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**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
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Monday 30 April 2012

Lundi 30 avril 2012

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

Monday 30 April 2012

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 30 avril 2012

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd pleased to introduce Andrea Roberts and her daughter Emily, who are here today from Haliburton county. They're spending the day with their MPP. Welcome to the Legislature. And also—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Another?

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm sorry, but yes. From Nature Conservancy of Canada, we have Erica Thompson, program manager from Georgian Bay-Huron, and Kristyn Ferguson, stewardship coordinator.

Mrs. Teresa Piruzza: Good morning, Speaker. This morning, I'd like to welcome Mohammed Fazle Baki and Fouzia Baki, who are here visiting from Windsor because their son, Shaumik Baki, is page captain today. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Haliburton–Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Carleton–Mississippi Mills, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: It gives me great pleasure to introduce a guest this morning, Jesse Waslowski, who is a volunteer and is going to be working in my office to try to put conservatism into our office.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Niagara Falls.

Mr. Kim Craiton: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I couldn't hear you back here. It's a little too noisy in the House.

I'm really honoured to introduce some special guests who are here. First, from the city of Niagara Falls, I have my good friend the mayor of Niagara Falls, Jim Diodati. Welcome, Jim. He brought some of the key executives with him. We have Ken Todd, who is the CAO from the city of Niagara Falls. Welcome, Ken. We have Serge Felicetti, who is the director of business development for the city of Niagara Falls. The last person and the most important person I want to introduce is my new executive director from my office in Niagara Falls, Michelle Tavano.

Mr. Frank Klees: I'm pleased to welcome to Queen's Park two guests: Michelle Watt, a student at Stuart Scott Public School in Newmarket; and her brother Robert

Watt, who is a third-year University of Toronto student, studying history and political science. He's going to take one of our jobs away one of these days, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Hopefully not mine.

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Good morning. I'm thrilled that today, joining us today from the city of Pickering to accept a youth friendly community award, gold status—I'd like to welcome and congratulate Jody Morris, Jesse St. Amant, Heather Butler, Karina Clendenning, Sarah Pizzale and Caitlin Kirouac. Welcome to Queen's Park. Thank you, and congratulations.

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I take this opportunity to welcome to the Legislature of Ontario the legendary Canadian jockey Sandy Hawley, who will be here today to talk with members representing Woodbine Entertainment Group and telling the Legislature about developments that they look forward to. I invite all members of the Legislature to the dining room for a reception today.

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to welcome Winnie Wales and Peter Wales of Richmond Hill to the Ontario Legislature.

Mr. Joe Dickson: It's my pleasure it introduce the grade 5 and grade 6 classes from Alexander Graham Bell Public School, joining us this morning with teachers Mrs. Francis and Mrs. Whitehead.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I also want to welcome the two special guests from the Nature Conservancy of Canada: Kristyn Ferguson, stewardship coordinator for Ontario; and Erica Thompson, program manager with Georgian Bay-Huron. Welcome. It's good to have you here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm very pleased that the murmuring that's been going on is not actually heckling, but I do want to reinforce the welcome, in case anyone didn't hear it in the House. We welcome you all.

RESIGNATION OF MEMBER FOR
KITCHENER–WATERLOO

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have a special announcement to make for the members of this House. I beg to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the membership of the House for the reason of the resignation of Elizabeth Witmer as member of the electoral district of Kitchener–Waterloo, effective the 27th day of April, 2012.

Accordingly, my warrant has been issued to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for a by-election.

ELIZABETH WITMER

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition on a point order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: On a point of order, Speaker: Given your announcement today about the resignation of the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, I would like to seek unanimous consent for each of the parties to take a few moments to pay tribute to Elizabeth Witmer, her incredible 32 years plus of public service and her historic impact in the province of Ontario as Deputy Premier and cabinet minister—

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader of Her Majesty's loyal opposition has sought unanimous consent. Is it the consent of the House? Do you agree? Agreed.

Leader.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I know Elizabeth Witmer is joining us in the gallery here today. I'm going to have some brief comments. I've made public statements, and I know Elizabeth and I will continue to work together going forward.

I remember not too long ago, in 1995, as a newly elected MPP for the riding of Niagara South, 27 years of age, I sat in that back corner back there. In fact, it was such a far back corner, they don't even have it these days. I'd watch, as a new member—so excited to be here—the front bench that were part of Mike Harris's team that turned our province around.

In those early days, there was no doubt a lot of focus and a lot of pushback from special interests who didn't believe in the path we were taking. I saw in Elizabeth Witmer, as labour minister, somebody who stood in her place, a woman of conviction, a woman of great integrity and a woman who was a steady hand during a very turbulent time and helped change labour laws, made good on promises in the Common Sense Revolution, and who stood above those here in the Legislature with her stalwart leadership.

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Not too long after that, she was made the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. As a—what was I at the time?—29-year old, I was asked by Premier Harris to take on the role of parliamentary assistant and became sort of her right hand. What better place, I could not imagine, to learn than next to Elizabeth Witmer what it meant to take on leadership roles, what it meant to carry through on a mandate, what it meant to wade through complex issues and make good for the province of Ontario.

Another thing Elizabeth Witmer taught me at an early age is to never, ever forget the people who sent you to Queen's Park, to work hard for the riding and the people who sent you there.

Because of her mentorship, her guidance, her leadership, I had the chance, then, to serve with her at cabinet. It has been an enormous pleasure, as Leader of the Opposition, to work with her as my caucus chair, my health critic, and to continue to learn from Elizabeth.

In fact, we had a couple of conversations this weekend, emotional conversations, because the truth is, I'm sad to see her go. I'm thrilled with the new position that she has taken on. I think she's the right person for that job. But when you lose somebody in the family, particularly somebody who has been close and has played such an important role in helping not only me but a lot of us along our way, I can say how deeply we will miss Elizabeth Witmer on this side of Legislature.

Her record is well known, Speaker. I know my colleagues in the opposite parties will highlight some of this too. But as labour minister, health minister, environment minister, education minister, she was given all the tough jobs during some very difficult times. Her accomplishments are a legend. As Minister of Health: 20,000 new long-term-care beds; bringing in family health teams; Telehealth. Her work with the nurses has been copied not only across Canada but internationally, the nursing protocol. The Alzheimer's strategy—the list goes on and on. Also, Speaker, she was the first woman to serve as Deputy Premier of the province of Ontario, and now, also, the longest-serving woman MPP in the entire history of the province of Ontario.

Among all this, I think, in my talks with Elizabeth, she'll say that her greatest accomplishment is being a loving and dedicated mother to her two kids, Scott and Sarah; and her husband, Cam. And despite a schedule that you could not believe, in those roles every night, she made sure she made the commute back at night and then early in the morning to spend the time that she could with her family.

To you, Elizabeth Witmer, I say thank you. You've made an incredible impact on our party and the province of Ontario. If we had a hall of fame here in the Ontario Legislature, you'd be an inductee today.

I want to say, too, on behalf of the Ontario PC Party and our members across the province, we will be eternally grateful to Elizabeth Witmer for her leadership, her dedication, her guidance and the incredible service to our party, to our province and to the good people of Kitchener–Waterloo.

I'll miss you very much; we'll miss you very much. I wish you every success—because I know you always deliver—in your future endeavours. Thank you very much, Elizabeth Witmer.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I too want to join all of our colleagues in this House to pay tribute to the member from Kitchener–Waterloo. Elizabeth Witmer's distinguished track record is well known to all of us. Her length of service, the offices she has held, and her achievements are, in a word, impressive.

But I want to speak to something I've seen from my vantage point here on the other side of the House, and that is Liz's genuine desire to serve. For nearly 22 years in this place, Liz has been reminding us that politics is fundamentally about public service. She's the real McCoy, and her community knows that. For five successive

elections, the people of Kitchener–Waterloo kept returning Ms. Witmer to this House—much to my party’s chagrin—and that is surely because they see in their community what we can all see here: the genuine article; a politician with a heart for public service; a leader who cares for those around her; a dedicated, passionate, articulate, thoughtful representative of her community; someone who embodies the very best traditions of our democracy; someone who always listens to the other side; a powerful champion of the cause she has embraced on behalf of Ontarians.

Perhaps what is most impressive, Mr. Speaker, is that Liz has never lost her idealism. I think we all understand that politics at the beginning of the 21st century can be a corrosive environment, but Liz has never stopped believing in the ability of people to come together and build something better for all of us. Liz’s good example reminds me of the words spoken by US congresswoman Margaret Chase Smith, who once said, “My creed is that public service must be more than doing a job efficiently and honestly. It must be a complete dedication to the people ... with full recognition that every human being is entitled to courtesy and consideration, that constructive criticism is not only to be expected but sought ... that honour is to be earned but not bought.”

Mr. Speaker, on behalf my party and on behalf the people of Ontario, I want to thank Liz for her record of public service in this House, in government and in her community. We wish you and your family the very best in the future, and if I may, hartelijk bedankt.

Applause.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Elizabeth Witmer leaves this Legislature after having served diligently for just over two decades. It’s not easy being a woman in politics. Any woman in this place could tell you so. But Liz has been tough and true in the many roles she has had here, and she deserves our respect.

On a personal note, I want to thank her for having encouraged me as I sought the leadership of my party a couple of years ago. Notwithstanding our differing political perspectives, she has on occasion remarked since then on the work that I’m doing in the role, and I have been very, very appreciative of her comments and her encouragement over the years. Liz has done her best to show that you can actually reach across the aisle and achieve things together. In fact, I believe that her work around the bullying issue in schools was an example of just that.

Applause.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Liz served her constituents with honour and, I’m sure, earned their gratitude, which I’m sure is why they continued to return her to this place election after election after election. Although we might not have seen eye to eye on many issues in the past, Elizabeth Witmer demonstrates that you can still have respect for people and earn their respect, even when your opinions are opposite.

It’s interesting, Speaker, that on Saturday night I was at the BBPA—Black Business and Professional Association—gala. They had a wonderful evening. I happened to be sitting for a little while with John Tory, the former leader of the Progressive Conservative Party, and we were chatting about Liz and the work that she’s done; chatting about the example she set with the RNAO, for example, an organization that, for lots of reasons, she could have had differences with, having served as Minister of Health during tough times.

But that organization had a lot of respect for her because of the dedication she showed to their issues and the commitment she showed to working with them over many, many years. In fact, they made her a lifetime member of that organization. I think that shows the kind of person that Liz is, in terms of her being able to work with other people, regardless of if there are differences and difficulties.

I think it’s true to say that Elizabeth always understood that strong convictions, in fact, make for healthy debate. We’ve had our differences in the past, and I don’t expect that to change much as she heads up the WSIB in her new role. But on behalf of New Democrats, I want to sincerely thank her and her family, because you never spend time here—you never serve here—without some sacrifices made by your family as well. On behalf of New Democrats, I want to thank Elizabeth and her family for having taken on a job over the last couple of decades that is often a thankless job. Thank you, Liz.

Applause.

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The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As the Speaker, it is convention that I don’t participate in the applause or any of the demonstrations whatsoever, but please, be assured of my internal heart beating for you, Liz.

I also want to thank all the members for their kind and very generous words in a tribute, and I’m also told, and I understand that as a tribute to Liz Witmer, there will be no heckling today.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All right; I tried. I tried.

It is now time for oral questions.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ONTARIO’S CREDIT RATING

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Premier: Last week’s credit rating actions, the downgrades, were a direct result of every decision that you have made since the election. Since election night, you’ve added billions of dollars in new spending, you’ve rejected the Drummond report out of hand, and you actually brought in a budget that increased spending and increased taxes, and then signed a deal to make both matters worse.

Premier, in the assembly, at every step of the way, we warned you; you were warned largely in the public. We

urged you to change course, we opposed your spending, and we told you it had to be done. But you ignored us and you ignored your critics and you thought you knew better, but now everyone knows you were wrong. Moody's downgrade—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Question?

Mr. Tim Hudak:—credit watch, Premier.

Will you stand up today in your place and tell the credit agencies and tell the public who pay the bills that you finally got the message?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question received from my honourable colleague, and I would encourage him, Speaker, to take a good, close look at the reports produced by the three credit rating agencies late last week. Among other things, they make it very clear that they are in fact supportive of the targets that we have in place. They are supportive of the economic assumptions that we have adopted, but they have, in truth, expressed a concern about our capacity to deliver on that plan. Specifically, Speaker, they say they have concerns about the capacity of a minority government, without the support of the opposition party, to deliver on some aggressive and ambitious targets.

It's exactly what we'll continue to say. We want to assure Ontarians we'll do everything in our power to achieve those targets.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: What a shameful answer by the Premier of the province of Ontario, at a time that we've had the first downgrade since the Bob Rae era, now happening under the Liberals. Under a PC government, Speaker, we had nine consecutive upgrades—faith in our management of the economy.

But Premier, how can you sugar-coat this? How can you say, don't worry; be happy? Are you that dramatically out of touch that a downgrade by Moody's, that a negative watch by S&P, is somehow good news? This is on your back. You have made mistake after mistake after mistake since the election, and now we're paying the price. Premier, you put Ontario in a debt spiral. Now it's time to stand up and get counted. Premier, what are you going to do to get Ontario out of this financial mess that you put us in?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, again, I would encourage my honourable colleague to actually read the reports, because I think he'd find them enlightening. The credit rating agencies make it perfectly clear that they are very supportive of the targets that we've adopted. They are supportive of the economic assumptions that we have made. They express concerns about the ability of our minority government to deliver on our plan. They are concerned about the—

Interjection: Obstruction.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty:—obstructionist approach brought by the opposition. They're well aware that in the lead-up to our budget, and subsequent to the presentation

of the budget, we could not count on the official opposition to participate in any constructive way so that we could come together to ensure that we might deliver on those targets. That's the real—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Answer.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty:—expressed by our credit rating agencies, and I'd ask my honourable colleague to take that into account.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Here's the problem: What the Premier is saying he knows is not accurate. It's not what's in the report. The report says, Premier, that you have had a downgrade. You have had a negative outlook. You have played with fire and now the people of Ontario are getting burned because you couldn't manage the resources for the province of Ontario. You kicked the can down the road for seven months. You had the Drummond report and you tossed it aside. This is on your back, sir. You have us on the wrong path. You've made mistake after mistake after mistake, and now it's going to cost us more to pay for his borrowing, Speaker.

It's time to chart a new course, to reverse direction, to reduce spending, to grow the economy. That's the path forward, Premier. Why don't you get the message that was sent to you loud and clear with the downgrade last week? Families do. When will you get a clue as to what's happening in the finances of our great province?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. We have a situation again where somebody is asking the question and there's heckling coming on that side, and somebody answering with heckling coming on that side. I'm going to start going into individual names now.

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I guess, I say to my honourable colleague, we're going to have to agree to disagree on this. Again, I would encourage my honourable colleague to actually read the reports, because I found them to be very helpful.

I'll say it again, Speaker: What the credit rating agencies are saying is that they support our targets, they support our economic assumptions, but they have concerns about our capacity as a minority government to deliver on that.

I'll quote from the Dominion Bond Rating Service. It says the following: "DBRS cautions that this is dependent on the province achieving its fiscal targets, which entail considerable execution risk, especially given the constraints of a minority government."

Undoubtedly, the credit rating agencies have looked at the behaviour of the opposition party just a few weeks ago and their refusal to find any grounds on which we might cooperate to deliver on our very ambitious plan. I can understand they have a concern in that regard. We will not let the people on this side of the House down—we'll not let them down, Speaker.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Nepean–Carleton will come to order.
New question.

ONTARIO'S CREDIT RATING

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Premier, this crisis is yours. This was born out of your inability to make the tough decisions to get the finances under control, to grow the economy. For seven months, sir, you did nothing but sit on your hands. You kicked the can down the road over and over again, and it's some can: a \$30-billion deficit. And now Ontario families are left holding the bag for your managerial incompetence and your refusal to get a grip on the finances of the province.

Sir, you have put us in a debt spiral. Things are happening fast and you don't seem to have a clue about what's happening around you. Will you chart a new course? Will you head in the right direction: reduce spending and grow the economy? That's our path forward. Otherwise, it's further downhill with the McGuinty Liberals.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Interjection.

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As they say, Speaker, plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.

The leader of the official opposition brings his stock approach to this challenge before us. He offers criticism, unvarnished, but he offers no productive process whereby we might come together and ensure that we deliver together when it comes to the plan that we put in place.

Again, Speaker, the credit rating agencies say they are supportive of our plan, they are supportive our targets, they are supportive of our economic assumptions, but they are concerned that, given the minority status of our government and the failure of the opposition to co-operate in any productive way, we can't deliver. We'll do everything we can on this side of the House to deliver on our targets.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Sadly, Speaker, the Premier seems to be so deep in his bunker mentality that he has no clue what's happening around him—no clue what's happened to the province's finances—

Interjection.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: —the first downgrade from Moody's. S&P put us on negative outlook in December and Moody's put us on negative outlook, and you looked the other way. You shrugged your shoulders. In 2009, two downgrades.

Premier, you're taking us down the wrong track. It is reckless; it is irresponsible. I sat down with you on November 8, I gave you our plan: a mandatory public sector wage freeze; reductions in spending, not increases;

a real fix to our broken arbitration system; an end to corporate welfare. You said no. I said we'll get downgraded. You said you didn't believe me.

Premier, you were wrong, and now we're paying the price. Will you finally get a grip, realize that you've put us in a debt spiral, reverse course, grow the economy, cut spending? Otherwise, Premier, I fear the impact that your recklessness will cause the finances of—

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

Interjections.

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

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I say to my honourable colleague, we are open and waiting and available. If he has any kind of a constructive proposal that will help us deliver on our plan, which has been supported by our credit rating agencies, then we are all ears. But to this point in time, my honourable colleague has chosen the obstructionist approach, the sit-on-your-hands approach, the do-nothing approach, the negative, ring-the-bells approach, which I don't think uphold the public interest.

I want to assure the people of Ontario once again, we will do everything in our power to deliver on our plan, and, again, we invite the opposition to find some opportunity to act in a proactive, positive and progressive way to ensure that we uphold the public interest together.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: I'm going to try to bring the Premier to the fiscal realities of the province. The person who got Ontario downgraded was Dalton McGuinty. I wonder how the Premier feels to be the first Premier since Bob Rae to see these downgrades in the provincial finances. I'm going to add, Speaker, Ontario is the only province to face that downgrade. It didn't happen to any of the other nine provinces. The Premier has put us in the league of beleaguered economies like Italy, Spain and Greece. That's the path he has us on.

Premier, it's time to put on the brakes, time to reverse course and time to understand the debt spiral you put us into. Will you do the right thing: Reduce spending, not increase it; grow the economy, don't phase out jobs; reverse course now, Premier and follow our recommended path before it's too late and families pay the price? Premier, will you get a grip on reality and move us in the right direction in the province of—

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

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would argue that just as obstructionism is irresponsible, so is talking down our economy. To somehow compare the Ontario economy, with its fundamental strengths, with its incredible resilience, to some of those less fortunate economies in Europe, again, I would argue, Speaker, is absolutely irresponsible. I believe we have a shared responsibility to champion the Ontario economy and to champion the plan that we put before the people of Ontario.

So again, I invite my honourable colleague at some point in time to stop sitting on his hands and to find a way to come together with this government so that on behalf of the people of Ontario, people we are here to represent, we can deliver on a solid plan of action.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. The government's budget launched a plan to merge all of the business support programs. My question is a simple one: Besides putting all of these programs under a single roof, has anything else really actually changed?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I thank my colleague for her question. I think she knows—I think she's very much aware—that, in fact, we are going to put together a jobs and prosperity council. That council will have as its membership representatives of the labour sector, the private sector. We're going to seek the advice of economists, academics and, of course, government members and opposition members themselves.

The purpose of that will help us better understand the strengths and challenges associated with the Ontario economy today and where it is that, working together, we can apply our collective muscle to ensure that we encounter still more success tomorrow. I invite my honourable colleague to provide us with any advice in this regard that she may care to offer.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, there's over half a million people out of work in this province, and they're very worried. They're worried that they're not going to be able to find a job, and they're worried that their government isn't making the decisions that are going to help them find a job.

Is this government actually re-evaluating the support they provide to business and looking at ways to improve it, or are they merely slapping a new label on the same old methods that have left many, many people looking for work in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, again, I want to remind my honourable colleague that the budget itself commits us to 170,000 jobs. I'll remind my honourable colleague as well of our recent record when it comes to job creation in Ontario. We created 46,000 jobs last month—that's 56% of all new jobs created in Canada during the course of the past month; and since the depths of the recession, we've created some 350,000 new jobs here in Ontario—that's more jobs created in Ontario than the nine other provinces combined.

So I'd say to my honourable colleague that she does have good reason to be more optimistic about the path that we're on at the very present time.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, Speaker, the Drummond report recommended moving away from a focus on jobs, and people have told this government to reject that approach. It's not clear to people who are looking for work,

however, exactly what approach this government is actually taking.

Does the government have any record whatsoever of the companies that have received money in the last year, and whether or not they're actually creating jobs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Speaker, I'm sure we do. One of the reasons we want to move ahead with our new southwestern Ontario economic development fund is to ensure that we can build on the successes that we've enjoyed together. It is modelled, in large part, after the northern Ontario heritage fund, the eastern Ontario economic development fund, where we've seen some tremendous returns on the relatively modest investments we've made with public dollars, in terms of the jobs that we've been creating.

