shafiq
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Sandals, Liz
Broten, Laurel C.	Jeffrey, Linda	Schein, Jonah
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Chan, Michael	Leal, Jeff	Singh, Jagmeet
Chiarelli, Bob	MacCharles, Tracy	Sorbara, Greg
Colle, Mike	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Coteau, Michael	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Crack, Grant	Matthews, Deborah	Takhar, Harinder S.
Craitor, Kim	McGuinty, Dalton	Taylor, Monique
Damerla, Dipika	McMeekin, Ted	Vanthof, John
Delaney, Bob	McNeely, Phil	Wong, Soo

Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
DiNovo, Cheri

Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Paul
Milloy, John

Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Before I adjourn, I would just remind members that it is protocol for them to wait until the Speaker has left the dais.

This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1805.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):

The ayes are 35; the nays are 65.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Dave Levac

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, 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
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Armstrong, Teresa J. (NDP)	London–Fanshawe	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister of Northern Development and Mines / Ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Minister of Energy / Ministre de l'Énergie
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Campbell, Sarah (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Cansfield, Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport / Ministre de Tourisme, de la Culture et du Sport
Chiarelli, Hon. / L'hon. Bob (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Clark, Steve (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Coteau, Michael (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Crack, Grant (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Damerla, Dipika (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Economic Development and Innovation / Ministre du Développement économique et de l'Innovation
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Fedeli, Victor (PC)	Nipissing	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Forster, Cindy (NDP)	Welland	Deputy House Leader, Recognized Party / Leader parlementaire adjointe de parti reconnu
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Attorney General / Procureur général
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	
Harris, Michael (PC)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Hon. / L'hon. Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara-Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jackson, Rod (PC)	Barrie	
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Hon. / L'hon. Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjointe de l'opposition officielle
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Leone, Rob (PC)	Cambridge	
Levac, Hon. / L'hon. Dave (LIB)	Brant	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
MacCharles, Tracy (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
MacLaren, Jack (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Mantha, Michael (NDP)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London-Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McDonnell, Jim (PC)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McKenna, Jane (PC)	Burlington	
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough–Westdale	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Milligan, Rob E. (PC) Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Reza (LIB) Munro, Julia (PC)	Richmond Hill York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
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Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
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Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

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Ernie Hardeman, Tracy MacCharles
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Tuesday 6 March 2012 / Mardi 6 mars 2012

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Family Caregiver Leave Act (Employment Standards Amendment), 2012, Bill 30, Mrs. Jeffrey / Loi de 2012 sur le congé familial pour les aidants naturels (modification des normes d'emploi), projet de loi 30, Mme Jeffrey

Mrs. Laura Albanese	889
Mr. Jeff Yurek	890
Ms. Cindy Forster	891
Mr. Jeff Leal	891
Mr. Steve Clark	891
Mrs. Laura Albanese	892
Mr. Jeff Yurek	892
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	895
Mrs. Laura Albanese	895
Mr. John O'Toole	896
Mr. John Vanthof	896
Mr. Jeff Yurek	896
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	897
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	899

Wearing of ribbons

Hon. Deborah Matthews	899
-----------------------------	-----

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Hon. Laurel C. Broten	899
Hon. Deborah Matthews	899
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	899
Mr. Frank Klees	899
Mr. John Vanthof	899
Hon. Michael Gravelle	899
Mrs. Julia Munro	899
Miss Monique Taylor	900
Mr. Michael Coteau	900
Mr. John O'Toole	900
Mr. Bill Mauro	900
Mr. Steve Clark	900
Mr. Jeff Leal	900
Mr. Victor Fedeli	900
Mr. Garfield Dunlop	900
Mr. Jack MacLaren	900
Mr. Steve Clark	900