Again, we're open to any advice that my honourable colleague may have to offer in that regard, but I don't want her to underestimate our continuing commitment to do everything we can, in concert with the private sector, to create more jobs here in Ontario.

JOB CREATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Premier. For years, this government, just like the Harper government in Ottawa, has followed a strategy of no-strings-attached corporate tax giveaways, and as a result, we have less money to help the people that are hit hardest by this recession. The HST and corporate tax cuts haven't created the 600,000 jobs that were promised.

Is the government's new fund going to put a real focus on jobs, or are we going to see the same old strategy simply recycled?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Well, Speaker, on the matter of the HST, the last figures that I saw demonstrated that there has been a dramatic new investment in technology and productivity-enhancing equipment here and among Ontario businesses. In fact, our pace of investment in those areas greatly outpaces the rest of the country, so I think we are, in fact, seeing a positive benefit in that regard. We remain one of the most attractive places in North America for the world to invest in.

Again, I say to my honourable colleague that we are open to new ideas, but I'm not prepared to throw out the baby with the bathwater. We are going to re-examine all of the economic development policies and funds that we had in place in the past that were being delivered through a variety of ministries, through a variety of different programs. We think that we owe it to Ontarians to better consolidate and lend focus to ensure that we're achieving more productivity and more jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It wasn't so long ago that this Premier was lamenting the lack of investment in Ontario, so I guess he can't have it both ways.

What I know is that people are really worried. They're worried about jobs, and they think it's time for a new plan—one that focuses on working with the companies

that create the jobs, not the ones that shift the jobs away, which this government has been doing far too often.

We proposed a job creation tax credit to give companies that are creating real jobs the advantage. Is this government ready to move forward with positive ideas like this one, or are we going to see more of the same old ideas that simply aren't working, Speaker?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that my honourable colleague has in fact raised this very proposal with me. She's raised it publicly. We've undertaken to have the jobs and prosperity council give it some very serious consideration. We're all looking for that which works best.

The fact of the matter is, this economy continues to grow. We continue to create jobs. We have learned, just recently, that we now have the largest mining sector in all of North America. We had our very best year ever just last year.

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We're building on the growing strength of our auto sector. We're proud, as a government, that at a time of great challenge we came together on behalf of the people of Ontario and extended a hand to the auto sector. They have now repaid the loans that we sent to them, they're creating more jobs, and they're once again leading in North America.

So again I say to my honourable colleague, we have some challenges but there again are good reasons for us to be optimistic.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, celebrating the mining sector while at the same time slapping northerners with the loss of the ONTC is a pretty serious situation here in Ontario.

In communities across Ontario, people want to see solutions that actually work for them for a change, and instead, what do they see? They see tax giveaways to companies that lay people off. They see vital infrastructure like Ontario Northland given away in a fire sale, while companies that create good jobs keep leaving.

When is this government going to abandon the same old plans and start looking for some new ideas to get people back to work?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I will always acknowledge that there is always room for progress, but again, let's consider some of the facts. Last month we created 46,000 new jobs in Ontario—56% of all new jobs created in Canada. We've created over 350,000 jobs since the depths of the recession. That's more jobs than the nine other provinces combined. The mining sector is booming. Our TV and film sector is booming. When it comes to biotech, we are booming in Ontario. When it comes to digital media, we are booming in Ontario.

There are good reasons for us to be optimistic. I look forward to working with my honourable colleague as we lend shape to the jobs and prosperity council and a new jobs and prosperity fund so that together we can use our

monies, our precious taxpayer dollars, in the smartest ways possible.

ONTARIO'S CREDIT RATING

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Last week, one rating agency gave Ontario a negative outlook and another actually downgraded Ontario's credit rating. I read that report. Moody's said, "Expense growth targets appear particularly ambitious in light of growth in expenses averaging 7% annually in the five years to 2011-12."

Funny, Minister: That line is almost a direct quote from me, speaking in this House on numerous occasions about the unsustainability of your unchecked spending. Translation: You're making promises you can't keep, and you're writing cheques you can't cash. We've been telling you that very thing for years. Now that Ontario is facing interest hikes that would make your latest budget obsolete, are you finally ready to listen?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite neglected to read down to the next paragraph, where Moody's also said that "Moody's recognizes that the province has laid out an ambitious fiscal plan to return to fiscal balance." He also ignored the parts in Moody's report that said the following: that we have a very high level of debt affordability, a high degree of fiscal flexibility, a large and diversified economy and a broad and productive tax base.

In fact, we have laid out a plan that all three agencies have accepted and acknowledged the difficulties in achieving. They have called on this Legislature to make it work, to work together.

One of the great risks out there, among others, is this Legislature. I ask the member opposite: Do what the third party did. Work with this government to get us back to balance.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Yes, you've laid out a plan, and no, we don't believe it. For years, we've been telling you to curb your spending. Months ago, we stood in this House and warned that if you didn't start paying attention, and if you don't get your financial house in order, Ontario will pay a high price for your incompetence.

You didn't listen. You thought you knew better. You have proven that Liberals have great difficulty accepting a simple if-then logic statement. That's why we couldn't have any meaningful discussions with you. Are you now ready to admit that you should have listened to us while you had the chance?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, let me quote a few others from outside of here. Here's a quote: "The key message from the agencies late last year was that they wanted a clear and credible medium-term plan as to how the ... government would balance its finances. And the government did that," said Craig Alexander, chief economist, TD Bank.

Another quote: "We're inclined to view the budget plan and the government's initial progress on the deficit

reduction as sufficient to put off additional negative pressure on the province's credit rating for now." That's Warren Lovely of CIBC World Markets.

Another quote: "McGuinty must not deviate from the path set out in his budget, including curtailing labour costs. For the good of all Ontarians, the opposition ought not to act as stumbling blocks." That is a stumbling block on the other side, Mr. Speaker. They refuse to work with the government. They refuse to co-operate. Later today, the bells will continue to ring, Mr. Speaker. Let's make this minority Parliament work—

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

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Finance. On Friday, the Minister of Finance wrote, "Elizabeth Witmer [is] a great choice for the WSIB. Her legislation ... gave rise to its current structure and name."

But back when that very legislation was proposed, the same minister, the then Liberal labour critic, called it "an attack on working people," "mean-spirited," "kicking sand in the face of working people," and said, "The government ought to withdraw this bill."

Has the minister had a conversion of some sort, or is there something the government wants to explain to us?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I'd like to again salute Elizabeth Witmer for her outstanding contribution to public life in Ontario for very many years. In fact, the member is not reflecting what I said. What I said, in fact, is accurate, that the name of the WSIB—and by the way, it was designed to move away from a sexually biased name to a more inclusive name. We changed the name and set up the current structure. Unfortunately, it didn't repeal the cuts to benefits that the NDP government had put in four years earlier, including the formula that continued to restrict benefits to those disabled. So you can't have it both ways, I say—

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

Mr. Taras Natyshak: To quote the Premier from his earlier statement, "The more things change, the more they stay the same around here."

There's no doubt the former member knows the WSIB file, but over here, we have some serious differences of opinion about how to handle it. Injured workers and their families have one important question: Did the Premier appoint Ms. Witmer based on her vision for the WSIB, or are they so desperate for a majority government they're ready to play politics with this appointment?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's unfortunate the member would denigrate a member with an outstanding track record. It really is, to question her integrity. It contradicts what the leader of his party said.

I want to salute Elizabeth Witmer—listen, I disagreed with Elizabeth Witmer on many, many issues, but she has been an outstanding servant of the people of Ontario for more than 30 years. She has served in government, in

opposition, with honesty and integrity and credibility. She brings good reflection on all of us in public life and in this House.

I want to again commend the leader of the third party at least for acknowledging her enormous contributions.

Leave this nonsense at home. I'm delighted she has taken on the job she has. We have a lot of work to do to build on our record to date. I'm glad—

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

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a question today for the Minister of Education. Minister, as you know, bullying is an issue that everyone in this province identifies with. We all know someone in this House who has suffered profound and long-lasting effects as a result of bullying. As parents in the province of Ontario, it's an issue that's especially important to everyone.

That's why I'm so disappointed that Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, has stalled in second reading debate. The opposition has chosen to continuously delay debate on legislation that's going to help kids in Ontario schools. You're running out of time to have Bill 13 in place in classrooms when kids return to school this September.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What are you doing to make sure that this legislation gets into our schools by September?

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Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'd like to take the opportunity to recognize the former member of Kitchener-Waterloo. She was a strong voice in this House and she was well regarded by all parties for her dedication to the province and to her constituents.

Before she resigned her position she had a private member's bill, Bill 14, that was also on anti-bullying efforts. Like Mrs. Witmer, the government believes in putting kids first. That's why I worked hard with Mrs. Witmer to incorporate the best ideas from Bill 14 into Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act. Late last week, on the John Tory show on Friday, Mrs. Witmer acknowledged this work. She talked about the Accepting Schools Act, Bill 13—that it would be amended to include Bill 14. She said that she was confident Ontario would pass strong anti-bullying legislation.

I'm calling on the members opposite to work with us, to move Bill 13 out of second reading debate so that the legislation can be amended and passed in time so that it can be in schools this September.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Minister. It's a pleasure to hear that there is some collaboration that is taking place on this issue.

My own constituents have clearly expressed to me that they expect to see this government put aside politics when the well-being of our kids is at stake. One of my constituents sent this message to me. It said, "Bullying is

a big problem in schools, and there is no room for partisan politics on this” issue.

I couldn't agree more, Speaker, and that's why I have another question for the minister. What are the next steps for Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act, to get it into our schools for this September?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I know that the member has been present during much of the debate on the Accepting Schools Act. That's because we've had a lot of debate on the Accepting Schools Act. It has been debated for second reading for almost 17 hours, but the PC Party has chosen to delay the debate 10 times; 10 times we have listened to the bells ring instead of moving this bill to committee so that we can focus on the best interests of our kids. We can move amendments to Bill 13 once we get to committee.

There are good ideas in Bill 14. I reiterate my commitment to make this bill the strongest bill possible, but we cannot take those steps as a Legislature unless we stop the game-playing, we stop the bell-ringing and we get Bill 13 to committee.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health: Despite promises for strengthened accountability, oversight and transparency at Ornge, the Minister of Health continues to defend this organization. Can the minister explain why, in her new legislation that she puts forward as this new strengthening of accountability and giving of transparency, she is shutting out the Ombudsman from investigating Ornge and she is protecting them from freedom-of-information requests? I'd like to know from the minister how she qualifies that as transparency.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This legislation, Bill 50, that I have introduced, does complete the job of responding to the Auditor General's recommendations. It protects whistle-blowers. It allows the government to change the performance agreement at any time. It allows us to put in a supervisor or an investigator—a right we have in hospitals but did not have in Ornge.

This is important legislation, and I'm asking the member opposite, if he really wants strengthened oversight at Ornge, then quit the games that you're playing. Let's get to work; let's get this bill to committee. But we can't get this bill to committee because you insist on ringing the bells every day.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: Speaker, we'll continue to ring the bells until she wakes up.

What I want to know from this minister is why she considers giving the Ombudsman access to Ornge playing games? I'd like to know why she thinks giving access to freedom-of-information requests is playing games. I want to know from this minister why she and her government continue to ring this organization with defence rather than insisting that we have full scrutiny of everything that's going on there. Why?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Be seated, please. Minister of Health?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want to tell the member opposite that we are open to suggestions from opposition to make this legislation stronger.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I say, we are open to amendments, but we have to get it past second reading first before we can have that important conversation at committee. The members opposite are obstructing the work of the Legislature. They insist on ringing the bells; we want to get to work. We've got important work to do at Ornge and in other parts of government, but as long as they continue to obstruct progress in this Legislature, we're going to have a very difficult time getting our work done.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Last week, we learned that the Premier's former chief of staff and current campaign manager, Don Guy, billed Ornge for \$125,000 for “professional services.” When did the Premier first learn that his campaign strategist, Don Guy, was working for Ornge?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. John Milloy: I think members of the House are aware, but I think, once in a while, it's important to remind members that the public accounts committee, a standing committee of this Legislature, is seized with the Ornge issue. I checked this morning: The public accounts committee, on this issue alone, has sat for over 15 hours, and 22 witnesses have appeared so far.

They have a robust list of witnesses appearing this week, which includes Patricia Volker, board member of Ornge; David Caplan, a former Minister of Health and of course a former member of this Legislature; Kelly Mitchell, a former Ornge lobbyist and a prominent Conservative; Flavio Volpe, former chief of staff to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade; Steve Farquhar, VP operations of Ornge; the chief accountant for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; and Mr. Guy himself will also be present there. It's an opportunity to ask questions such as the ones raised today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have no idea what that had to do with my question, but back to the Premier: The Premier knows Don Guy very well. The two have been described in newspaper articles as being “joined at the hip.” Some say that despite leaving the Premier's office, Mr. Guy still has a say in how the Premier's office is run. Mr. Guy's last bill of \$17,000 was to one of Ornge's for-profit companies. That was on December 17, 2011, right when Ornge's high-flying executives started making the front page of the papers. Mr. Guy did not take the cash. Was it because the Liberal Party's campaign chair knew

this government was doing something they shouldn't be doing?

Hon. John Milloy: I don't think any member of this House appreciates these sorts of drive-by smears. The fact of the matter is, the public accounts committee is seized with this matter. It's a standing committee of this Legislature. The Auditor General reports to the Legislature through the public accounts committee. They're in the process of examining the Ornge situation. There is a long list of witnesses who are appearing, including Don Guy, who will be appearing Wednesday, and there will be an opportunity for members of this Legislature to ask questions, to continue their investigation into Ornge, something which complements the work that's been done by the Auditor General, which complements the good measures that have been taken by the Minister of Health.

I would also remind members that we have a piece of legislation before this House, which, if it finally ever did make it through second reading to committee, would be another opportunity to take a look at the Ornge situation.

AIR AMBULANCE SERVICE

Mr. David Zimmer: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. For the past several weeks I've been sitting on public accounts, dealing with the Ornge business. Seven years ago, Ornge was created after a previous Auditor General's report said there were problems with Ontario's air ambulance. It wasn't serving Ontarians effectively. The then Auditor General said that a central coordinating agency was needed to improve air ambulance service in Ontario. That's why Ornge was created.

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Sadly, Speaker, and troubling, significant issues arose on the watch of the former leadership of Ornge. The CEO and the board of directors let Ontarians down. They created a complex web of private companies, they avoided credibility, and they enriched themselves.

What are you doing to right the ship at Ornge? Are those reforms going to take root?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member from Willowdale for—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Member for Lanark.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Lanark is now warned.

Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you, Speaker. I'd like to thank the member for the question and also for his excellent work at the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

We have taken concrete and substantive actions to address issues at Ornge. We now have a stronger performance agreement in place. We have a new board of directors, new senior leadership, and the OPP has been called in. The private entities that Ornge's former leader-

ship had created are being wound down, and Ornge is now focusing on providing quality air ambulance service to the people of Ontario.

And I have introduced Bill 50, Speaker. I had an opportunity to speak to that last week. Not only is the official opposition going to block the legislation, they say they're going to vote against Bill 50.

This side of the House is focused on—

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

Mr. David Zimmer: Speaker, Ontarians entrust government with the responsibility of governing. Ornge was created to improve air ambulance services in Ontario, and there is a role for all members of this Legislature to be a part of that solution and those reforms, whether they're Liberals, Progressive Conservatives or NDPers. This includes work by all party members on committees and on debates, especially on the committee work. This means working together on government legislation to improve accountability and transparency at Ornge.

Minister, what can we do as legislators, whether we're Liberals, Conservatives, or NDPers, to help you reform Ornge?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thanks for the question. There is, unfortunately, a trend emerging from the opposition. It is clear that they were absent without leadership on the budget, Speaker, and it is now clear that they are absent without leadership on legislation. They are playing games with—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to take this moment to remind the members, when answering questions, we're doing so on government policy.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have introduced new legislation that will bring enhanced transparency and enhanced accountability to Ornge.

The members opposite have chosen to ring the bells. They have chosen to play political games, Speaker. We've got work to do, and we need some co-operation from the party opposite to get the work done.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question is for the Premier. Today, Premier, you're closing slots at Fort Erie, the slots at Hiawatha and at Windsor Raceway, mothballing hundreds of jobs and putting families into distress.

Earlier this month, the MPP from Niagara Falls was to hand-deliver to you a proposal on behalf of the town of Fort Erie and the Fort Erie Live Racing Consortium. These organizations want to take over and operate the slots facility instead of closing it, saving approximately 300 jobs at Fort Erie's largest employer.

Premier, did Kim Craiton even bother showing you the proposal? Did you consider it? And why will you not give the private sector a chance?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A reminder for everyone, including those who use first names or whatever, that we refer to everyone by their title or by their seat.

Premier.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, earlier in question period, the opposition said we should follow Drummond. We are closing those slots, getting rid of it. That was one of Drummond's recommendations. You can't have it both ways. You can't say, "Do Drummond" and do as the Conservative finance critic did and call the Drummond report a sham the day it was introduced.

There are difficult choices to be made. The \$345-million-a-year subsidy to horse racing across Ontario is not a good use of public tax dollars, Mr. Speaker. It is the right move to make. Our priorities remain health care and education. We are going to move forward on those files as we move back to balance.

Mr. Speaker, these choices are difficult, but they're important for a better future for all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Premier: Your recent budget will single-handedly close the slots at the Fort Erie Race Track, putting 300 people out of work and closing the single largest employer in Fort Erie; likewise in Sarnia, another 140 jobs out the door, and 210 more in Windsor, all with the passing of your budget—over 500 families thrown into disruption and chaos, joining the over 600,000 Ontario men and women already out of work in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

Premier, why did you force your MPPs from Windsor West and Niagara Falls to vote against their constituents and vote against keeping jobs in their communities by forcing them to support your job-killing budget?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, in fact, the member for Niagara Falls met with both the Premier and I with respect to that proposal, so the premise of your question is wrong. In fact, this government's priorities remain the economy, health care and education.

The member opposite voted against his constituents when he voted against the southwestern Ontario economic development fund. We choose to invest in health care: in Windsor, Sarnia and Fort Erie, more than 80 new doctors in eight years—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound is now warned.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: —since 2003, 375 new teachers in Windsor, 201 in Sarnia, 382 in Fort Erie. Health care and education are the priorities. It's a difficult choice, Mr. Speaker. You can't continue to subsidize the international horse racing industry.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the finance minister. The budget bill sets out a rather disturbing process that screams Ornge all over again. The bill would establish a legal framework for the privatization of ServiceOntario, a framework that would allow an unaccountable, privatized, public-private system which the minister can hide behind.

In light of the disturbing abuses of public funds and the complete lack of transparency at Ornge in the fiasco, why is this minister, this government, heading down the same path with ServiceOntario as it did with Ornge?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In fact, Mr. Speaker, this initiative actually goes back to the 2011 budget. We began that to look at the best possible service delivery for Ontarians. We want to build on our success. Remember the 30 days or it's free on birth certificates, which we've done.

We took ServiceOntario, put it into one unit and increased efficiency—almost doubled efficiency. We looked at it more carefully, and like jurisdictions around the world, we're moving to an alternate financing proposal to see what can happen.

The member is not accurate when he says the bill contemplates an identical situation to Ornge. That's simply factually not correct. Those decisions haven't been taken, and we look forward to working with the third party to implement this.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: Speaker, the new piece of legislation opens the door to privatization of ServiceOntario and any other services provided by the Ministry of Government Services. Despite the comments from the government that letting Ornge go down this path was a big mistake, it seems perfectly willing to replicate it. The bill allows the government to enter into service agreements with any—I repeat, Speaker, any—corporation to provide public services, and allows for-profit partnerships.

Can the minister explain why he introduced legislation that replicates many of the failures of the Ornge legal framework?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: It's all about improving the quality of service to Ontarians. You know, the ServiceOntario offices that are open around the province—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke is now warned.

Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Speaker, the ServiceOntario offices that are around the province are serving people well. We still have more to do. For instance, there are still a number of services—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Attorney General will come to order.

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Hon. Dwight Duncan: There are still a number of services that could be offered online that are not being offered online. There's an investment of some \$1.3 billion in order to purchase the needed computer equipment. We'd like to work with the private sector to bring those services online, to bring that technology online. That will help improve service for average Ontarians and reduce wait times for things like birth certificates and health cards. We think it's the right direction to go in and a very affordable way to do it.

HOME CARE

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: My question is for the Minister of Finance. The seniors I talk to in Pickering–Scarborough East tell me that they want our government to do everything we possibly can to help them stay in their homes for as long as possible. I am pleased that Bill 2, the healthy homes tax credit, is a bill that helps do just that. This bill will provide a tax credit of up to \$1,500 a year to eligible seniors, as well as their caregivers, who make necessary retrofits to keep seniors at home longer.

Unfortunately, while sitting as a committee member on the Standing Committee for Finance and Economic Affairs just last Thursday, I witnessed first-hand how the PCs are using delay tactics to stop Bill 2 from moving forward. Speaker, while I understand that we may not always agree, this should not stop us from implementing important bills. Can the Minister of Finance please explain why we need to pass Bill 2?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, when you listen to those bells ringing, we're reminded that the bill will keep seniors safer in their homes longer. When those bells ring, we're reminded that our desire to relieve the pressure on long-term-care costs gets longer and the wait time longer. Every time those bells ring, the opposition is trying to prevent the creation of 10,500 jobs that would result from this legislation. When they ring the bells, they are deliberately undermining our ability to support almost \$800 million in home renovation activity.

The Conservatives are absent without leadership. They're blocking important legislation that will serve our seniors—

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

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Minister. I ran to become an MPP because I wanted to help implement good public policy, and this bill helps Ontario seniors make a better place to live, work and retire. I can't comprehend why the PCs are stalling on this. It's unfortunate that it's only the Liberals and the NDP who find the strategy of ringing bells offensive.

However, during committee last Thursday, I sat across from your critic, who also sounded frustrated and acknowledged that delaying procedures—and I quote from the member for Thornhill: “Every single piece of legislation that's out there has been delayed. Nothing has come back to the House since we were elected last October 6. I'm not happy about that nor am I proud....” I'm glad to hear that.

Can the minister please further explain to the House why we need to work together to support Bill 2 to happen?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I thank the member for her question and for her hard work in trying to get Bill 2 passed.

Here's what others say about the healthy homes renovation tax credit:

“Policies such as that would make it easier for seniors to remain at home.” That's from Susan Eng, the vice-

president of CARP. Every time the bells ring, the Tories are telling her, “We don't care what you say.”

Paul Golini, the chairman of the Building Industry and Land Development Association, says:

“Residential renovation is essential to our region's economic stability and prosperity because it creates jobs while improving the existing housing stock for years to come ... 165,800 jobs in new home construction and renovation in 2011, making it one of the largest employers in the region.”

The Tories are telling him and his organization, “We don't care what you say.”

Mr. Speaker, we want to get this bill passed. It's about better lives for our seniors. It's about making this Legislature work. The Tories are absent without leadership. We'll stand with Ontarians to pass—

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

GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: My question is for the Minister of Consumer Services. Ontario needs a real strategy for jobs and growth. Small business owners want to do their part, but often they can't, all because of provincial red tape.

My constituents Alan Mailloux and Barbara McMahon know all about that. They operate the Downie Street Bakehouse in Stratford. They invested good money in high-quality used ovens. Their ovens are safe, in everyone's opinion—except the TSSA, the Technical Standards and Safety Authority. To get their oven certified for use, the TSSA made a host of—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Peterborough is now warned.

Carry on.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: To get their oven certified for use, the TSSA made a host of unreasonable demands. They even demanded that someone from the oven's American manufacturer come up to Stratford and inspect the ovens—all at the Mailloux's expense.

My question is this: Does that seem reasonable to the minister, or is it just more Liberal red tape?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Mr. Speaker, first let me assure the member opposite that public safety is, indeed, the government's first priority—a very important concern for the government of the province of Ontario.

The Technical Standards and Safety Authority, TSSA, administers the Technical Standards and Safety Act and its regulations on behalf of the government. In 2009, the act was amended to strengthen the accountability and transparency of the TSSA by providing the minister with the power to appoint the chair and vice-chair of the TSSA board of directors, establishing a legislative authority to guide the focus of the TSSA—

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

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: Mr. Speaker, the minister is accountable for the TSSA. That's why I wrote her on behalf of the Downie Street Bakehouse. That was a month ago, and I've yet to see her response. This isn't about safety. Alan and Barbara spent a lot of time and energy following the TSSA process to have their ovens certified for use. But the TSSA's demands were unreasonable and excessive. They left Alan and Barbara with no choice but to go \$20,000 in debt just to buy new, lower-grade ovens. That's unacceptable to Alan and Barbara and to me.

My question to the minister: Can she name even one regulation that the McGuinty government has eliminated which actually made it easier to run a small business in Ontario?

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Mr. Speaker, I would like to assure the member opposite how important it is to the province of Ontario and to this government to have all the small businesses in the province operating as efficiently and effectively as possible.

This is a very specific issue and a very specific case that the member opposite brings to my attention. I certainly would look into this particular issue if he brings it to my attention. I undertake to further follow up with the member on it.

While I cannot address specific cases, I certainly can look into the issue that the member raises, and I can assure the member how important it is for the businesses to continue—

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

PEST CONTROL

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Health. Early last year, the McGuinty government, with a great deal of fanfare, announced \$5 million to tackle the spread of bedbugs. Now the government has quietly ended this program and also—quite frankly, shamefully—cancelled the community start-up and maintenance benefit, which helped people living on social assistance pay the cost of replacing bedbug-infested mattresses and furniture.

Do these cuts mean the McGuinty government thinks that the bedbug crisis has been solved?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me start by saying I can only imagine what it would be like to live with an infestation of bedbugs, Speaker. No one should have to live with that, and that is why last year, we provided one-time funding—extraordinary one-time funding—of \$5 million to help our public health units deal with this issue. I want to say thank you to the member from Eglinton–Lawrence, who worked very hard to raise this issue and to actually drive this change.

We have offered Toronto Public Health an additional three nurses to handle the bedbug issues. Unfortunately, Speaker, that money has not flowed because they have not added additional nurses. I want to reiterate that that money is available. It is ready to flow if and when they add those additional nurses.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: That's not what we're hearing from the Metro Toronto federation of tenants or from the local health units. They're hearing that they need the money, and they need it now. Ontario families continue to struggle with this problem of bedbugs everywhere, not just in Toronto: its health effects, ruined furniture, and unaffordable for most people pest removal costs.

Meanwhile, the McGuinty government is abandoning support for effective local public health programs that help people deal with bedbugs; this is what they're telling us.

I would ask the health minister to direct her opinions and her comments to those who need it most, those people who are struggling with bedbugs. I would welcome her at any time; we have many apartments in Parkdale that struggle with this problem too. She could stay for a night and find out what it's like.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, as I said, last year we were in a position to flow \$5 million to public health units; \$1.2 million of that did go to Toronto Public Health. We've also offered funding for new nurses, if and when Toronto Public Health adds nurses to their complement.

I want to work together. I want to work with the member opposite to find a solution. The city of Toronto is, of course, running a substantial surplus this year. We, sadly, are not in that position. We will work together, though, for the benefit of the people who are fighting this infestation.

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of the Environment. Clean water is crucial for our well-being. Conserving our water supplies and protecting our water quality are essential to ensuring the health of our families, our communities and our economy.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of the Environment: Please explain to us what Ontario is doing to promote innovation and growth of our water sector and encourage conservation.

Hon. James J. Bradley: First of all, it's an excellent question. As members of the House may know, through the Water Opportunities and Water Conservation Act—a key part of our Open Ontario plan—we are driving innovation, creating economic opportunities and promoting water conservation. I think the Conservatives voted against that act.

Innovative Ontario companies are already leading the way, employing 22,000 people in the clean water sector. We want to help foster new and innovative water technologies, services and practices, and encourage people to use water more efficiently. The 2011 Ontario budget outlined the water strategy and announced funding of \$30 million over three years for community demonstration programs, municipal water sustainability planning, and to support education and public awareness of water conservation. This is real progress.

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

The House recessed from 1152 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I just want to introduce Crystal Lee, who's here visiting from Toronto—actually, Toronto–Danforth—just to see the Legislature in action.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests? Members' statements? The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you. I attended an event this afternoon with Playworks, and I was very impressed that Mayor Dave Ryan was there as well as Mayor Pat Perkins—Mayor Dave Ryan of Pickering and Pat Perkins of Whitby. Thank you for the work you do with our youth in the community.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That was an introduction.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We'll reset the clock. That was an introduction.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

FALUN DAFA

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Thank you very much, Speaker, for getting that so nice and clear as well.

It's my pleasure and I'm proud today to congratulate practitioners of Falun Dafa worldwide. On May 13, 2012, it will be the 20th anniversary of Falun Dafa's introduction to the public by Mr. Li Hongzhi.

When Mr. Li Hongzhi introduced Falun Dafa, his intent was to encourage people to be truthful, compassionate and forbearing. Members of the Falun Dafa community hold these truths dear.

Regrettably, not everyone in the world follows these principles. Members of the Falun Dafa have been subject to extreme persecution, with their life, liberty and property taken from them immorally.

Around the world, the Communist Chinese government has engaged in a systematic campaign of oppression and suppression. Apparatchiks of the Communist state are not confined to the PRC. They have even forced documentaries off the air here in Canada on CBC.

Members of the Falun Dafa community have been subject to arbitrary arrests, imprisonment, torture, organ harvesting and psychiatric abuse and execution.

I, for one, am thankful for my friends in the Falun Dafa, and I'm glad they do not receive that persecution here in Ontario.

I invite all members of the House to attend the Falun Dafa Association of Canada's celebration on May 5 in Nathan Phillips Square at 11:30 a.m. here in Toronto.

NATIONAL DAY OF MOURNING

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: Today, I want to use my time to reflect on April 28, the National Day of Mourning for persons killed, injured or made sick by the workplace.

Today, the commemoration of this date has spread to more than 80 countries around the world. In 2001, the International Labour Organization observed it as World Day for Safety and Health at Work.

Make no doubt that this is a global movement now. Let's consider some key facts, as disturbing as they are.

On average, nearly four workers are killed in Canada on every working day; about a million more are injured every year. For every 16 workers in Canada, one of them will suffer an injury while at the workplace. Younger workers between the ages of 15 to 29 are at the highest risk.

Now, just imagine all of this happening in the world, including Canada: One person is killed on the job every 30 seconds. That means that by the time I'm done speaking, we will have lost another four people because of unsafe working conditions. This is an intolerable fact.

The government continues to dole out corporate tax cuts and asks nothing in return: no guarantee of jobs; no commitment of health and safety. Simply put, the relationship between people, government and business has come to be one-sided. It is no wonder that organized labour is coming under increasing attack.

PICKERING SOCCER CLUB

Ms. Tracy MacCharles: I'm very pleased to rise in the House today to acknowledge and applaud the Pickering Soccer Club and club head coach Tony La Ferrara for their exceptional support in helping put an end to bullying in our schools and our communities.

I had the pleasure of participating in their campaign kickoff just this last Friday, along with my colleague from Ajax–Pickering. It was a great success.

I'm pleased to be joined today in the House by Mayor David Ryan and members Gino Sgovio and Franco Taverna from the Pickering Soccer Club. So I welcome them.

While officiating weekly games on the soccer field throughout the city of Pickering this season, the referees wore a vest with the Stop Bullying Now logo clearly displayed to all spectators and players. This unique initiative has never been done before by any sports organization in Canada. Their important message will reach thousands of parents, players and community members over the course of the summer and is sure to be something to generate discussion and healthy dialogue between children and their parents.

I want to congratulate the Pickering Soccer Club for taking a major leadership role in helping make our kids

feel safe and comfortable in our shared community. Welcome, folks, and thank you, Speaker.

ONTARIO PROVINCIAL POLICE

Ms. Laurie Scott: Last Thursday, I had the honour to represent the Legislature at a touching ceremony in Minden in my riding of Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Under the Highway Memorials for Fallen Police Officers Act, three area bridges were dedicated to the memory of three local Ontario Provincial Police officers who gave their lives in the line of duty. These dedications were made in co-operation with the families of the deceased officers.

On December 11, 1968, Corporal James Smith and Detective Sergeant Lorne J. Chapitis were responding to a desperate call from a woman and her child who were being threatened by her husband. The officers approached the suspect and attempted to negotiate with him. Despite being unarmed, both officers were shot and killed by a high-powered rifle.

On July 3, 1993, Constable Richard Eric Nystedt was investigating another domestic dispute when the suspect attempted to escape into the woods. While pursuing the suspect, Officer Nystedt was stabbed from behind and bled to death before he could reach help.

I mentioned at the ceremony on Thursday that my father, Bill Scott, was the city federal member of Parliament when all three of these officers lost their lives in the line of duty. I remember the sadness we felt as a family and as a close community to all of those incidents.

The dedication at the three bridges will be a lasting reminder to the families of these men of the gratitude of the people of Ontario for the sacrifice they made. We are forever grateful to them.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yet again, another example of how the McGuinty government is deciding they're going to, as my friend says, whack northern Ontario.

We first saw it with their inactions and their feeble attempts to deal with the downfall of the forest industry, making a bad situation worse. Then we see them, on a whole bunch of other things, essentially groping around and trying to figure out how to respond to the issues in northern Ontario. Now it's the ONTC.

All of us were back in our ridings this weekend, and it's just palpable the anger that people have towards this government. I went to the 80th anniversary of the Croatian Hall in Schumacher, I went to the Day of Mourning, I went to a number of other events in the city of Timmins on the weekend, and just everywhere you went it was like, "Why is Dalton McGuinty doing it again?" And I have to say to them, "I really don't know."

"Why is it okay," people ask, "that you're able to provide an infrastructure in southern Ontario and, yes,

subsidize it by way of GO Transit, by way of other means of transportation, but you can't do it in northern Ontario?" And then we have cabinet ministers, as we hear now, who say that it's \$400 versus whatever. Well, you know what? It costs 10 times more to provide ambulance service in northern Ontario. It costs more money to run schools, it costs more money to run hospitals, but we do it. Why? Because it's part of the basic infrastructure that people are entitled to.

So when we hear cabinet ministers talk about, "You can't compare it to southern Ontario, because a subsidy in the south is not good in the north," we just wonder where this government is coming from.

WOODBINE ENTERTAINMENT GROUP

Mr. Shafiq Qadri: I use this opportunity to welcome the Woodbine Entertainment Group, who have come to Queen's Park and will be in committee room 2 from 5 p.m. to 7 p.m., including an invitation to meet the legendary jockey Sandy Hawley.

Speaker, as you'll know, Woodbine Entertainment has been a strong business and community partner in my riding, and their operations have, of course, made significant contributions to the government. OLG slots at Woodbine and Mohawk generate over \$500 million annually for the government. It's the number one lottery retailer in Ontario, the largest racetrack operator in Canada, and the engine that drives horse racing. It's a highly regarded member of the international racing community. It directly employs 2,300 individuals and another 3,000 individuals work in the back stretches at their racetracks.

It's been a strong community partner focusing on health care and youth, has donated approximately \$6 million to community organizations, and their leadership has made a great deal of difference for the young folks in my riding. They've set up scholarships, summer camps, riding programs for the disabled and support for local women's shelters. Last year, Woodbine employees spent almost 950 hours volunteering in the community.

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The Rexdale community has very much benefited by their presence. Woodbine has invested over \$375 million in racetrack and slot facilities. It actually hosts annually more folks than the Air Canada Centre or the Rogers Centre: seven million visitors annually.

I certainly support a new casino in Toronto at Woodbine, and welcome them today.

ONTARIO'S CREDIT RATING

Mr. Todd Smith: This is a very important issue in my community and many others. We're facing a serious debt and deficit crisis in the province of Ontario. Our party has been warning the government for months to get its house in order. We warned that the budget wasn't doing enough to meet Ontario's debt and deficit challenges. We warned that equivocating on a wage freeze, as the

government has, would be met with skepticism by the private sector.

Well, we got that private sector response loud and clear from Standard and Poor's and Moody's last week. In their review of Ontario's credit outlook, S&P said, "We believe the province's main credit challenges include its ... weak budgetary and debt metrics...."

Was the finance minister even humbled by this news of last week? No, he wasn't. He said that he welcomed the news, of all things.

Under the finance minister's watch, the deficit is 22% of operating revenues. The debt is 235% of revenues. He's responsible for managing Ontario's books. The finance minister, and the Premier this morning in question period too, seemed to be daring the credit agencies to further downgrade Ontario's debt and put the finances of the province into even worse shape.

Mr. Speaker, imagine you're a family with an income of about \$50,000, like many in Prince Edward-Hastings. If you were the province of Ontario, you'd be \$117,000 in debt today. You'd have to pay \$11,000 in interest every year on that debt, and your current spending patterns would mean that, in two years, you'd be \$140,000 in debt. Welcome to McGuinty and Duncan's Ontario.

ANTI-BULLYING INITIATIVES

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Mr. Speaker, our government understands that education is the key to building a stronger economy for our sons and daughters.

In order to grow and learn, our children have to feel safe going to school every day. That's why I'm proud to support Bill 13, the Accepting Schools Act. We're doing more than just telling bullied kids that it gets better; we're working together to make it better now. For the first time ever, we're defining bullying in legislation so that every student, teacher, principle and parent knows what we're talking about when we say that bullying is not okay in our schools.

The McGuinty government knows it's incumbent on each and every one of us inside the Legislature on both sides of the aisle and across the province to make sure that every Ontario student feels safe, included and welcome in our schools. We're all committed to making things better for our children.

That's why it's vital that Bill 13 is passed quickly so that new protections to prevent bullying and protect kids from homophobia can get in schools in time for September. I call upon the official opposition to stop delaying the passage of this important legislation. Let's work together to make sure kids who are being bullied get the help that they need.

ELIZABETH WITMER

Mr. Ted Arnott: In a political life, you meet thousands of people, and over a political lifetime, you may be lucky enough to develop a friendship with a very excep-

tional person who has inspired everyone around her with her passionate commitment to public service. Such a person is our colleague Elizabeth Witmer. I know I speak for her friends on all sides of the House when I say thank you to Elizabeth and wish her well as she assumes her new leadership responsibilities as chair of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

Last week, Elizabeth put her family first and decided that after 32 consecutive years serving the people of Ontario in elected office, the time had come for her to retire from the Legislature. What a career she's had here: Deputy Premier, Minister of Health, Education, Environment and Labour—all the easy ones, as she once said. In opposition: deputy leader, House leader, caucus chair and critic of some of those same important responsibilities—all this after a decade on the Waterloo public school board, and half that time as board chair.

She was always a political trailblazer, demonstrating women are, in every measure, the equal of men when it comes to political leadership. She also leads this place having made Ontario history as the longest-serving woman MPP ever with an elegance, class and style rarely seen in politics.

Once recognized in the Toronto Star as the hardest-working MPP in the House, her work was also defined by her compassion for people and a practical, collaborative approach to getting things done. She would work across party lines and never let partisanship get in the way of accomplishing her goals and those of her community. She was never defined by her party, but, at its best, our party was defined by her.

She accomplished big things for Waterloo region, like the hospital improvements and support for the universities and college expansions, but she was never too busy to help anyone she could with their individual issues and problems. I think of the McFadyen family and their little son Isaac, who needed life-saving medication, and what she did to convince the government to do the right thing; and the way she championed the free flu shot, which has saved literally thousands of lives since she introduced it a decade ago; and the work she did with the registered nurses and all the health stakeholder groups whom she enjoyed working with so much.

The circumstances of her departure meant she was unable to say goodbye to us here in this chamber, but I know she would want me to extend her warmest wishes to everyone here: the staff of the Legislature, members of all three caucuses, everyone.

Having been privileged to serve with Elizabeth for the past 22 years, I've come to know her family, and I know how proud they are of all she has done. As a friend, I'm saddened by her departure, but I know that all of us here who admired her and the way she served Ontario are ready to accept the torch that she passes to us.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank the member for that statement, and I thank all members for their statements. I also did take an opportunity to send an email personally to Ms. Witmer.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I beg leave to present the first report 2012 from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Tabuns presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations. Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Just my thanks to the committee for the work they did on going through this material, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Tabuns moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: No—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Oh, you did not do that. That's fine. No further action is required, then. Thank you.

Reports by committees?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Let's stop for a moment. The member does need to move adjournment of the debate.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I so move.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Tabuns has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

LABOUR RELATIONS AMENDMENT ACT (FAIRNESS FOR EMPLOYEES), 2012 LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RELATIONS DE TRAVAIL (ÉQUITÉ À L'ÉGARD DES EMPLOYÉS)

Mr. Natyshak moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 77, An Act to amend the Labour Relations Act, 1995 with respect to enhancing fairness for employees / *Projet de loi 77, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1995 sur les relations de travail en vue d'accroître l'équité à l'égard des employés.*

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.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: What this bill is about is very simple. We need a level playing field when it comes to

labour relations in this province. Every Ontario worker deserves to be able to exercise their democratic rights without fear of reprisal, but current labour laws allow employers to bully, intimidate and fire employees without impunity. With the present labour laws, there's no such thing as workplace democracy in Ontario. We desperately need to bring balance back to Ontario's Labour Relations Act and give vulnerable workers the tools to lift themselves out of poverty.

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Bringing fairness to the workplace is a big task, Mr. Speaker. What we have tried to do with the Fairness for Employees Act is to take a few modest, uncontroversial reforms that we think can easily be implemented with support from all parties and all parts of the labour movement and hopefully, the employer community as well. I urge everyone in the House to vote for this very practical, doable, modest set of reforms.

PETITIONS

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O'Toole: It's my pleasure to read a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"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" had their homes bought out to silence them;

"Whereas Ontario's Green Energy Act 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"—not politics—"and local planning."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Dia, one of the pages here in her last week.

LONG-TERM CARE

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

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

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

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

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to expand the Ombudsman’s mandate to include Ontario’s long-term-care homes in order to protect our most vulnerable seniors.”

MARKDALE HOSPITAL

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Grey Bruce Health Services’ Markdale hospital is the only health care facility between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor;

“Whereas the community of Markdale rallied to raise \$13 million on the promise they would get a new state-of-the-art hospital in Markdale;

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

“That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care announce as soon as possible its intended construction date for the new Markdale hospital and ensure that the care needs of the patients and families of our community are met in a timely manner.”

I support this petition. I’ll affix my name and I will send it with Ranbir to the clerks’ table. Thank you.