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Public transit

Mr. Tim Hudak	900
Hon. Dalton McGuinty	900

Public transit

Mr. Tim Hudak	901
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	901

Job creation

Ms. Andrea Horwath	902
Hon. Brad Duguid	903

Job creation

Ms. Andrea Horwath	903
Hon. Brad Duguid	903

Air ambulance service

Mr. Frank Klees	904
Hon. Deborah Matthews	904

Air ambulance service

Mme France Gélinas	905
Hon. Deborah Matthews	905

Women's issues

Ms. Dipika Damerla	905
Hon. Laurel C. Broten	905

Air ambulance service

Mr. Frank Klees	906
Hon. Deborah Matthews	906

Automobile insurance

Mr. Jagmeet Singh	906
Hon. Dwight Duncan	907

Long-term care

Mr. David Zimmer	907
Hon. Deborah Matthews	907

Air ambulance service

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer	908
Hon. Deborah Matthews	908

Taxation

Mr. Michael Prue	908
Hon. Dwight Duncan	908

Energy policies

Ms. Helena Jaczek	909
Hon. Christopher Bentley	909

Continued on inside back cover

Continued from back cover

Renewable energy

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....909
Hon. Christopher Bentley.....909

Use of question period

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....910
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....910

Minister's comments

Mr. Frank Klees910
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....910
Mr. Jim Wilson910

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS /
PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS**

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....911

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS /
DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS**

Epilepsy

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer911

Epilepsy

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....911

Epilepsy

Ms. Helena Jaczek.....911

Donald Stewart "Chip" Gordon

Mr. Monte McNaughton912

Royal Canadian Legion public speaking contest

Mr. Michael Mantha912

Prix Bernard Grandmaître

M. Phil McNeely912

Don Lobb

Ms. Sylvia Jones912

Windsor-Essex Economic Development Corp.

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza.....913

Suicide prevention

Ms. Lisa MacLeod913

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS /
DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI**

**Education Amendment Act (Concussions), 2012, Bill
39, Ms. Broten / Loi de 2012 modifiant la Loi sur
l'éducation (commotions cérébrales), projet de loi
39, Mme Broten**

First reading agreed to.....914

**Epilepsy Awareness Day Act, 2012, Bill 40,
Ms. Jaczek / Loi de 2012 sur la Journée de
sensibilisation à l'épilepsie, projet de loi 40,
Mme Jaczek**

First reading agreed to.....914
Ms. Helena Jaczek.....914

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS
MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES**

Concussions / Commotions cérébrales

Hon. Laurel C. Broten914
Ms. Lisa MacLeod915
Mr. Peter Tabuns916

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Renewable energy

Mr. John O'Toole.....916

Public transit

Mr. Jonah Schein.....917

Wind turbines

Mr. Todd Smith.....917

Hydro rates

Mr. Michael Mantha.....917

Education funding

Mr. Phil McNeely.....917

Curriculum

Mr. Steve Clark918

Diagnostic services

Mme France Gélinas918

Kidney disease

Mr. Jeff Leal.....918

Chronic joint pain

Mr. Victor Fedeli.....918

Child protection

Mme France Gélinas919

Wind turbines

Mr. John O'Toole.....919

Dental care

Mme France Gélinas919

Kidney disease

Mr. Jeff Leal.....919

Visitors

Mr. Gilles Bisson919

OPPOSITION DAY / JOUR DE L'OPPOSITION

Public transit

Mr. Tim Hudak	920
Mr. Peter Tabuns	922
Mr. Mike Colle	922
Mr. Peter Shurman.....	923
Mr. Jonah Schein	924
Ms. Soo Wong	925
Mr. Steve Clark.....	925
Mr. Rosario Marchese	926
Mr. Mario Sergio	927
Mr. Monte McNaughton.....	927
Ms. Cheri DiNovo	928
Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti	928
Mr. John Yakabuski.....	929
Mrs. Laura Albanese.....	929
Mr. Frank Klees.....	930
Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield.....	930
Ms. Tracy MacCharles.....	931
Ms. Andrea Horwath	931
Mr. Bas Balkissoon.....	932
Mr. David Zimmer.....	933
Mr. Michael Prue	933
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne.....	935
Hon. Brad Duguid.....	935
Motion negatived.....	937