ONTARIO NORTHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION

Mr. John Vanthof: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission provides services which are vital to the north’s economy; and

“Whereas it is a lifeline for the residents of northern communities who have no other source of public transportation; and

“Whereas the ONTC could be a vital link to the Ring of Fire;

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

“That the planned cancellation of the Northlander and the sale of the rest of the assets of the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission be halted immediately.”

I fully agree. I’ve signed this petition and will send it down with Talin.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Steve Clark: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, signed by a number of my constituents.

“Whereas the Ontario horse racing and breeding industry generates \$2 billion of economic activity, mostly in rural Ontario;

“Whereas more than 60,000 Ontarians are employed by Ontario’s horse racing and breeding industry;

“Whereas 20% of the funds generated by the OLG slots-at-racetracks program is reinvested in racetracks and the horse racing and breeding industry, while 75% is returned to the government of Ontario;

“Whereas the OLG slots-at-racetracks program generates \$1.1 billion a year for health care and other spending, making it the most profitable form of gaming in the province for OLG;

“Whereas the government has announced plans to cancel the slots-at-racetracks program, a decision that will cost the government \$1.1 billion per year and threatens more than 60,000 jobs;

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

“Call on the government of Ontario to protect the \$1.1 billion of revenue the government received annually because of the OLG slots-at-racetracks program; direct OLG to honour the contracts with racetracks and protect the horse racing and breeding industry by continuing the OLG slots-at-racetracks revenue-sharing program.”

I agree with the petition, will affix my signature and send it to the table with page Noah.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas currently the law takes the onus off of owners that raise violent dogs by making it appear that violence is a matter of genetics; and

“Whereas the Dog Owners’ Liability Act does not clearly define a pit bull, nor is it enforced equally across the province, as pit bulls are not an acknowledged breed;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly passes Bill 16, Public Safety Related to Dogs Statute Law Amendment Act, 2011, into law.”

I couldn’t agree more. I will sign this and give this to Manak to be presented to the desk.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m hoping that other people have constituents like mine who are interested in presenting views. It’s my duty and privilege to present them. It reads as follows:

“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” had their homes bought out to silence them;

“Whereas Ontario’s Green Energy Act 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”—not politics—“and local planning.”

I’m pleased to sign and support it and present it to Dia, one of the pages here that’s here for two more weeks.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Sudbury and Nickel Belt, 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 October 2009, “insured PET scans” are performed “in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

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

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

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

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Jeff Yurek: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the residents of Elgin–Middlesex–London are concerned about the sacrifice of 400 acres of prime agricultural land in the town of Belmont to the development of a solar farm despite the Green Energy Act’s

prohibition of building on such high-grade agricultural land;

“Whereas the company First Solar claims their use of such valuable land is justified under the older renewable energy framework that was in place when the company received its OPA contracts;

“Whereas the government has grandfathered the project into the new Green Energy Act, thereby allowing the company to circumvent any municipal opinion and review;

“Whereas the government has effectively allowed this project to use favourable aspects of two separate regulatory frameworks while avoiding aspects of those same frameworks that are meant to protect one of Ontario’s most vital finite resources: its world-class agricultural land;

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

“To put a moratorium on the solar development in Belmont until the province decides by which set of regulations First Solar is to abide.”

I support this petition, sign it and hand it page Brady.

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HYDRO RATES

Mr. Michael Mantha: “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 fully support this petition, and I will be presenting it to page Manak to bring it to the Chair.

MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT

Mr. Reza Moridi: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas currently the chair of the regional municipality of York is not an elected official and is appointed;

“Whereas currently the population of the regional municipality of York is approximately one million and forecasted to reach 1.5 million within the next 20 years;

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

“To support private member’s Bill 60, brought forward by Reza Moridi, MPP for Richmond Hill, which would amend the Municipal Act, 2001 to provide that the head of council of the regional municipality of York must be elected and may not be appointed.”

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Todd Smith: “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” dozens of families “have been bought out of their homes;

“Whereas Ontario’s Green Energy Act has ended local planning control by stripping municipal councils of their rights;

“Whereas 80 municipal councils” and growing, representing more than “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 local planning.”

I agree with this petition and will send it to the table with Noah.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: J’ai une pétition qui a été signée par des francophones de partout en Ontario :

« Attendu que la mission du commissaire aux services en français est de veiller à ce que la population reçoive en français des services de qualité du gouvernement de l’Ontario et de surveiller l’application de la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que le commissaire a le mandat de mener des enquêtes indépendantes selon la Loi sur les services en français;

« Attendu que contrairement au vérificateur général, à l’ombudsman, au commissaire à l’environnement et au commissaire à l’intégrité qui, eux, relèvent de l’Assemblée législative, le commissaire aux services en français relève de la ministre déléguée aux services en français;

« Nous, soussignés, demandons à l’Assemblée législative de l’Ontario de changer les pouvoirs du commissaire aux services en français afin qu’il relève directement de l’Assemblée législative. »

Je suis en faveur de cette pétition, monsieur le Président. Je vais la signer et demander à page Vincent de l’amener à la table des greffiers.

CELLULAR TRANSMISSION EQUIPMENT

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I’ve got a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the operation of cellular commercial transmission equipment on new or existing cell towers has been proposed near residential areas in Oakville and other communities around the province; and

“Whereas Industry Canada has ultimate authority to approve the location of cellular communications transmission equipment under the federal Radiocommunication Act;

“Whereas the province of Ontario has no jurisdiction in the placement of cell communications equipment or services; and

“Whereas many area residents and local elected officials have expressed concerns with the location due to its proximity to residential areas;

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

“That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada review the siting of cellular commercial communications transmission equipment in residential areas; and

“That the province of Ontario request that the government of Canada place a moratorium on the installation of cellular commercial communication transmission equipment on new or existing towers within 1,000 metres of residential homes until an improved separation distance is established by the federal government.”

I agree with this petition, Speaker, and will sign it and send it down with Gillian.

HORSE RACING INDUSTRY

Mr. Bill Walker: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the horse racing industry employs approximately 60,000 people, creates \$1.5 billion in wages and \$2 billion in recurring expenditures annually; and

“Whereas the partnership that was created between government and the horse breeding and racing industry has been a model arrangement and is heralded throughout North America, with 75% of revenues going to the provincial government to fund important programs like health care and education, 5% to the municipalities and only 20% goes back to the horse business; and

“Whereas the horse business is a significant source of revenue for the farming community and rural municipalities;

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

“That the Ministry of Finance continue the revenue-sharing partnership with the horse racing industry for the benefit of Ontario’s agricultural and rural economies.”

I support this petition. I’ll sign my name to it and I will send it with page Georgia to the table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

AMBULANCE AMENDMENT ACT (AIR AMBULANCES), 2012

LOI DE 2012 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES AMBULANCES (SERVICES D’AMBULANCE AÉRIENS)

Resuming the debate adjourned on April 25, 2012, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services / Projet de loi 50, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances en ce qui concerne les services d’ambulance aériens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I’m advised that when we last debated second reading of Bill 50, the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound had the floor. He still has some time on the clock. I recognize the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you, Speaker. I’ll start off where I left off. Again, I just want to suggest that Bill 50 is nothing more than the McGuinty government’s attempt to divert attention away from its failure to take action against Ornge, despite repeated warnings of financial irregularities, bloated executive salaries, operational deficiencies and, worst of all, compromising patient care. The Minister of Health, the Minister of Finance and the Premier blindly defended an organization that was siphoning scarce health care dollars into a web of for-profit companies when questions were first raised here in this Legislature in April of last year.

Speaker, we don’t need more regulation and legislation. What we need is competent and responsible leadership. Both have been found wanting on the part of the Minister of Health and those responsible for oversight of our province’s air ambulance. The question we ask on behalf of Ontarians is: What has changed? Why should Ontarians believe that the same individuals who failed in their oversight responsibilities and allowed millions of scarce health care dollars to be wasted will do anything different? A piece of paper, a regulation, a legislation is not what’s needed, Speaker; it’s a change of approach. Certainly we have no confidence that this new layer of legislation will do anything to restore confidence in what is an essential emergency health care service. Only competent leadership can bring about that confidence. By bringing forward this meaningless bill and boasting that this will bring about the changes necessary to restore that confidence only confirms to us that the minister does not

grasp the depth of the issues that are at the core of the problems at Ornge and that she and her government are more concerned about self-preservation than ensuring the integrity of one of our essential health care services.

The bill’s single biggest weakness is the so-called whistle-blower protection section, which fails to protect some of the very people who are in the best position to report fraud, waste, abuse and health and safety violations. Firstly, it fails by not providing across-the-board protection for whistle-blowers. Secondly, it fails by imposing limits on which individuals are protected and who they can approach with information.

So again I ask: Why should we believe anything will change? What is needed is a process that will not only safeguard the whistle-blower but will also instill confidence that their concerns will be taken seriously. The Ombudsman should be engaged to assist in developing that process and should be integral to a formalized whistle-blower reporting process if this is to have any meaningful effect.

I mentioned earlier about confidence. This layer of legislation is what we seem to be getting over and over. We add another rule, another layer of bureaucracy, another layer of wasted time and effort. What we need is significant change. We’ve had months and months where the minister could have stepped in and done something of a substantive nature to bring this about. By bringing forward this meaningless bill and boasting that this will bring about the changes, the minister just again exemplifies that she has missed the boat on this one. It’s too little, too late.

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We keep hearing all the time, “We have to do better.” Why don’t we do better on the first iteration when we implement something? Why do we have to continually go back and revise and revamp and bring in a whole new slate of people and start the process all over? We need to move ahead.

We’ve asked again and again for a select committee to investigate Ornge, as was the will of this House and as was agreed to by the minister herself. We need to ensure that more witnesses are able to come forward with information and be allowed time to speak on their concerns. Only when we get this will we truly be able to get to the truth. As long as the government House leader refuses to respect the will of this Legislature to strike a select committee on Ornge, we will not get to the bottom of this scandal.

As mentioned a couple of times already in my remarks, this bill is nothing more than an attempt to divert attention away from the fact that the minister has had the power to appoint a supervisor and/or inspector from the very beginning of this Ornge saga. The minister had the power to intervene at Ornge under the original Ornge performance agreement, as well as the Independent Health Facilities Act. Article 15 of the original performance agreement gave her powers of intervention. Why didn’t she show leadership? Why didn’t she step up with the legislation she already had and act, as opposed

to introducing yet more paperwork, more endless bureaucracy and this administrative boondoggle?

It's a shame that the Premier, the cabinet and Liberal MPPs are not as committed as we are to getting to the bottom of this scandal. Why don't they want to find out what happened and ensure that those responsible are held accountable and, most importantly, determine what has to be done to restore confidence in our air ambulance service?

Speaker, that's our objective, and we intend to get there. We owe it to the Ontario public. We owe it to the front-line staff of our air ambulance service, the paramedics, the pilots, the engineers, the dispatchers, the maintenance crews and the administrative staff who are dedicated to providing an essential health care service to the people of this province.

I want to assure those people that we will do everything in our power on this side of the House, on their behalf, to achieve that objective.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

M^{me} France G  linas: Mr. Speaker, it's always a little bit odd when the lead starts the week preceding and then continues. Anyway, I was there when the member from Newmarket–Aurora started his lead, and I listened to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound from beginning to end, the end being today. I agree with lots of what they have put forward; things such as the expression that I think the member from Newmarket–Aurora used, “We shut the barn door once the horse had already left”—I think applies very well, in the sense that there is so much scrutiny on Ornge right now that the people in there wouldn't dare raise a finger without making sure that it is in the protocol. To come out with this new legislation—some of it is very problematic to me and to us—after the scandal is already done, after the harm is already done, is very little consolation.

They talk about building confidence back into the system. This is something you hear the NDP talk about a lot. When we talk about health care, health care happens between individuals. That relationship between the care providers and the person receiving the care is at the core of confidence. Once you've lost this, you have lost the ability to deliver top-quality care, and this is a shame.

They talk about two glaring myths in this bill—that is, if you are serious that you want to give people transparency and accountability, then rather than inventing new powers, why don't you use effective levers that we already have? Why don't you give the Ombudsman oversight of air transportation, and why don't you make this agency FOI-able?

I'll have more to say soon.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to add my comments to those of the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound and urge that the members of this House speak in support of Bill 50, or at the end of the day would be supportive of Bill 50, because I think it's that step

forward that we all need and a challenge that's been placed before this House—where an organization does things that you would otherwise it did not do.

What we propose to do or what the bill proposes to do is that we're able to appoint a supervisor and move in quickly. I think all members of this House would agree that that's something that should be done. When a challenge faces any government at any time, you want to be able to move quickly. So the ability to put a special investigator in there or to put a supervisor, I think, is good, sound management and something that we should be promoting and should all be supporting.

We should also be allowed, at the provincial level, to give directives to the air ambulance service in the same way that we've all gotten used to doing at the hospitals. When things got out of hand a little bit at the hospitals in the past under any party, we've been able to move in and make changes. That's what we'd like to see here. I think any agency of the government that is operated on behalf of the government should have a level of accountability similar to what you would find in the private sector, for example, where there are performance measures, where there are standards that are put out there and the organization can then be held to account using those performance measures and standards as a bit of a guide.

I believe we also need to have a performance agreement with any agency that operates on behalf of the government, especially one such as Ornge or the air ambulance service that provides such a necessary and needed service to the people of the province of Ontario. We need to be clear, in that performance agreement, that responsibilities exist that are expected on behalf of the ministry and that will indeed be provided by the air ambulance service. By supporting Bill 50, you allow this to move forward to the committee stage. I'm sure there will be some further comments at that stage, but I think it's important that we move to that stage.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I do respect the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound as the critic for the health care file. I think he did a commendable job in terms of, I think, just telling it the way it is. He's very good at that. In fact, he followed the remarks by Frank Klees, made earlier, where he said basically that the actions of Bill 50 are completely unnecessary; in fact, there are regulations, etc., under the current Ambulance Act to do the same thing. But this is really kind of a whitewash, trying to move forward and act like they're doing something. I agree. That's kind of the argument he put forward.

But I want to put one more thing on the table, too. We all get letters from frustrated civil servants, and I want to put on the record here one Julie Wood, who has written to members of our caucus and, I think, to the Premier as well, outlining some of the people who are in charge, not just at Ornge. Ron McKerlie is now in charge. He was the former super-deputy from, I think, government services. In one of these memos, he is criticized quite openly. I'll put that on here, supporting that observation,

except that others were saying—these are former civil servants. It looks like the blind leading the blind.

Why don't they let the Ombudsman take care of this? What's this special section? If you look at the first section of the bill, it says, "The Lieutenant Governor in Council may appoint special investigators to investigate and report on the activities" to the minister. Why wouldn't you just let the Ombudsman do it? If we really want it to be clear and open and transparent, what's the problem with letting André Marin? He's the king of all—he'd out you in five seconds.

Now the deal here is that there's a lot of power to the minister. They have messed this file up so badly that Bill 50 is completely unwarranted.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Come on. Say something nice.

Mr. John O'Toole: Look, we'd like you to straighten out the mess. What we really want is a select committee on Ornge. That's what we want. In that vein, I would like—oh, I ran out of time or I would have called for bells.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jonah Schein: I listened carefully to the members from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, Nickel Belt, Oakville and Durham, and I'm happy to speak about G50 today. Clearly, we need to strengthen this bill, and I think it's important to talk about protecting whistle-blowers. But I think it's also important to talk about how to restore public confidence in our public health care system.

I grew up in an era where the Conservatives were in power and there was an education minister who was on record as creating a crisis in the public education system, and who went to every length to actually make that happen, to create that crisis of confidence in the public. Unfortunately, I feel like we're going down that same route again here, where there's a real crisis of confidence in the health care system. Until the government actually steps up and takes responsibility for what has happened with Ornge—and we haven't heard this yet—it's going to be difficult to win the public's trust back.

Listening to the member opposite talking about the kind of accountability in the private sector, I think the problem is that there is over-confidence on the government side that private delivery is going to work and be accountable, when in fact it's not. It's only accountable to itself, and we need to bring back public accountability at this point.

1350

We need to make sure that the public is back on-side, that we don't move down the path of privatization. We've got real concerns about the OPS being privatized at this point—we heard that today in question period—and we need the government to talk about public accountability, not just the accountability of the private sector here.

I think we need to have this debate, but there are some difficult things. This was announced the same day that Ornge was being investigated. The public cannot be fooled this easily. It seems like a distraction to the public.

We need to get to the bottom of the Ornge scandal at this point and then move forward with this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We now can return to the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. He has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Bill Walker: As I said, and as some of my colleagues in this House have stated just now, this is closing the door after the horse is out of the barn. It's way too late; it's trying to play catch-up. Worse, it's disingenuous, because it's trying to deflect and divert attention away from the true matters at hand. The minister knew full well from the start that she had the powers to step in and do something. The Premier knew, the finance minister knew; they could have done all of this without this.

There are 500,000 pieces of regulation. What we should be doing—and we've said it from day one in our platform last fall. We need to get rid of regulation, not add more. That seems to be what the government of the day wants to do. They want to add more and more paperwork; they want to add more and more layers of government. Unfortunately, in this case they even have a tangled web of administration and bureaucracy so that we can't get to the answers.

We've been asking for an Ornge select committee to be able to get to the truth of the matter. This is nothing but a red herring. It reads like a knee-jerk reaction to the years-long fiasco at Ornge, serious breaches of public trust that the Liberal side of the House, namely the Minister of Health, the Minister of Finance and Premier, has tried to dodge and hide. Over and over, it's becoming indicative of their incompetence to be able to manage the affairs of our province.

This is nothing but a cover-up. It's a case of them wanting to divert and move around. They want to just get it out of the limelight so they can bring some of their stuff back into the limelight. It's nothing more than a damning failure of the minister and her government to fess up and admit what they knew. Bill 50 is proof of deep cynicism and failed leadership at the ministry. This piece of legislation is going to do nothing to actually improve health care for the people of Ontario.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: It's a shell game.

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a shell game. As my colleague from Elgin–Middlesex–London said, it is a shell game. We're seeing too many of these shell games. That's why we have a \$15.3-billion debt that's moving to \$30 billion. We need to start doing the things that Ontarians expect.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I guess it will be my turn to state a bit of the NDP's position regarding Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services; le projet de loi 50, la Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances en ce qui concerne les services d'ambulance aériens.

Let me start by saying that the tabling of this and the press conference for this bill was, let's just say, very suspicious by its timing. As the Auditor General was presenting his special report on basically the scandal at

Ornge, the Minister of Health chose the same day to introduce Bill 50. In the business of politicians, it is called changing the channel. What the Auditor General was bringing forward is a real shame, a real scandal. This bill was given to us on the same day as the damning report was coming out.

The Minister of Health—and, to much of an extent, the Premier—would like us to believe that they had no part in creating the disaster at Ornge. Since March, when it first came out, they have gone to great lengths to show that the blame has nothing to do with them; it has to do with a faulty accountability agreement. Yet they did not even provide the oversight that was prescribed in the agreement, and I will go into more details about this.

They blame Ornge, yet Ornge officials, one after the other, have told us that the government was briefed every step of the way. How can you have people at Ornge telling us, “We briefed the government every step of the way,” and then the government telling us, “We knew nothing. Had we known, we would have acted, but we knew nothing”? It’s becoming hard to believe.

Then they started to blame the bureaucracy, in spite of the fact that it is clear that MPPs were intentionally shielding themselves from the information, although there are fingerprints of elected representatives all over Ornge.

The government has even tried to blame the opposition, that it is the PC and the NDP’s fault that this scandal went on, implying that we could have done more. At least it’s an admission that something should have been done sooner—I guess I’ll try to look at the glass as half full. But to blame the opposition when really we, the NDP, filed 42 questions in estimates about Ornge and never got answers for over 20 months; we filed freedom-of-access-to-information requests regarding Mr. Mazza’s salary. Mr. Mazza was the CEO of Ornge and is the one that everybody now knows was making \$1.4 million. But apparently it is our fault, the NDP’s and the PCs’, that the Liberals didn’t act.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Blame everybody else.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Blame everybody.

Then it gets even more twisted, because the minister changed her story halfway through. She introduces Bill 50 and holds a press conference. The press is all there, and so am I. One of the reporters from CBC—Christian Noël, actually, from CBC—asked her, “Did alarm bells go off when a letter that Ornge had put together”—it was a substantial document that basically outlined step by step the steps they had done to build these for-profit companies around the not-for-profit Ornge, with a schematic and everything. When this was presented, the minister said, “Oh, yes, a red flag went up, alarm bells went off. We tried to get answers, but we were stonewalled”—as in, they were trying to do the right thing, they were trying to get to the bottom of what happened, but they couldn’t get information.

Yet when we asked everybody at Ornge, not one of them was ever asked a question. When we asked the bureaucracy what kind of follow-up they had to do

following this briefing—it is quite remarkable that you have dozens of people who received this briefing, who received this document, yet very few even remember they got this document. Even fewer of them remember ever reading it, and the few whose job it was to read this will tell us that, oh, they told the minister, but no red flag went up, no bells were ringing and no follow-up.

Yet we have the Minister of Health on tape, from at least 15 different TV radio stations, saying, “Oh, yes, alarm bells went off, a red flag went up. We followed up. We were stonewalled.” But it looks like none of that is true. It doesn’t look like it raised any alarm bells. It doesn’t look like it raised any red flags. It certainly doesn’t look like they did any follow-up work, and it certainly doesn’t look like they were stonewalled.

Then the Minister of Health told us that when she became aware of the outrageous salaries that were paid and the number of for-profit companies that had been put in place, she had fired the board. All of them were gone—to be replaced, to turn the page, to put a clean slate into place.

1400

But yet, we learned when some of the previous board members that apparently had been fired—“Out the door you go. You guys did bad, and out you go.” That’s not what happened at all. Those people came, they talked to us and they said, “She never fired us. No, no. We asked to meet with her, and we decided to leave so that they could appoint.” I’m scratching my head here and asking, “What’s going on?” The Minister of Health is telling us that when she became aware, through the work of our good auditor and through the front page of the Toronto Star, which probably helped just a little wee bit, she called a meeting. But then we hear that she never really called a meeting; it was Ornge who called them when they saw their name splattered in black, painted black on the front page of the paper. And then they were never told to resign, Mr. Speaker; they decided to leave on their own. This is the type of leadership that doesn’t score very high in my book, doesn’t—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Point of order, the member for Durham.

Mr. John O’Toole: I’m concerned about the lack of attendance here. I wonder if there’s a quorum present, listening to this—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I’ll ask the table to ascertain if there is indeed a quorum.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you. I return to the member for Nickel Belt.

M^{me} France Gélinas: So we’re about at day five of the public accounts hearings on the Auditor General’s special report, and the story is starting to come together. We have pieces of the puzzle, and now we’re starting to see the picture of the puzzle. What we see is that Ornge was made up of a whole bunch of for-profit companies. We’ve seen that it was not only Ornge’s incompetence or mismanagement, like the government wants us to

believe, that the story ends there, but it looks like the government should have known, did know, and kind of purposely was hiding what was going on, that the government actually had many levers for action but chose not to use them. And then you can't help but ask yourself, if you know that this is wrong—I mean, how could anybody agree with paying somebody \$1.4 million of taxpayers' money to manage a \$150-million budget? We have hospital executives that manage four or five times that amount, and hopefully none of them will ever make \$1.4 million, not under an NDP watch, I can guarantee you that. Yet we were seeing this.

So why was this allowed to happen? Why is it that although we saw this shell game of companies going on and the government saw that too, and we saw the outrageous salaries and the government knew about this, they did nothing? I can't help but think, Mr. Speaker, it was because it served their purpose. They had something to gain in letting it continue.

They expected Ornge to privatize some of their services—that was part of the purpose; Ornge never hid that part of it—leveraging Ontario's assets, knowledge and skills so that apparently we could make money and that money would come back to Ontario and serve the people of Ontario. From looking at what happened, it looks like everything went according to plan, Mr. Speaker. They did leverage the assets of Ontario, they did build a whole bunch of new companies, and they did pay Dr. Mazza \$1.4 million. In the meantime, a whole bunch of people intimately connected with the Liberal company—Liberal government made a ton of money.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Feels like a company.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes, it feels like a company.

So here we are now. When we first started asking questions about Ornge, the minister stood at her seat and told us that if it was the will of the House to investigate Ornge, she would respect this. Well, let me tell you today, Mr. Speaker, that it is the will of the House that Ornge be investigated by a select committee of the Legislature. We actually took a vote, and the will of the House carried. The will of the House told us that we want an investigation on what happened at Ornge. We want to know who knew what, when, so that the mistakes of the past serve for lessons for the future, so that we learn from our mistakes. First, we acknowledge that we've made a mistake, then we learn from them; we do better, then we turn the page. This is what a select committee would allow us to do. But in spite of this, in spite of telling this House that if it was the will of the House that we could do this, the government is steadily refusing to put together a select committee.

The bits and piece of information that we are putting together come from the hearings that we are having at public accounts. But a very basic question remains, Mr. Speaker. How come the government can't even admit that they did wrong? How come they can't admit that they had a role to play in this fiasco? If you don't acknowledge that you have a problem, how can you convince us that you're willing to fix the problem and that you will fix it right?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's the first step.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's the first step. How can we be assured that it won't happen again? If you're not willing to accept that there's a problem, then chances are it will happen again, and government money will continue to be wasted, services will be put at risk and the confidence in our health care system will continue to be shaken at a time where people need reassurance.

It looks to me right now that this government is simply hoping that the bill will change the channel. I think Ontarians deserve better than this. They deserve a full account of the facts and they deserve a government that can stand up, look at their own role in creating this disaster and find ways to actually assure Ontarians that that will not happen again. Today, instead of moving forward toward that goal, I fear that we are moving further away.

One of the key statements of the minister is that she wants Ornge, the air ambulance, to be more transparent. Actually, even with Bill 50, I'm really afraid that Ornge will continue to not be that transparent. Ornge will not be subject to freedom of access to information.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker: Organizations and agencies behave really differently when they are subject to FOI. Just look at the 150 hospitals in Ontario. They became FOI-able. They fell under the freedom of access to information law on January 1 of this year. On January 2—because I think the 1st was a weekend—all websites of every hospital in Ontario had posted the contracts of their CEOs, as well as their salaries and compensation. You would never have seen this before if it was not that they fell under FOI.

To bring an agency under the freedom of access to information law changes the behaviour of those agencies for the better. It changes the behaviour of those agencies, and they become more transparent. They become proactive in being transparent, which I think would help Ornge. I think it would help people regain confidence if Ornge was under the freedom of access to information, but there is slim chance that that will happen, although, today, in question period, the Minister of Health said that she's quite ready to listen to the other side, to take good ideas.

The system is set up in a way that, in order to move things forward, such as bringing them under freedom of access to information, we would need unanimous consent. It is not part of Bill 50. It would need to be added to Bill 50, although it is part of the spirit of Bill 50. Things don't work in spirit in here; they are in black and white, in clause-by-clause in legislation. I took the briefing on Bill 50; I can assure you that it is not in there. In order to put it in, which seems to be a pretty reasonable thing to do, make them FOI-able. Make them behave in a way that is more transparent. Isn't this what we all want them to do? We will ask for unanimous consent. We already know, because of the questions that were asked this morning by a member of the PC caucus, that they also want freedom of access of information. I hope I'm wrong, Mr. Speaker, but I hope that when I ask the Liberals if they

will give their consent to bring Ornge under the freedom of information act, they will actually agree. I have my doubts, but I am putting it out there. I will be asking for your consent and I hope, Minister, that you will give it.

1410

The other part that would greatly improve transparency is Ombudsman oversight. Air ambulance, Mr. Speaker, I don't have to tell you, deals with life-and-death situations, and sometimes things go wrong. We can all think of events where air ambulance would be called in. In the north, we depend on them an awful lot—most of the time, in most tragic accidents that happen in the north. But they happen in southern Ontario. Everybody will remember what happened with the train that derailed. We all saw the picture of this ambulance standing on the side, waiting to transfer people to a place where people could help them. Life-and-death events occur in and around air ambulance. When that happens, sometimes things go wrong. Sometimes families have questions. Sometimes families worry that their loved ones maybe did not get exactly what they wanted. Whether it's justified or not, it doesn't matter. In your heart, you wonder and want answers. You want to be able to bring closure to the loss of a loved one, to the loss of opportunities, to life-and-death events. The Ombudsman does that. The Ombudsman is that third party, this arm's-length individual who comes in and gives you answers. They have investigated dozens and dozens of complaints. They have very knowledgeable and skilled staff who know how to do investigations, they know how to get answers to people's questions, and in health care they bring families closure. The families feel reassured that they know the full story, that somebody on their side went to bat for them and got them the truth about what happened. Whether it's good or ugly, it allows people to move on; it allows people to turn the page; it allows families closure. This is something that would bring great transparency into Ornge.

But here again, Ombudsman oversight is not part of Bill 50. They go nowhere near bringing a third party independent investigator into Bill 50. Here again, we heard through question period that the PC caucus would like to see that. We would like to see Ombudsman oversight of this agency. Here again, we will be limited by procedures. The only way to bring that forward, Mr. Speaker, is to have unanimous consent.

Minister, once again, I will be asking you for consent to bring Ombudsman oversight of Ornge in whatever form air ambulance takes in this province. Will you grant it? I sure hope so. Because if you are serious about wanting to bring transparency, then one of the wonderful tools that exists in this assembly and in this province is the Ombudsman, who speaks for the little guy, as his motto would tell you.

Then comes the sunshine list. You will all remember that in 2007—actually it was his 2007 salary, but it happened in 2008—Dr. Mazza, who was the CEO of Ornge, the air ambulance, was making \$298,000. We all know this because his salary was on the sunshine list.

Like everybody else paid by the government who worked in a transfer payment agency, his salary had to be disclosed if it was over \$100,000. So in 2008, when the list came out, we found out that Dr. Mazza made \$298,000 in 2007. I would say he was handsomely paid, if you asked me, but that was the fact.

Then in 2008 when the salary disclosure came out, Dr. Mazza had disappeared. Some would say, "Maybe he started making under \$100,000, which is the reason he was not on the list." I don't think too many people believe that.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Dr. Houdini.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Dr. Houdini.

There was another reason why he was not on the list. It's not because his salary was under \$100,000; his salary was actually \$1.4 million. You don't have to be very strong in math to know that \$1.4 million is more than \$100,000.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: What a raise.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It was a pretty good raise.

Mr. Michael Prue: Fourteen times.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yeah, 14 times. But the minister said she had no idea that he was making that much money.

Let me take you back in time, Mr. Speaker. We're now in 2009. We, the NDP, doing our work in opposition, keeping an eye on things, realized Dr. Mazza's salary had disappeared from the sunshine list. So we filed an access to freedom of information to the Ministry of Finance and to the Ministry of Health to find out: Where did Dr. Mazza's salary go? Of course, they didn't respect the 30 days—it took months—but once we got a response, it said that they had nothing to share with us.

During that period of time, from the spring of 2009 all the way to December 2011, they knew that we had filed an access to freedom of information. They knew that we were trying to get his salary. Did the Ministry of Health do anything about this? Well, if they did, it's a very well-kept secret. We asked people in the ministry—we've had the deputy minister, the assistant deputy minister, the director of emergency services; we've had quite a few of them come to public accounts. We asked them, "Did you work on the access to freedom of information? Did you know how much he was making? Did you try to get answers to our access to freedom of information? Did you try to find out how much Mr. Mazza was making?" Some claim amnesia, others never heard about it, and most people never knew we had filed a request, never tried to get to the bottom of things. It was as if our request went into a black hole.

A director of emergency services sent us a little note that said, "Sorry, can't find anything," and it died there. Apparently, that you cannot find a salary that taxpayers are paying for, a salary that should be, didn't raise red flags, didn't sound off alarm bells. Everything was hunky-dory. He was being paid \$1.4 million of taxpayers' money, plus a few perks.

He was supposed to disclose this. We asked the ministry to look into it, and nothing: no red flag, no follow-

up, no giving him a call maybe and asking, “How much are you making? I’m giving you \$150 million a year to run this program. Maybe we could have a chat sometime.” Maybe a little moral suasion: “We have this access to freedom of information. We’d like to know how much you make. Could you share that with us?” Nothing. Nothing was done. She had no problem transferring \$250 million a year to fund this organization, but apparently she was shy in asking how much he was being paid.

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Mr. Taras Natyshak: Eyes wide shut.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Yes. That is a lot of money when you don’t even ask any questions.

Mr. Speaker, things got even worse. On November 16, 2010, it was time for estimates. “Time for estimates” are fancy words that mean the government comes to a committee—usually it’s the minister, the deputy minister, all of their assistant deputy ministers—and the members of this Legislative Assembly get to ask them questions about their portfolio: “How much did you spend? Where did that money go? What did we buy with this? What does this program mean? How much money do you intend to spend?” It’s an opportunity to go into more detail as to the estimates of that particular ministry. The Ministry of Health was chosen, so they came to estimates.

Usually I would have been the one—I had been the health critic in 2010—asking the questions, but my leader at the time, Howard Hampton, was subbed in on that day. He was subbed in because we had whistle-blowers come to the NDP, telling us that things were not good at Ornge; that salaries and compensation were going through the roof; that money was being used in ways that made some of the staff pretty nervous about the legitimacy of the money that the government was transferring.

I will read some of the questions—42 of them altogether. It’s in Hansard. Anybody who wants to can just Google the Legislative Assembly, go to Hansard, estimates, 2010. It’s easy to find. I’m quoting from Mr. Hampton directly from the estimates:

“Now, I have a question. If he”—Dr. Mazza—“is the head of Ornge, why does his name no longer appear on the Ontario salary disclosure list after 2007? This is the Ontario air ambulance service. It’s 100% owned by the government of Ontario. He’s the head of Ornge. Why would his name no longer appear on the salary disclosure list after 2007?”

That’s in Hansard. That’s the question that my leader at the time, Howard Hampton, asked of the Minister of Health.

It was the deputy minister, Saïd Rafi, who answered. “Again, I’ll have to consult”—remember, this is a series of 42 questions; I’m just reading a few of them—“with the Ministry of Finance, who are responsible for regulating and determining who is included and who is not, and we’d like to get back to you on that.”

So he just said that he would get back to us on this. He didn’t know the answer at the time—no harm done. I mean, this is a huge ministry. I don’t expect them to

memorize everything by heart, but I expect the ministry to be true to their words, and when they say that they will follow up, that they actually do.

Howard Hampton, my leader at the time, went on to ask questions about Ornge’s corporate structure, the procurement process, the money spent on purchasing new aircraft. The questioning concluded with the following interchange—he’s now talking to the Honourable Deborah Matthews, who answers his question: “Rather than answering a hypothetical question, what I’d like to do is get answers to the questions that you have asked.” There was a series of them. “I confess to you that this is not an area I am well schooled in, and we’ll do the work required to get answers to the questions that you’ve raised.”

So both the ministers, in Hansard, realized that those were good questions he was asking about salaries, those were good questions he was asking about the corporate structure and the mix of for-profit and not-for-profit and how things moved between one and the other. Both the Minister of Health and the deputy minister said that they would look into it and they would give us answers. Not only did that happen, but the clerk who sits in at estimates and sits in on those committees wrote the series of questions that were left unanswered, to which the minister had agreed she would do follow-up.

So this letter was drafted. They passed this by the NDP office to make sure that it captured all of the unanswered questions. We said, “Yes, this captured the unanswered questions.” They sent that letter back to the minister, as well as to the deputy minister, and said, “Here is the list of questions about Ornge that you have said you would give follow-up on and give answers to.” Here they are, in black and white, for everybody to see.

The clerks are very neutral. They just gather the work together. They don’t make their own questions. They don’t put in insinuations. They just take whatever the minister had agreed to, whatever questions we had asked, and say, “You said you would answer. Please provide answers to those questions.”

The way things work, it usually takes a couple of weeks, sometimes a couple of months, and then we get answers from estimates. Sometimes there are quite a few of those answers and they come in a little booklet. Basically, we get, in writing, the questions that the people in the ministry didn’t know off the top of their head. I mean, this is a huge ministry. It is quite fine to not have the answers right here, right there, because we have a process to follow up, and the follow-up goes.

Usually, what happens is once you ask questions, then they go back to their office and split the questions with different assistant deputy ministers: “You’re in charge of Ornge; you answer those questions. You’re in charge of primary care; you answer those questions. You’re in charge of hospitals; you answer those questions.” And then the questions get put together and the answers are given back.

Well, how long do you figure it took us to get answers to our questions, Mr. Speaker? Usually it takes a couple

of weeks; sometimes a couple of months. For those particular questions about Ornge, the answers never came. To be truthful, the answers came after the special report, once the structure had completely changed and once the salaries had completely changed. Dr. Mazza was no longer there. The corporate structure had been changed. Years later, we got answers to our questions.

So we are supposed to believe that we ask questions in estimates and the minister, the deputy minister, the assistant deputy minister, the director of the program tells us, "We will get answers to your questions, because we don't know the answers right now," but not one of them looked any further? Not one of them took any more steps? For some reason, the bureaucracy developed a great big black hole and those fell into it, never to come to out.

The other questions from estimates from that fall came. They were able to give us answers to some tough questions. I had asked an entire series of questions on primary care, which I was not too happy about, the way things were going. They spelled it out in black and white and answered those questions. But, funny; the questions on Ornge fell into a black hole.

When we talk to people within the ministry, it's rather interesting. I had this Mr. Malcolm Bates—I don't really know this man. I met him—actually, I think I had met him once before, but I don't really know him. He was one of the witnesses that came. He is the director of emergency health services, and he was there back when Ornge was created and all through that period of time.

I asked him if he was ever asked to do any follow-up on the questions from estimates, and he said, "No."

I said, "Did you ever receive the request that Minister Matthews told us she would get answered?" He said, "No."

Mr. Malcolm Bates said, "I did not know that you had not received information, because when we are asked for information, we provide it as quickly as possible." Mr. Bates was telling us that had he been aware that there were questions about Ornge, he would have gotten us answers; he would have done his work. But he didn't have an opportunity to do his work, because nobody asked.

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Here again, from an exchange with him, so I'm quoting from myself, which is a little bit weird, but anyway here I am: "So you were never told that there were outstanding questions from estimates that had directly to do with your division?"

"Mr. Malcolm Bates: No."

I went on to say, "Okay. Did you know, since we were given answers in March [of 2012], that somebody had given us answers to those questions" a year and a half later?

Mr. Bates goes on, "When we provide information, as the gentleman rightly said before, we provide it, if you want to call it, up the line. We provide it to our assistant deputy minister, and where it goes from there is basically the responsibility of another part of the ministry."

He went on to say, "If we are asked to provide information on questions of any sort, we provide that information."

I asked him, "Okay. Were you made aware that we had filed a freedom of access to information regarding the salary of Mr. Mazza?" which was directly in his department. His answer was quite simple: He never knew. He was never asked to do the work. He never knew that we had filed a request.

So, let's get this straight here. We have Howard Hampton, the leader of the third party at the time—everybody knows him—he asked a series of direct questions to the Minister of Health about the salary of Mazza, about the corporate structure, and the minister promises a response, but then the director of emergency services never sees this request and the answer never arrives.

So what happened? How could that be? How could that be that you have people there willing and able to do the work, you have a procedure in place that has been there for decades—and, I would say, centuries—of estimates, where questions have to be answered and follow-ups are done, but when it came to Ornge, the black hole happened and, although the people at the top told us, "Yes, we will get you answers. We're sorry, we don't have them, but we will get them to you," the bureaucracy is never asked to get the answers and no follow-up is done? This is hard to believe. This is really hard to believe.

The minister seems to argue that she simply forgot, and the issue of Dr. Mazza's salary didn't come up again until 2011. I'm having a hard time with that story. The picture I'm getting from the different pieces of the puzzle is not a pretty picture. The nicest thing that could turn out right now is that we have a completely incompetent minister, and I don't believe that. Every other scenario is worse than that.

It was quite interesting when we had the former Minister of Health and Liberal MPP George Smitherman come, and this is what he had to say on April 4 at public accounts. I'm quoting from Mr. Smitherman right now:

"When I left the Ministry of Health in 2008 and moved to another ministry, Dr. Mazza was making \$298,000,"—which is true—"was reporting that in complying with the sunshine list and the like, and the activities that went on subsequently were activities that were not to my knowledge. I cannot imagine"—his words—"a circumstance where I would have tolerated a situation where Dr. Mazza ended up making \$1.4 million and where the organization lost its focus.

"But the ministry bears a lot of responsibility for this because it is in the ministry"—here again, this is the previous minister, Minister Smitherman, saying this—"which had 8,000 or 9,000 employees, where on a day-to-day basis there are people who are paid to wake up and to focus on it. The real question I have is, at what point did they decide that they were dealing with what I described as a rogue entity, and what steps did they take at that time to bring it to heel?" This is from 2009, and we are now in 2012.

Why is it that in 2009 the NDP can file freedom of access of information, can raise the red flag, can send the bells ringing and say, “Look at how much money this guy is making,” and yet the Ministry of Health, with their 8,000 to 9,000 employees, doesn’t have the time or the energy, apparently, to ask how much he is making? Why is it that a caucus—we were a caucus of 10 at the time—we had the time and the energy to say, “Hey, you need to follow up with this Ornge because things are not straight. People are being paid way too much money. They’re spinning a web of agencies that is hard to understand”? We raised the red flag, we sent the bells ringing and nothing happened—nothing. And to this day, the answers to those questions—I don’t know if we’ll ever get them.

If we really want to turn a leaf on Ornge and if we really want for that to never happen again, then why don’t we bring Ornge and make them disclose their salaries? But yet we’re talking about Bill 50 now, Bill 50 that is supposed to bring us more transparency and accountability. But are we asking that all subsidiaries of Ornge post their salaries? Nope. So the same thing could have happened. The same thing could continue to happen. The opposition, the NDP, could scream up and down and say, “Hey, have a look at the salaries that people are paying themselves in there,” and the black hole would reopen, all the documents would fall into it and nobody would look, because this is what happened the first time. And there is nothing in Bill 50 that would prevent it from happening over and over and over again, because they’re not going to be responsible to put the salaries on the sunshine list if we keep any of the subsidiaries. They have a chance with Bill 50 to change this, but did they take that chance to say, “We’ll take away some work for our bureaucrats here. We’ll make it mandatory that if they make over \$100,000, they post it”?

Remember what I told you at the beginning of my hour-long speech, that once you demand transparency, it changes everything? Once we brought hospitals under FOI, they voluntarily put the contracts on their website; they voluntarily gave us how much their executives were making. We have the opportunity to do that with Ornge but we’re not doing this—we are not doing this. We need to close the loophole in the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act. That loophole would mean that if you receive money from the government, whether you’re for-profit or not-for-profit, you have to disclose the salaries that you pay from the public purse. We fully know that those loopholes exist, but they are quite happy to leave them there. So why exactly are they giving us Bill 50? It is not for freedom of access of information. It is not for Ombudsman oversight. It is not for salary disclosure. What exactly is it for, again? Because I seem to have forgotten what we were trying to do with this.

Let’s talk a little bit about ministry oversight, because this is one part that is in the bill. Apart from the matter of the sunshine list, there are many outstanding questions of whether the ministry did their job in providing adequate oversight of Ornge. In the Auditor General’s report, the Auditor General said that “in February 2006 ... the

Ministry [of Health] committed to set standards and monitor performance against those standards to ensure that the ‘end result will be improved care, improved access to service, increasing effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of service, and the assurance of greater fiscal and medical accountability.’”

Sounded pretty good, if you ask me.

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But then the auditor goes on to say that the ministry never fulfilled their end of the deal. As the auditor says in his report, “However, the ministry has not been obtaining the information it needs to meet these oversight commitments.” This is on page 7 of the Auditor General’s report, if anybody is interested in reading it.

The fact that the performance agreement included many tools for oversight is not the issue here. You can have the best-ever accountability agreement, but if the ministry fails to do their job, then all is for nothing.

The Minister of Health’s main line of defence is that the original performance agreement tied the government’s hands, that they were stonewalled, that they tried really, really hard, Mr. Speaker, but they just couldn’t get there, that although the ministry wanted to keep Ornge in line, they were prevented from doing this with an inadequate agreement and that they were lied to by Ornge executives. This is how they defend themselves.

However, in public accounts committee last Wednesday the issue was explored by one of the lawyers who was there when the agreement was drafted. She was called in as a witness. My colleague the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton asked a question at the time: “The minister has indicated a number of times—and I think you’ve already answered this, but let’s make it clear: The minister indicated that the existing performance agreement was not strong, didn’t give her the ability to do the proper oversight. I just want you to respond, given the fact that you’ve indicated a number of tools that the minister did have, including the ability to issue the notice of default or at least threaten to do so, including the right to terminate the agreement based on the 15 pages of covenants. What’s your response to that?”

To this, the lawyer who was there who had worked on developing this agreement answered, “Those were all of their rights. In addition, the ministry, as the chief funder of Ornge, had great powers of moral suasion. I can tell you, all of my broader public sector clients work very hard to make sure that the ministry is kept happy with them.” So it’s not that the performance agreement did not provide adequate tools for oversight. The question is, the government did not hold on to their end, the responsibility.

The other argument that the Minister of Health is fond of employing is the idea that her office was deceived and kept in the dark about the goings-on at Ornge. They were deceived, Mr. Speaker. They just didn’t know. But here again, the story doesn’t add up very well because when Mr. Alfred Apps was called in front of public accounts committee and asked to comment on the matter, he said the following—and I’m quoting first from my colleague:

“You indicated that the government was thoroughly briefed on every aspect of Ornge before any step was taken.”

Mr. Alfred Apps: “Correct.”

“How do you know that?” he went on to ask.

Mr. Alfred Apps’s response: “Because I participated in those briefings as a lawyer, reporting on the structure, how Ornge was insulated, what the rating agency thought of the structure.” He went on to say that “the government was thoroughly, painstakingly and, in all cases, truthfully briefed in advance of Ornge taking any of these actions.”

So when you talk about changing the salary scale, when you talk about the web of for-profit companies, when you talk about everything that shocked the minister when she apparently found out in December, we have a lawyer here—but it’s not just any lawyer. He’s a lawyer who happens to be the president of the Liberal association of Canada. There’s a bit of a connection there. We have a Liberal government; we have a Liberal lawyer. So here we have—

Mr. John O’Toole: Bob Rae was a Liberal. He was an NDP.

M^{me} France Gélinas: He was not an NDP. Sorry; they’re making me laugh.

There’s a bit of a connection there, and he said that “the government was thoroughly, painstakingly and, in all cases, truthfully briefed in advance of Ornge taking any of these actions.” How can we take the defence of the minister that she did not know, that the minute she became aware she acted quickly and decisively? And then we have those people coming to us and saying she was briefed every step of the way, that they never moved until after they had been thoroughly, painstakingly and truthfully—truthfully, Mr. Speaker—briefed in advance of any of these actions. Here we have a lawyer under oath telling us that the government was truthfully, thoroughly and painstakingly briefed about everything that went on at Ornge. But yet we have a minister that says, “When I found out in December, I was outraged. I acted decisively.” None of this holds, Mr. Speaker; none of this holds.

We know that the chief of staff in the Ministry of Finance received a half-hour briefing from Ornge. We know of multiple conversations and meetings, yet the government has consistently maintained the argument that they did not know anything was wrong at Ornge before December 2011. How can the NDP raise red flags? How can we ask 42 questions? How can a lawyer under oath tell us that they have been briefed? But yet they didn’t see anything; they didn’t hear anything.

The question that cuts through all of the specifics of the Ornge scandal is whether we are merely seeing gross incompetence or rather if there is self-interest that also fuels this fiasco. A quick look at the facts provides a sobering reality. We know that Premier McGuinty’s former chief of staff, Don Guy, billed on average \$3,670 a month to the law firm Fasken Martineau to provide strategic and public policy advice on Ornge. This added up to a cool \$107,000 for a few months’ work. This came

after first learning that former Liberal Party president, Alfred Apps, working for the same firm, billed Ornge for \$9 million. In all of my years in health care, Mr. Speaker, it doesn’t matter how big of a transfer payment agency I was dealing with—hospitals with hundreds of millions of dollars—none of them spent \$9 million in legal fees. Even if you will get sued, you will have somebody that—there are human beings working in health care and sometimes it still goes wrong. None of them spend \$9 million in legal fees. Yet this tiny, weenie, little agency called Ornge spent \$9 million in legal fees.

The firm’s work included advising Ornge on setting up a web of for-profit subsidiaries, compensation for its executives, and whether the organization needed to disclose the \$1.4 million paid to Chris Mazza.

The more we look at this, Mr. Speaker, the more we realize that well-connected Liberal insiders have deep, deep roots into Ornge, and some of them, I would say, deep pockets.

Il ne me reste seulement que quelques minutes pour vous parler du projet de loi 50, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les ambulances en ce qui concerne les services d’ambulance aériens. La raison pour le projet de loi 50 est que notre service d’air-ambulance, Ornge, est un fiasco, monsieur le Président.

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Nous, du côté des néo-démocrates, on vous dirait qu’on est au courant depuis 2009 que les choses ne vont pas bien à Ornge. En 2009, nous avons demandé l’accès à l’information pour le salaire du D^r Mazza, qui était le président-directeur général d’Ornge. C’était en 2009. Notre demande, ça a pris des mois. On nous a répondu qu’ils ne pouvaient rien partager avec nous.

L’année suivante, en 2010, pendant le temps des estimés, mon leader dans le temps, M. Howard Hampton, a passé tout un après-midi à poser 42 questions à la ministre de la Santé, au sous-ministre et au sous-ministre adjoint par rapport à Ornge. Ils n’avaient pas les réponses, mais ils se sont engagés à nous donner des réponses.

Après des années d’attente, aucune réponse n’est venue, monsieur le Président. De plus en plus, on entend des gens qui travaillaient chez Ornge—M. Apps étant l’un d’eux—qui nous disent qu’à chaque pas qu’Ornge a fait, ils sont venus en parler au gouvernement, ils sont venus en parler au ministère pour leur expliquer clairement quels pas ils allaient prendre et quels changements ils allaient mettre en place à Ornge.

Mais lorsqu’on en parle à la ministre de la Santé, elle insiste qu’elle n’a rien vu et rien entendu jusqu’au mois de décembre 2011. Comment se fait-il que la ministre de la Santé n’a rien vu quand on fait des demandes d’accès à l’information? Comment se fait-il que la ministre nous dit : « On va vous donner des réponses à vos questions par rapport à Ornge, » mais aucune réponse ne vient? Aucune bureaucrate n’a été demandée de faire des suivis à nos questions. Elle n’a rien entendu. On entend des gens qui nous disent : « On est venu les breffer. On a les documents de breffage. On a les vidéos qui vont avec. »

Des gens dans le ministère ont reçu ces notes de breffage-là, mais la ministre n'a jamais rien entendu.

Elle n'a rien entendu jusqu'au mois de décembre, et au mois de décembre, apparemment, elle a appelé le conseil d'administration d'Ornge. Mais le président du conseil nous dit : « Non, non, elle ne nous a jamais appelés. C'est nous qui les avons appelés après qu'on a vu le nom de notre agence sur la première page du Toronto Star. » Elle nous dit qu'elle a mis tout le monde à la porte, et lui, il nous dit : « Non, non, c'est nous qui avons décidé de partir. »

Il y a beaucoup, beaucoup de questions qui ne sont pas dans le projet de loi 50 auxquelles on doit répondre. Merci, monsieur le Président.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to respond to the member for Nickel Belt's presentation.

When the problems with Ornge were brought forward, principally with the January letter, the Auditor General was already doing the value-for-money audit, which eventually came out to be a special report in March 2012.

As soon as the minister was briefed on the AG's draft report, she asked ministry staff to prepare a list of options for her. This was in late October 2011.

On December 8, the minister asked for action on providing information on salaries.

On December 15, the ministry met with Tom Lepine, the COO of Ornge, and chair Rainer Beltzner. The minister told them they had to co-operate with the Attorney General's office on information.

On December 21, Ornge released the information on salaries, including the salary of Chris Mazza of over \$1.2 million per year. This is coming up to Christmas.

On December 22, the Ministry of Finance forensic audit team was sent in. This was very quick action.

On January 11, 2012, the existing board—they had put enough pressure on them—agreed to resign.

On February 16, 2012, based on the forensic audit, the minister sent in the OPP.

We now have a committee that has all the rights of a select committee.

The opposition parties are playing games with Bill 50. We have to get it moving forward, and it's very important that it move forward.

Ms. McKeogh, who is one of the senior lawyers in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, stated that both are required: the legislation and the performance agreement. These are very important, so I think the minister acted very quickly and got things moving in two or three months, where we had new administration at Ornge.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I always enjoy listening to the member from Nickel Belt, with her background and knowledge in health care and her genuine and sincere approach to important health care issues, and this is no exception. She has, as she said in her remarks, participated in the public accounts process, and I have no doubt

that the questions she submitted were well thought out and respectable.

In a general sense, I looked at the remarks that she made in response to the introduction of Bill 50 on April 25. Basically, she said much more about it today, but roughly the same thing: It's a bit of a red herring. In fact, she said that the bill really wasn't required.

In her opening remarks the day she had just heard about the bill, she said, "We just spent the entire day at public accounts, where we found out that the existing performance agreement had many levers in it that were never—they never even tried to use them," and they've been saying all the time that there's no power or authority that they had.

This bill, Bill 50, as most are saying, is clearly a bill to sort of change the channel, to get people talking about something entirely different. There have been mistakes made, there have been procedural motions in the House here—and in fairness the Minister of Health said, in a unanimous consent motion or vote, which was won and carried, that she would convene a select committee to get to the bottom of this outrageous scandal within the Ornge organization.

The minister and the Premier were briefed on it, they knew all about it and yet there were hundreds of millions of health care dollars—scarce health care dollars—that were spent in a very out-of-control, wildcat kind of organization. And there were close Liberal allies, as she pointed out in such a very deliberate and well-rehearsed argument—there's every reason there should be an inquiry on this. People will serve time because of the wrongdoing. And that's why this bill isn't required.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I sometimes wonder where to start, when we all speak about the issue of Ornge, but I guess I will start with thanking my colleague the member from Nickel Belt for her thoughtful commentary and her work on this file since 2008, when New Democrats first began asking questions; in 2009, when we understood that the salary disclosure for Dr. Mazza had suddenly disappeared; and to date, where she continues to push the government on the truth. The truth, ultimately, is what we want to get to.

You know, the timelines are interesting, but it seems as though the closer we get to some semblance of truth—I'd make the correlation of the reduction of seats that the government has. The less amount of seats they have, the closer we get to the truth in this House, which I think may ultimately lead us to the simple fact that a complete change in government may finally get us where we need to be, where we see a full picture of exactly what happened at Ornge and what changes need to be made within the delivery of the system and the entire model. So I'm optimistic, in that sense, and I would submit my colleague from Nickel Belt's name as a potential health minister in the future, because I think she understands the way things should be done, not the way they were done, as we've seen in Ornge.

One of the worst things I have learned is that of all the lawyers in the country that you could find—and there are certainly lots out there who would have jumped at the opportunity to help you navigate this field—you found one who was so closely attached. Actually, he was already in the backrooms; you didn't have to go far. Alfie Apps was already there, waiting to help conjure up this deal. It's probably one of the ways that it went so sideways so quickly. I would submit. Find someone outside of your own house to do those types of deals in the future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I, too, am on public accounts and have heard the testimony, and I get quite distressed when I hear partial reporting of the testimony.

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What have we learned? We have learned that the original order to draft a bill to create Ornge was actually given prior to the election of 2003 by the then Minister of Health, one Tony Clement, a Conservative. He gave the original order.

Once Ornge was created, a firm by the name of Fasken Martineau was hired as their legal counsel, and there was a whole host of lawyers at Fasken Martineau who worked on this file and billed Ornge over \$9.5 million over the course of this fiasco. The most responsible lawyer was purportedly Lynne Golding, who is a prominent Tory and coincidentally Tony Clement's wife. Also on the file and playing a prominent role was Guy Giorno, whom many of us remember here as Mike Harris's chief of staff and many people in Ottawa will recall as Stephen Harper's chief of staff. Obviously, Speaker, a Conservative.

So if people want to talk about what party's tentacles are entwined in this story, people had better look at themselves, because there are a lot of Conservative tentacles.

We have asked Ms. Golding for the individual billings by the individual lawyers so we can in fact sort out who billed what, but that has not yet been submitted to the committee. But I do note she had Don Guy's billings. And do you know what Don Guy did for that money? He told—

Interjection: Nothing.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Well, perhaps that's true. He told Ornge to do what the Ministry of Finance asked them to do—to comply. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Nickel Belt has her two minutes to reply.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

To the member from Ottawa—Orléans, the quick action—you cannot call a three-year lag in action “quick.” The red flags went up in 2009, the bells were rung in 2010, and only after it hit the front page of the paper and Ornge asked for a meeting with the minister did we start to see action. The action may have come fast after that, but real leadership would have taken action when bells rang on freedom of access to information on the salaries, when the flags went up about a question in

estimates about the web of for-profit agencies that has spun out of control at Ornge. When we asked the minister, “Why didn't you ask?” she brings up arguments that she knew all along or that she should have known all along.

The member from Durham is right that we owe it to the people of Ontario to have more of an inquiry to know exactly how it could have gone so wrong, how we can learn, and a select committee would certainly be a good way to do this.

I thank my colleague from Essex, who is following what is happening at Ornge. We are all worried about what happened. When we see connections like this between a party president doing work and then it all goes south, we start to worry about—let's clear the air. Let's move forward.

To the member from Guelph, who sits on public accounts, I think we haven't heard the end of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely: As a member sitting on the public accounts committee, it pleases me that I can rise today and give my comments on what has transpired at Ornge.

One thing I know: that the minister moved in and that one of the first things she did was make sure that safe, high-quality care for Ontarians was provided, and, through the new board, that's certainly the case today. We have competent new management at Ornge.

The Auditor General announced his value-for-money audit in October 2010. His work continued until his report was released in March 2012. He had difficulty getting the information on salaries, and intervention—a lot of intervention—by the minister got the information out. The report was delayed from the fall reporting of the Auditor General, delayed a few months, but it certainly is more appropriate and has been the guide for the minister in the new legislation and the new agreement.

Following the last election, the minister was apprised of several serious issues regarding Ornge from the Auditor General's report and that those required attention. On October 27, she instructed her ministry to prepare a list of options for a plan to deal with them. As we've heard often from both the minister and the ministry, the performance agreement was weak, and the ministry's options were very limited. We heard that the other day from Ms. McKeogh, who's a senior lawyer at the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and appeared before the committee.

Ornge was federally incorporated, so legislative options were even out. The minister met with the AG on December 1, 2011, to discuss the Ministry of Health chapters which were going to go out in the normal report. The AG informed the minister that the Ornge audit would not be completed in time for his annual report.

On December 8, 2011, a letter was sent to Ornge asking it for detailed information on compensation. On December 15, the minister met with the chief operating officer, Tom Lepine, and then-board chair Rainer Beltzner. The minister demanded that they disclose

executive salaries and co-operate with the Auditor General. On December 21, Ornge released the compensation of senior executives, including the outrageous compensation to chief executive officer Chris Mazza.

The next day, December 22, 2011, the minister directed the ministry to send in a Ministry of Finance forensic audit unit. The next day—that's just before Christmas—that forensic audit group started their work. On January 11, 2012, the board of directors signalled their intention to resign, and the minister recommended the appointment of an interim CEO, Ron McKerlie. In January, a new board of directors was recommended for appointment. The new volunteer board of directors was directed to report back on patient safety, the use of public dollars and the development of a new performance agreement.

On February 16, 2012, based on the forensic auditors' report revealing serious financial irregularities, the minister referred the matter to the OPP. So it wasn't very long that the OPP was in there and the forensic unit from the Ministry of Finance was in there. Certainly, as much as could be done was being done by the minister.

The Special Report of the Office of the Auditor General of Ontario on Ornge Air Ambulance and Related Services, dated March 2012, became the subject of importance to the legislative public accounts committee, of which I am a member. The minister acted quickly on the information garnered from the AG report.

Maintaining Ornge service and safety through all this turmoil is a credit to the minister, the ministry and to the excellent front-line personnel at Ornge. Within three months of the briefings to the minister following the delivery of the draft AG report, the Ministry of Finance forensic audit was done, the board of Ornge had resigned, a new board and CEO were in place, the OPP was involved, and the ministry had a new performance agreement in place.

The Ambulance Amendment Act before this house today, Bill 50, is now under consideration. It's important that that legislation pass quickly, and I would just hope that members of this House would act to get that legislation through, get it to the committee to discuss it clause-by-clause. The member from Guelph has explained well why this legislation is needed to supplement the new performance agreement. That was done, I think, last Thursday.

If this legislation is passed, air ambulance would be on the same footing with many other health sector and public sector transfer agencies where, if things go wrong, the minister actually does have the power to step in and take over. To call this legislation a red herring is absolutely wrong, especially in light of what happened with Ornge. Even though the Leader of the Opposition and your party may want to support Conservative-friendly lawyers working thousands and thousands of hours for Ornge that cost hundreds of thousands of dollars per hour, I believe it is your duty to stop obstructing the Legislature and to work with us to make Ornge one of the safest and best air ambulance services in the world.

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I would like to just call on my 35 years of experience, where I was president or chief operating officer of my company—certainly not a company of that size, but we had over 100 employees at one time—just to reflect on what I think happened at Ornge. I want to explain what I believe happened at Ornge based on what I have read and heard, including being part of the Standing Committee on Public Accounts.

I believe the original board, the minister at the time and all involved wanted the best possible air ambulance for Ontario. I believe that the decisions made to set it up with some elements of a private company with a lower amount of red tape—and that's what we're accustomed to getting in government. Red tape includes the interference from the funder, more difficulties making decisions etc. I believe that the original thinking was to have these freedoms with high ideals—this could have been the best arrangement possible. Unfortunately, with the shareholders shut out of the oversight as time went on—the shareholders being the taxpayers of Ontario—the public money started looking like their own money. With millions of dollars of public money to pay for lawyers, they found out ways to suck some money out of the building using public rent commitments. They looked at a way to work with the helicopter company to squeeze some money out of the helicopter deal, and, all the time, favouring them over us, the taxpayer.

We have seen the huge amounts spent on lawyers. In order to get that private start-up capital, lawyers were used to devise these schemes to steal from the taxpayers of this province, and the taxpayers of this province paid for those lawyers, as far as I can determine. As this private money accumulated, the schemers thought they deserved more money to recruit staff, educate friends or family and obtain loans. The story is an old one.

It is admirable to try to build a better organization and to run a public service. If those chosen to run it and/or their lawyers do not go rogue, something wonderful could result and we could have had a world-class service.

Dr. McLellan is the CEO of Sunnybrook Hospital, is a member of the new board of directors at Ornge and is the chair of the quality committee. He acknowledges that quality care and quality services are a concern at Ornge. He has pointed out three major issues: staffing, and specifically staffing of critical care paramedics and advanced care paramedics—Ornge is not fully staffed in these areas. The second thing he pointed out was the interior issue of the AW139 helicopters. The third was the quality of information around individual calls, including calls where Ornge cannot respond. The new governance model is important and is in place. Ornge does have very good paramedics and pilots.

Sunnybrook is the country's largest trauma care hospital. It includes aeromedical transport, and as such, they have discussed with Ornge the possibility to export the full technology to Brazil and Kazakhstan. So that's how far it went, and that was with the leader there, Dr. McLellan. He's one of the world's most knowledgeable

people, and he's on our board now and in charge of quality care.

The creation of the quality committee was the first step, and the framework of the Excellent Care for All Act, as it relates to hospitals, was used as the basis for the new agreement. Dr. Barry McLellan was the chief coroner for air ambulance service some years ago, so he is ideally suited to be heading up patient safety at Ornge.

We had the opportunity to have the deputy director of legal services branch, Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Ms. McKeogh, at our hearings. "In my view," says McKeogh, "the amended performance agreement and the proposed legislation, if passed, provide a strong and effective response to address the concerns identified in the Auditor General's report on Ornge."

A number of provisions from the Excellent Care for All Act were included in the amended performance agreement. Under the old agreement, the ministry was only permitted to make on-site inspections twice a year. That's not a good agreement. People were saying that that was a great agreement. They could only make inspections twice a year. Under the new agreement, inspections can be made at any time through the year.

McKeogh pointed out that article 15 only included the right of the ministry to take control of communications service, not the entire Ornge. This was made a point by the member of the opposition when he said that under article 15 of the agreement, it could have been taken over. Only the communications could have been taken over. This was not a good agreement.

Now we come to the important contribution to the debate. The member from Newmarket–Aurora wants to call Bill 50 the red herring bill, despite the testimony of Ms. Carole McKeogh, where she said, "In my view, the amended performance agreement and the proposed legislation, if passed, provide a strong and effective response to address the concerns ... in the Auditor General's report on Ornge." That's important; that's what we're trying to do. The Auditor General has been in there, he has given us instructions, he's giving us what he feels we should have, and we want to follow his recommendations. She is a deputy director with the legal services branch of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

The member for Newmarket–Aurora says Bill 50 is not necessary. He says Lynne Golding told him it wasn't. Well, who is Lynne Golding? The member opposite puts so much faith in her. Lynne Golding was the responsible partner, and she played the lead role in the original incorporation of Ornge in 2004 and the negotiation of the performance agreement in 2005, structuring advice with respect to the formation and incorporation of Orngeco and Ornge Peel in 2007. I believe those are the private parts of the company. Ornge's first response to the first draft of the AG's report was in the fall of 2011. The corporate activities completed since January 1, 2012—these were things that she had worked on.

So criticism of the AG's report came from Lynne Golding. The corporate activities completed since

January 1, 2012: Well, Lynne Golding was at the centre of what went wrong at Ornge. She was the principal lawyer. There are about 250 work days in a year, so what were the taxpayers of this province spending on Mrs. Golding? In 2008, Ornge not-for-profit was paying Mrs. Golding \$5,700 per day, and \$700 per day for the for-profit part. In 2009, the numbers per day were \$7,200 and \$700. In 2010, when it seems things went wrong, it was only \$4,030 a day for her company, and \$3,700 a day was being billed to Ornge, but \$3,700 a day was being billed to the for-profit Ornge. In 2011, it was \$1,600 per day for the not-for-profit and \$4,050 per day for the for-profit. But where was all the money coming from? The money was all coming from taxpayers. And who owned the for-profit? Was it the taxpayers of Ontario? No, it was the board members. So we had \$4,050 a day for 250 days a year—over \$1 million of taxpayers' money being paid to support the for-profit. And this was all under the direction of Ms. Golding.

How did Mazza and Beltzner become the owners of the for-profit Ornge operation? Did they provide capital for the for-profit? No. Golding helped them artificially increase the value of Ornge office buildings through charging taxpayers higher rent and then increased the mortgage on the building, and suddenly Ornge for-profit had equity. Thank you, taxpayers. And how did they again increase the capital for the for-profit Ornge? They bought more helicopters than they needed and arranged to have money coming back to the for-profit, even though the taxpayer was on the hook for paying for all of the helicopters, and probably paid more to cover a kickback to the Ornge for-profit group. And who was behind this from 2003 on? Lynne Golding. Who was the lead lawyer on the file from 2003 to 2012? Lynne Golding was the responsible partner; she was at the centre of the sad affair all the way. Was she working for the taxpayers of Ontario? It does not appear so. The dollars were too great for her to blow the whistle: 22,000 hours were billed and over \$9,547,000 over that period. I do not believe Lynne Golding thought of the taxpayers of Ontario. The money tap was running too well, and at its peak in 2009-10, when all the illegal work was being done, Lynne Golding could have the comfort that every day for those two years the billing accruing to her company was almost \$8,000 per day, \$160,000 a month and almost \$2 million per year, split between the for-profit and the not-for-profit. I want to see Ms. Golding back at the public accounts committee. I want to know about her responsibilities to the taxpayers of this province, who were paying \$2 million a year and getting fleeced in the process.

I was in business for 35 years, and I always felt that I could wear only one hat at a time. I always felt that my lawyer should be working for me to make sure that I was dealing properly with my shareholders in that company. But this is outrageous. How could Lynne Golding possibly represent the taxpayers of Ontario and also charge the for-profit for structuring advice with respect to the formation and incorporation of Orngeco and Ornge

Peel in 2006 and 2007, the private for-profit companies? Ornge's first response to the first draft of the AG's report was in the fall of 2011. The corporate activities were completed, so January 1, 2012.

1520

Lynne Golding was at the centre of what went wrong at Ornge. Now, there are about 250 workdays in a year, so how did we possibly get into those kinds of dollars?

The member for Newmarket–Aurora in his debate about Lynne Golding, who was in charge of the Ornge file, saying that the existing agreement was great—that was what he was basing the fact that the existing agreement made up in 2004 was great. She told him it was great, so he said that it was great. We can see that she was the wrong person to be telling him that.

Ms. Golding said in Hansard that the agreement signed was great and gave all the rights that the government needed. That may have been so, but the lawyers representing the taxpayers of this province worked with a board that went rogue and used all kinds of legal manoeuvres to hide from the taxpayers the true facts.

So was Lynne Golding driving the getaway car when this was going on? Was she? Only the OPP will be able to tell us for sure. I will be asking our public accounts committee to ask Ms. Golding back to committee.

Ontario needs Bill 50, and the opposition should stop blocking its passage. If they have good ideas, they can bring them to the committee as we move into clause-by-clause consideration.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I was surprised the member from Ottawa–Orléans didn't finish his time, because there's a lot to be said.

I was most interested in his accusations of the profession of lawyers. Regardless of their stripe and party affiliation, he was quite critical. I think if he said that outside here, he might find himself in court.

The real issue here is, the minister knew and the Premier knew. They were briefed. They knew full well, and what's really more important here—most people that I've heard speak, including even the minister and the parliamentary assistant, implied that this was moving forward. Bill 50 was kind of part two. Well, both shoes have dropped on the floor on this thing, and they were both under the watch of Premier McGuinty and Deb Matthews, the Minister of Health.

Bill 50, it's been proven by all the experts I've heard speak on this issue—mostly Frank Klees, and France Gélinas as well. They've said that this bill is a ruse. There's absolutely no need for it. All of the powers and authority by a professional legal counsel, not some party hack person—not to say that Phil's a party hack. That's not what I meant. It may have sounded like that, but really what I meant was that a lawyer, under their professional ethical guidelines, said—and they're regulated by a college, so we have to kind of trust most of what they do—that they had all the tools necessary.

In fact, France Gélinas said it in her remarks, and I think it's worth reporting here. In her remarks today, she

said: "It's rather interesting to listen to the Minister of Health and her PA.... We just spent the entire day at public accounts, where we found out that the existing performance agreement had many levers" that had never, ever been used and never tried. They're already in the Ambulance Act. We don't need Bill 50, with more chatter about Liberal's moving forward and blah, blah blah stuff.

My sense is this: Public money's being wasted. Patients in Ontario are at risk. Some reports say that there have been injuries, potentially deaths, under their watch. This needs a full inquiry, not just a select committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened with some incredulity to the member from Ottawa–Orléans as he spoke. He spent almost all of his time attacking a lawyer by the name of Lynne Golding and her relationship to a previous health minister, her relationship to the Conservative Party and everything else.

But the reality is that I've been here now some 10 and a half years, and through most of that time, there have been Liberal governments. I sat here and watched as George Smitherman set up most of what happened. I sat here and watched as David Caplan set up and continued most of what happened. I've sat here and watched as the current minister sat there and watched what happened.

The reality is, the Liberal government chose to set up a P3, a public-private partnership. They stood there every single day of those nine years and talked about how wonderful public-private partnerships were, how they were going to work, how they were the way of the future, how they were going to save taxpayers' money and how they were going to run themselves. I listened today, and all of that, of course, is baloney, all of it—because what has happened with your much-vaunted public-private partnership in the Ornge file and probably in most of the rest is that there are no oversights that are capable of being used. The reality is that the government had levers and chose not to use them. The government let it happen.

You talk about the responsibilities of Ms. Golding. Ms. Golding works for a private company that you set up, that you had no oversight over. She was doing her best for the private company, not for the taxpayers of Ontario.

The lesson that needs to be learned over there is that P3s do not work.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Speaker, the question is: Where do you start? Do you get into the spitting match, or do you actually talk about what this bill is intended to do? This bill is intended to actually solve a problem. I'm disinclined, as a member, to get into the back and the forth, the things that will be forgotten 10 minutes after the problem is solved, so let's just talk about what this bill does to solve a problem.

Appointing a supervisor or special investigator when the air ambulance service is not being operated in the

public interest: Gee, that's just like what happens in a hospital. So what we're doing in this bill is to make the service of the air ambulance compatible with what happens in a hospital. That's fair.

Allowing the minister to give directives to an air ambulance service provider—just like a hospital. If the minister had had that type of freedom, you can speculate that this entire Ornge thing wouldn't have happened. So it gives the minister the ability to command something to happen at Ornge.

There's one point on which I am going to agree with my colleague from Beaches–East York. He talks about the fact that the structure of this particular arrangement was flawed from the outset. I'm inclined to agree with that. What was really flawed here was that a performance agreement, which is intended to be interpreted by reasonable people acting in a rational, logical, honest and straightforward manner—didn't happen. It's the same category and class of performance agreement that has been used time and time again, but if you chose to flout it, if you chose to go around it, well, surprise, surprise, you can actually break the law. That appears to be what a lot of this discussion is all about: Did Ornge break the law? Who broke it? And what do we have to do to get it fixed?

What we have to do to get it fixed is to pass Bill 50. I hope it happens.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: Once again, I rise to speak to this bill and suggest that there's no benefit to the public health. This is simply diverting attention from the issue. Yet again, we're talking about things that have absolutely no benefit. We're introducing more legislation, not less, and it's the wrong way to go.

As many of my colleagues in the House have discussed, this is too little, too late. The horses have left the barn, now we're closing the door and we're trying to cover our tracks—typically unacceptable of the Liberal approach.

What they want to do is introduce more legislation. Let's do a bit of action, for a change. Let's do something that's actually going to improve the state of the people's health care in Ontario.

If as much thought was put into the original performance agreement as the web of for-profit companies set up by Mr. Mazza and Alfred Apps, we would not have this fiasco in the first place. We would not need a select committee, and in fact we would be able to be debating substantive issues, such as how to cut spending, how to lower the deficit and how to create jobs.

This is nothing more than yet again, “We messed up. We didn't spend the time. We weren't on our A game. Now we've got to go backwards, and we're going to introduce yet another bill” that again does not do anything for the whistle-blower protection that we've all talked about in this House. We need to ensure there's an environment where people can step forward. Those on the front line need to be able to come forward and offer the suggestions we need to improve the situation.

This piece of legislation is nothing more than a diversionary tactic to take us away from all the mess that Ornge is—and it's nothing more than a mess. It's wasting money. Now we're wasting even more time and resources debating yet more legislation. If they did a good job with the first legislation, we wouldn't even be having this. If they had actually cared about what they were doing with Ornge and not structured so much for these for-profit companies for Mr. Apps and Mr. Mazza, we wouldn't be here having this debate.

Speaker, at this point we cannot accept this new legislation. It's not doing anything for the health care of the people of Ontario. We will continue to get to the bottom of this Ornge fiasco.

1530

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Ottawa–Orléans has two minutes to reply.

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you, Speaker, and I want to thank the members for Durham, Beaches–East York, Mississauga–Streetsville and Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for their comments.

I would just like to go—we interviewed Carole McKeogh. She's one of the most senior lawyers in the ministry, and here's what she had to say:

“I became involved in providing legal services for the ministry in connection with Ornge in January 2012.” She hadn't been exposed to Ornge at that time. “At that time, I was asked to prepare an amended performance agreement between the ministry and Ornge. This amended agreement was signed by both parties on March 19, 2012. I was also involved in the development of the proposed amendments to the Ambulance Act.

“In my view”—this is one of the most senior lawyers in the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care—“the amended performance agreement and the proposed legislation, if passed, provide a strong and effective response to address the concerns identified in the Auditor General's report on Ornge. I would like to speak to you briefly about these two initiatives.”

So these two initiatives, as she said in the evidence she gave to us at committee—and I can't understand why anyone would not be pleased with what's going on at the committee on public accounts. It's doing its work.

Interjection.

Mr. Phil McNeely: It's doing its work. We can bring people back if they have—and some people have already been.

This is important. This is a lawyer for the Ministry of Health. But who did your member suggest—that this agreement wasn't necessary? It was Golding, of course.

So I think we have to listen to the experts at the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care. Carole McKeogh is certainly an expert and has done a great job. We should move this legislation forward. We should give Ornge—the new board and the new management—the chance to excel as an air ambulance.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the opportunity on behalf of the opposition to address Bill 50, the Ambulance Amendment Act, relating to air ambulance.

You know, just in the last probably half hour, an hour, I've heard this act described as a diversionary tactic, a changing of the channel, a bit of a ruse; I'll throw in bait-and-switch myself. A cover-up—that's something else that comes to mind.

We're looking at a boondoggle, a scandal—there's so much phraseology around this issue—unsupervised by this government, paid for by this government; essentially a free-for-all that clearly, we're concerned, has put patients at risk and has cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars.

So now, we have kind of a half-hearted effort—a number of us sit on the Standing Committee on Public Accounts—to try and find out what's going on, with very limited resources. We do need to find out what happened, and that is in the past tense, Speaker, because, as was mentioned earlier, people understand that closing the barn door after the horses have already bolted—you're left with an empty barn, as was explained by the Texas Ranger who is sitting next to me here. He knows a bit about how that works.

There's another analogy as well, and this continues—while the barn cats are away, the field mice continue to play. This kind of phraseology just puts in my mind the lack of government response, other than kind of a rear-guard defence.

This is truly a classic textbook example of lack of oversight. I think in the future, if young people in Ontario or Canada were studying management, this would be a case study on how not to do it, particularly in that area of oversight, that lack of control; a textbook example of very little to no accountability at all. There is accountability in the system but nobody pulled the trigger; nobody acknowledged the red flags that continued to come up.

This government spent five years looking the other way. They turned their heads while \$150 million a year went out the door, without questioning how it was being spent.

The day that the Auditor General blew the lid on this myriad of for-profit and not-for-profit subsidiaries was the same day we got this bill, Bill 50—clearly, to my mind, something to, as I say, somewhat divert or perhaps to brush it under the rug, legislation that really repeats what was already there. The powers were already there for this government to keep an eye on what was going on.

We continue to learn, as things twist and weave, of the revealing testimony. On Wednesdays, we really only have five minutes per party to raise questions. It's not enough. As we have indicated many times over, this has to be done in a better way, and we do need a select committee.

It was well over a year ago, as you would recall, Speaker, that we in the opposition first warned that provincial health dollars were inappropriately subsidizing

a complex web of for-profit companies. The health minister, Deb Matthews, ignored those warnings and didn't take any action. It is ironic, when you look at the moniker Ornge, that the "A" is missing. Accountability, which starts with "A," is missing with respect to this issue. Bill 50 is not going to do the job on this one.

The Ontario government employs people, a handful of senior officials, whose job it is to guard the public trust. It's very disappointing to learn that at least 12 of these officials—three from Premier McGuinty's office, a minister and four deputies—were fully briefed on the goings-on at Ornge in January 2011, apparently, but took no action. Again, it raises the question: Why did the health minister not intervene; why did the Premier not intervene? By refusing to act—and that is more than a year ago—and only acting now by rolling out a piece of legislation, this government may well have put lives at risk and certainly betrayed the public trust. Only recently were the OPP called in for their criminal investigation.

It's hard not to be cynical about this government and about politicians in general. It tars so many people with the same brush when we see this complete lack of control, this complete lack of oversight and really no hint of accountability at all or no hint of any action with respect to accountability.

It reminds me of eHealth. At the end of the day, the taxpayers ended up footing the bill for that particular textbook-quality case study of mismanagement. Hundreds of millions of precious dollars went down the drain. In the context of eHealth, Ornge air ambulance is just the latest scandal presented by this government, and something we have to deal with in this Legislature.

It was just a few years ago that we were debating eHealth—\$1 billion squandered on government friends and insiders. We have no electronic health care system at this point. We have no results at all from close to \$1 billion that was flushed down the drain. We asked for an inquiry at that time. Again, despite another damning Auditor General's report, the government rejected the calls for further investigation.

Inquiries are so important. Whether it's an inquiry even through a select committee, it's so important to try to determine what happened, to look back, obviously, to do the research—to have the resources to do the research—and not only to look back but look forward, to propose policy and propose reform, all the while conducting these deliberations in public view with the participation of the public and, obviously, expert witnesses.

Auditor General Jim McCarter at the time, with respect to eHealth, pointed to uncontrolled spending and no significant results. But he lacked the mandate to answer many of the important questions about the dollars that were funnelled to consultants. This was the report that highlighted the fact that one consultant at eHealth—this is going back to 2002—grew to a whopping 328 consultant contracts by 2008.

1540

Further, at the time of its amalgamation into the eHealth Ontario agency in 2009, the ministry had more

than 300 eHealth consultants and something like 27 employees. So given the potentially criminal behaviour hinted at by the AG's report on eHealth, including potential collusion, bid-rigging, overt obstruction of his own probe—again, only an independent, impartial public inquiry with a full mandate to subpoena documents, to subpoena testimony, would have provided the answers on that one.

Again, dollars down the drain; a further example of lack of oversight; no attention to results. This continues, as we see now, with Ornge, much as it did with eHealth. We have suggested, we have requested, that the present minister step aside, much as Minister Caplan honourably did the right thing with respect to eHealth.

So the bottom line, Speaker: While the government pretends that Bill 50 will fix—this is what the minister has indicated—what her government allowed to be broken, it's little more than a cover for a minister who didn't do her job. For months we've been asking questions in this Legislature and at committee, questions about what the minister knew, when she knew and how she reacted. At each turn, we were met with answers that simply don't add up. And this bill, Bill 50, is going to do nothing to clarify any of those kinds of inquiries with respect to the something like \$730 million that went out the door.

We in opposition had suspicions about the cost and the scope of this emerging scandal, and the Auditor General's report opened the door to some of the realities before us today. For example—from the report—Ornge funding for air ambulance services had increased more than 20% since 2006-07, while the number of patients actually decreased 6%. With respect to land ambulance, Ornge received \$65 million for inter-facility land ambulance transfers, projected to a number of something like 20,000 a year. However, Ornge is currently providing only about 15% of that projection.

The AG report went to highlight that while the Ministry of Health continued to dole out the cash, oblivious to its use, Ornge board and management “created a network of for-profit and not-for-profit subsidiaries and other companies with which Ornge has entered into complex financial arrangements to deliver air ambulance services.”

Ornge's corporate head office: another example of one of these convoluted arrangements. As the AG pointed out, Ornge used \$15 million in funding, borrowed through a bond issue, to purchase a building that houses its corporate head office. Then it entered into yet another complex arrangement with other entities, which it had created itself, to sell the building and then rent it back. The AG calculates that over the first five years of this 25-year lease, Ornge was paying something like \$2 million more than it should on this particular lease.

Ornge has borrowed almost \$300 million to finance, among other things, the purchase of 12 new helicopters, 10 new airplanes and 11 used helicopters. And the Toronto Star reported that \$25 million in funding cannot be accounted for.

The Auditor General discovered that \$500,000 was spent by Ornge for two motorcycles, two custom-made motorcycles built to promote Ornge. They used them on the television series American Chopper. This is a California company, Orange County Choppers, that makes custom bikes. One of the motorcycles was used in a promotional event at a Blue Jays game, and at the time of this audit was on display in the lobby of the office building owned by Ornge. I think at the present time, one of the bikes has been sold and the other one is missing.

Speaker, “Ornge's first priority must be”—and this is very important—“to ensure the safe and timely transport of patients needing air ambulance....” To that end, in 2006, the ministry committed to set and monitor standards. I would like to read this quote: The “end result will be improved care, improved access to service, increasing effectiveness and efficiency of the delivery of service, and the assurance of greater fiscal and medical accountability.” That sounds really good.

Why are we now in a position of trying to find out what went wrong? Those were just words, obviously. Obviously, the minister has a responsibility to ensure that things are run cost-effectively and in an accountable manner, meeting the needs of the public and our health care system. These responsibilities were clearly not met, and I don't have any faith that Bill 50 is going to make any changes to that.

The health minister was warned about financial irregularities, and we've confirmed at public accounts that she was advised of the intricate web of for-profit companies that were misusing scarce health care dollars and almost daily revelations of patient safety being compromised. But again, in her own words, she did little.

You know, Speaker, I don't think a day has gone by in this House since the AG's report when we've not been stonewalled by government ministers as we try to get answers to help inform new legislation. There's a lot of work that needs to be done on this bill to deal with, again, issues of lack of oversight, lack of control and lack of accountability—let alone ministerial responsibility.

Members on the other side of the House seem to have forgotten our 150-year tradition of responsible government, first established by Robert Baldwin, the principle of responsible government, the concept that ministers should resign if their leadership is called into serious question or if a major scandal occurs on their watch. Again, I see no accountability in this government. I see no ministerial responsibility. We see diversion tactics. I've heard that articulated many times this afternoon.

It's very upsetting, Speaker. As I mentioned, I sit on this public accounts committee. This committee does not have the horses. It does not have the tools. It's set up essentially to not be able to do the kind of work that needs to be done. We have called for a select committee. To that end, Speaker, and to indicate my disgust with this process, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Barrett has moved the adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1548 to 1618.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Will the members please take their seats.

Mr. Barrett has moved the adjournment of the debate. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted by the table staff. Please take your seats.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing as well.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):

The ayes are 24; the nays are 42.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion lost.

I return to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Speaker, I guess I interrupted myself partway through. In the remaining time, just to wrap up, as a member of the committee, an all-party committee, we've had an opportunity to bring forward information from the Standing Committee on Public Accounts to this Ontario Legislature. Oftentimes the reception is very negative from the government. Fortunately, we have Hansard. Everything has been documented. Most importantly, as well, things are documented in the Standing Committee on Public Accounts. It's a committee that certainly does not have the wherewithal that a select committee, let alone an inquiry, would have, Speaker.

I do wish to draw attention to the House—not everybody here sits in on the public accounts committee; not everyone here is following it on the monitors or is reading Hansard. We received testimony from one individual, Trevor Harness, a former member of the Ministry of Health's air ambulance Medical Air Transport Centre.

Mr. David Zimmer: You've got to be kidding.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I find that the member opposite—it always gets a rise out of this member whenever this particular Ontario government employee's name is mentioned. I'd like to quote Trevor Harness, and he expressly stated—this is in Hansard—before a duly organized standing committee: “Attempts were made to warn the minister of this growing crisis,” but “they were all ignored by the Ministry of Health”—and I see now they're being mocked. Since 2008, Mr. Harness made several attempts to reach out to the Ministry of Health regarding management and patient safety at Ornge.

I find this disturbing, this blatant lack of oversight, let alone accountability, let alone control. I put forward that this kind of turning-a-blind-eye puts patients at risk. We know about the millions of dollars that went down the drain.

A former employee reached out to the minister's office, informed the minister's office of patient safety issues, and was ignored.

Interjections.

Mr. Toby Barrett: It's curious, Speaker, that in response, apart from the response I'm getting right now, the Minister of Community and Social Services jumped up to demand of me if I would commit not to ring the bells during that day of debate on Bill 50. No bells were rung that day. I never said there would be bells; I never said there would not be bells. What I will say, though, is that was then—there were no bells; this is now.

Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Barrett has moved the adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say “aye.”

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1624 to 1654.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Will the members please take their seats?

Mr. Barrett has moved adjournment of the House. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted by the table staff.

Take your seats.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing while you're counted.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 26; the nays are 40.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I declare the motion lost.

Questions and comments?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I am pleased to respond to some of my colleagues' comments.

The issue before this House is a question of whether or not this ministry took the appropriate steps, and now, the question of whether or not this bill will correct what occurred in the past.

Though the Minister of Health has indicated that the performance agreement did not have sufficient power to ensure that Ornge was properly—the oversight requirements were satisfied, it has become very clear in the committee hearings with the Standing Committee on Public Accounts that there were sufficient oversight mechanisms in place; they were simply not utilized. These mechanisms that were in place were strong. They provided the ability to have oversight. They provided the tools to persuade Ornge to ensure it fulfilled its requirements. Most importantly, there was the power of suasion that flows from the fact that the ministry was providing the funding for this organization; that if the ministry was to withhold this funding or even threaten to withhold this funding, they could more than have Ornge come into compliance with any requirement whatsoever.

While it's important to strengthen any agreement to ensure that there are no loopholes, we must acknowledge the fact that a select committee would get to the bottom of this—I support my colleague's comments with refer-

ence to that—and that there were sufficient powers in place before this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I think we have a committee that has all the rights of a select committee. The opposition parties are playing games. Public accounts is doing a full investigation.

I'll quote Ms. McKeogh, who is a senior lawyer for the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care:

"The amended agreement contains a statement of principles which Ornge must follow in providing its services. These principles include the requirement that Ornge's operations will support exclusively the provision of air ambulance services on a not-for-profit basis. It contains a number of elements relating to quality improvement and patient relations, which mirror the requirements in the Excellent Care for All Act. This legislation currently applies to public hospitals. Its provisions are made applicable to Ornge through the amended performance agreement.

"Under the amended agreement, a number of actions by Ornge require the ministry's prior approval. These include the purchase of real estate; incurring debt; the sale of assets ... as well as any changes to Ornge's corporate structure....

"I have also been involved in the development of Bill 50, An Act to amend the Ambulance Act with respect to air ambulance services, which received first reading on March 21, 2012." That's what's under consideration here today. "The proposed legislation, if passed, would provide the province with many of the same powers for intervention in the public interest which currently exist for public hospitals under the Public Hospitals Act." Those work, so those are the ones we want to adopt as part of this legislation.

"However, in the case of public hospitals, the legislative framework includes the power to intervene in the governance of a hospital through the appointment of a hospital supervisor, who can assume all the powers of the board and the corporation. This is viewed as an extraordinary power of intervention which exists to protect the public interest. It is an important safeguard which has been included in the proposed legislation for Ornge."

I hope that we get away from all this bell-ringing and proceed and pass the bill so that Ornge can continue to be a great service to this province.

1700

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened closely; in fact, I left to watch it on television, there's so much distraction going on here. The member from Haldimand-Norfolk made substantial arguments that I believe will stand the test of accuracy. You know, it reflects a lot of what our lead person on this whole Ornge file, Frank Klees, has been saying.

I'm going to quote the Hansard record here. It says, speaking here directly, "The Minister of Health, I

believe, has done a great deal of discredit to her office by defending her role and by insisting that she had no authority" nor leave to step in on these things—which has subsequently been disproven by a qualified, highly ethical lawyer, who has said that she did have the tools and failed to use them. I put those on the record earlier.

It goes on to say in Hansard here—this is on Hansard. For the people of Ontario, this is a detailed thing, but we need a full inquiry. I'm almost at that point now—Bill 50 is strictly a shell. What we need is a full inquiry. There's been so much abuse. It goes on to say that she actually admitted that she had failed the people of this province. Imagine: She'd failed.

We've repeatedly called on the Minister of Health to do the honourable thing and step down. This is ministerial responsibility, the very fundamental underpinnings of a democracy that's functioning. There's deep trouble under McGuinty here, and we know that. But we're calling on the minister to do the honourable thing and have a select committee.

A lot of these troubled waters would be calmed. We would get to the bottom of it. We would get to the truth—most importantly, to get to the truth. The truth, as we all know, will set you free. Premier McGuinty will be free then to go on and ruin—or do—other things. I always like to give them a second chance. Do the honourable thing: Have a select committee. The waters will be calmed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. John Vanthof: I'd like to take this opportunity to comment on the member from Haldimand-Norfolk. I believe my colleague from Nickel Belt also used a similar analogy about closing the barn door after the horse already left. In my case, it would be after the cows are already out.

The problem with Bill 50: What it's doing is putting a new coat of whitewash on the barn, but nobody is actually looking at why the barn door was open in the first place. Nobody is actually looking at if we can fix it. The one thing that nobody is really looking for is where the cows went. As far as you know, the cows are still out there, and somebody has sold the cows.

For a bill that's supposed to fix a problem, or the barn door, there's some major issues. Firstly, Ornge will not be subject to freedom of information, nor will the Ontario Ombudsman have oversight of the agency. So really, one of the biggest problems, we're not touching with Bill 50. Ornge will continue to be an organization that cannot be called to government agencies.

One thing I noticed is that I believe Ornge spent—was it \$9 million, \$9.5 million on legal fees? If that works out to \$1,000 an hour, that's still, like, 2,000 hours. But this morning the government House leader said we'd already had 15 hours of hearings. Well, you know what? I think we're slightly overpowered by Ornge's lawyers to this date.

I don't understand why we just—the bells are ringing because we're not having a select committee. Call the

select committee. Say we'll have it after the police hearing. You know what? Then we'll find out when the cows come home.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I'll return to the member for Haldimand–Norfolk, who has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Toby Barrett: The member for Timiskaming–Cochrane talks about how the cows have stampeded. At minimum, it's up to us to round them up again with whatever tools are available to us from the Ontario Legislature.

The member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton posed the question before this House whether this government took appropriate steps. I do wish to refer back to the testimony from Trevor Harness. He indicates, “Ornge was an experiment gone very wrong, an experiment whose responsibility lies solely with the Minister of Health, the Ministry of Health and the emergency health services branch. As far back as 2006, attempts were made to alert them to problems developing with the creation of Ornge. Not one person followed up on credible leads and factual information.”

The member from Ottawa–Orléans—I know he questions the bell-ringing, but just to go on, from Trevor Harness, “The organization itself was built on a culture of fear, intimidation and harassment. Anyone who questioned any decision, policy or procedure was dealt with swiftly, from immediate dismissal to threats of legal prosecution.” This is no way to treat Ontario government employees. To continue, “Many hard-working, responsible and dedicated employees found themselves forced out of a job they were committed to, and no one would listen at the Ministry of Health, whose job it was to oversee this vital emergency service.”

Further comments: the member from Durham, calling for the minister to step down. Again, and I quote Harness, “Today, the reputation of Ornge is one of failure, mistrust and scandal. A once proud and efficient organization is now an international disgrace. Their credibility has been lost and the damage has been done.”

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I would love to join the debate on Bill 50.

First, let's begin with what's not in the bill. My colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane talked about this, but let's make this very clear: One of the key issues, one of the key concerns regarding Ornge was the lack of oversight. So in crafting a bill to correct the mistakes, why is it that two very essential elements of oversight are overlooked?

One of the key issues that we raised in the Standing Committee on Public Accounts was the fact that the NDP had asked numerous questions in estimates regarding Ornge and in fact had made a number of freedom-of-information requests to assess or to disclose what the salary was of the executives at Ornge. Those requests were unanswered. In fact, they were made in 2010 and

were not answered until about two years later—this year—in the public accounts committee. That is unacceptable. It's rather ridiculous.

A publicly funded agency should be required to disclose a salary that it's paying out of the public purse to its executives. That's simply a very reasonable and logical thing to do. The fact that this bill does not include a mechanism to ensure that the freedom-of-information request made would be answered is a clear mistake, and it begs the question: Is this bill really aimed at increasing transparency? Is this bill really aimed at improving accountability?

The Ontario Ombudsman is well respected and has a great role in assessing, auditing and getting to the bottom of various problems in this province. The Ombudsman did excellent work when it came to reviewing the SIU and their ability to provide the oversight necessary for the police. Similarly, if Ontario's Ombudsman is given the mandate or given the ability to access the records of Ornge, it would provide another tool to ensure that we have proper accountability for Ornge. These two tools are markedly left out of this bill, and raise concerns.

What's more concerning, though, is that the entire premise or the entire thrust of the Minister of Health's position in respect to Ornge is that she simply did not have the tools to oversee Ornge properly. She blames the fact that the performance agreement had some gaping holes in it, that the performance agreement was not robust enough to ensure that oversight was something that she or that her ministry could accomplish. But that is completely contrary to the facts we have before us. The performance agreement had a number of covenants—in fact, 15 pages' worth—that Ornge was subject to. That's a considerable amount of material. On top of that, the lawyer who testified during committee hearings, Lynne Golding, made it very clear—and a number of other deputants made it very clear—that what the ministry could have done, regardless of the performance agreement, was that they were holding the keys to the treasury. They had the money. They provided the purse. If they were unhappy with the service, if they had any problem whatsoever, they had the ability to withhold the funds.

1710

Now, of course, we would not want to have our air ambulance services suspended. But if the services were not providing proper documentation, were not providing proper information about what they were conducting or doing, then it's very reasonable to say, “Listen. If you don't comply, if you don't provide us with the information we need, if you don't disclose the salaries of your executives, if you don't provide us with information regarding proper patient care oversight, then we will be forced to withhold the funding.” That is a very powerful tool that could have been used and was not used. It's been used with a number of other agencies.

In fact, testimony that we heard in the committee was that many agencies are very fearful of losing funding and that the threat alone of a ceasing or a suspension of funds is more than enough to persuade any organization to

come into line and to address any concerns that are raised. In fact, we heard testimony in the committee hearings that there was no issue in Ornge that was not discussed with this government, and they received one complaint, which was addressed. The one complaint that was received by Ornge from this government was addressed. But there were no other issues, no other concerns that were raised.

The ministry has a responsibility to ensure that scarce public dollars are spent efficiently, that scarce public dollars are spent properly, particularly when it concerns health care. We know that there are cuts that have been proposed by the budget. We know that health care is a priority in Ontario. And if dollars are scarce, it's even more important that we ensure that there is a rigorous application of a standard to ensure that our money is spent properly. We need to ensure that money that is spent in health care is not wasted, so that we have the best health care possible for the citizens of Ontario.

Now, I want to read into the record some testimony that we heard in the public accounts committee, just to ensure that members of this House know exactly what happened and they know exactly what the circumstances were surrounding the strength of the performance agreement that currently existed—or that existed before Bill 50.

There was an exchange between myself and Ms. Golding, and I wanted to clarify this issue of how strong was the performance agreement and did the Minister of Health's suggestion that the performance agreement being weak have any merit—did that argument hold any water?

I said, "The minister has indicated a number of times—and I think you've already answered this, but let's make it clear: The minister indicated that the existing performance agreement was not strong, didn't give her the ability to do the proper oversight. I just want you to respond, given the fact that you've indicated a number of tools that the minister did have, including the ability to issue the notice of default or at least threaten to do so, including the right to terminate the agreement based on the 15 pages of covenants. What's your response to that?"

Ms. Lynne Golding, who was responsible for crafting the initial performance agreement, indicated, "Those were all of their rights. In addition, the ministry, as the chief funder of Ornge, had great powers of moral suasion. I can tell you, all of my broader public sector clients work very hard to make sure that the ministry is kept happy with them."

So, if we accept now the Minister of Health's excuse that the performance agreement did not give the government enough tools or didn't give it the ability to oversee Ornge, what does that say about the government's role with respect to Ornge and with respect to the oversight?

Regarding closing the barn door after the cows are already out or after the horses are already out, we know that the Ministry of Health and the Minister of Health had full well the ability to close those doors and did not,

and have not to date come clean and indicated that, "Yes, in fact, we did not. We were not proactive with our oversight. We did not take the steps that we could have. It was our fault." By blaming the bureaucracy and by blaming the lack of tools, when we know full well there were tools sufficiently, the minister is distracting the argument.

The reason why we have to be clear on who is responsible, the reason why we wanted to get to the heart of the Ornge scandal, the Ornge fiasco, is two-fold: One, we want to know that our ministry and our Minister of Health are able to do the job. We want to know that the ministry is able to spend money appropriately, that they're able to manage what is one of the largest budgets in all of the ministries in Ontario, that they're able to manage their resources appropriately. Secondly, and almost equally important, we want to ensure that this type of thing does not happen again. Now, how can we ensure that this type of thing doesn't happen again when we don't know the details of exactly what happened? How can we ensure that another Ornge doesn't occur when we can't ascertain whether or not this ministry was able to indicate what they did wrong, what they didn't do and how this all happened, how this came to be? That's why it's essential that we have a select committee.

There are a number of obstacles and hurdles we are facing in the public accounts committee; namely, limitations in terms of the amount of time that we have to hear the deputations. In fact, there's also a concern that we're not hearing enough from the employees themselves, people at the ground level, who can tell their stories and indicate what was going on at Ornge and why resources weren't properly allocated and properly distributed to ensure that we had the best ambulance care possible.

We need to find answers to questions like why the government did nothing when officials from Ornge indicated that all throughout, every step of the way, Ornge had briefed this government, briefed this ministry, on everything that occurred at Ornge, including the web of for-profit companies, including the corporate structure. All of this was briefed, was advised. All of this was presented to this government. Despite the fact that this was presented to the government, despite the fact that all this information was very clearly disclosed, according to Ornge officials, to the Minister of Health and to the Liberal government, nothing was done. Why was that the case? Why was a blind eye turned in this circumstance? Why didn't the ministry act? Why were no red flags raised when there were some clear concerns raised?

This fact alone should have created enough of a concern that steps should have been taken: when we realized, or when the government realized, that Dr. Mazza, the CEO of Ornge, that his once-disclosed salary, previously disclosed under the sunshine list—once that salary was no longer being disclosed, it immediately should have raised concerns. The NDP asked questions about this salary: "What is Dr. Mazza's salary?" Once that request was made, once that question was asked, not

only in the committee hearings in 2010 but also through freedom-of-information requests that were made, why was nothing done? Why were there no red flags raised?

Interjection.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: If not red flags, at least some orange flags should have been raised.

These are very troubling issues, and they strike again to the heart of the matter: that Bill 50 seeks to correct something. Bill 50 seeks to strengthen the performance agreement, add additional powers, provide greater oversight. But what's the point of creating more tools if you're not going to use them? If the previous tools existed and weren't used, where is the guarantee that if we give you more tools, those will be used? When this minister does not accept responsibility, when this government does not accept responsibility, what faith do we have—what faith do the citizens of Ontario have—in this government being able to oversee Ornge when they had tools they didn't use and now we're giving them greater oversight? How do we have any confidence, or greater confidence, that anything will be done differently this time?

1720

What did we see in Ornge? We saw a publicly funded organization take public funds, public money, and funnel them into a net of private companies. Public funds were transitioned into private companies. They were transitioned into such a number of private companies that to follow that corporate web alone would leave you spinning. To see the complex web of companies, the for-profit side, the not-for-profit side, the public side—to follow that corporate web would leave you reeling, just to follow it. That alone should have caused concern. It should offend anyone that public money was used in this manner.

At the public accounts hearing on April 18, Peter Wallace, the secretary of cabinet, said the following. He indicated: "I am acutely aware of the need for the government of Ontario to continuously drive for more efficient operating models, including operating models that are not traditional, that involve other groups into the delivery of public services, including core public services."

Now, when we look at Ornge, there were not just the concerns of a private web of companies and a private web of corporations. We also have some clear testimony that the purpose of Ornge was to provide ambulance care, not to create an entire fleet or an alternative fleet of air ambulance airplanes, fixed-wing airplanes, helicopters. That's what in fact Dr. Mazza did. The initial agreement was that Ornge would be able to provide the services, provide the paramedics, provide the workforce. But what happened, in fact, was that companies that were providing the service at a more affordable or a lower cost overall were shut down, were bought out, and an entire new fleet was created, which was not the original mandate of Ornge. It was not the original purpose of Ornge and in fact called into question the quality of care that was provided.

Initially, before Ornge was organized the way it was, which resulted in the scandal that we see before us, there were far greater airport facilities, there were more aircraft, and the service that was provided was better. Ornge, under the leadership of Dr. Mazza, actually resulted in lower patient care. Again, that's not the fault of the aircraft operators, the pilots. It's not the fault of the paramedics. It's not the fault of the front-line staff. It's the fault of the executives. It's the fault of the ministry for not overseeing this. It's the fault of the board for not providing the proper guidance and oversight.

It's our responsibility to ensure that this stops. To fulfill our obligation to ensure that the Ornge air ambulance services are returned to the level of excellence and performance that they were once at, and to honour the work of the paramedics and the pilots that are involved, we must clearly lay blame at the feet of the executives, and at the ministry for not providing the proper oversight and for not enforcing the performance agreement that existed and that had sufficient tools within it.

We need to know all the facts so that we can prevent this from occurring in the future. We need to know all the facts so that we can ensure that this government can, in fact, fulfill its mandate of operating or managing an air ambulance service like Ornge.

To conclude my remarks, I want to make a couple of points very clear. Oversight is of paramount importance. The fact that public funds are being spent should be very vigorously, rigorously scrutinized to ensure that money is not spent in any improper manner, that it's spent efficiently and properly.

We need transparency. Transparency will come from a number of sources. One has to be the ministry. So we need to have some guarantees, some assurances that this government will oversee properly what is occurring at Ornge. We also need to see some independent sources of transparency, one being the Ombudsman. We need to see some legislation. We need to see some guarantees, some protection placed into the agreement, placed into the legislation that will allow the Ombudsman some access into what's going on at Ornge, so they can provide an independent source of transparency and oversight.

In addition, and of crucial importance, is that there needs to be access provided and no restriction from freedom-of-information requests so that, in the future, if there are any concerns, we have an independent vehicle or avenue to ensure there's information provided to the public to find out whether or not funds are properly being spent or used. This transparency is essential to ensure that we don't see another Ornge happen, whether it's in this ministry or another ministry. We need the transparency to do our jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I'm pleased to respond to the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton on Bill 50, the Ambulance Amendment Act (Air Ambulances).

There are a few key points in the legislation that I think are worth getting on the record. The legislation will

appoint a supervisor or a special investigator when the air ambulance service is not being operated in the public interest, just like a hospital. It will allow the minister to give directives to an air ambulance service provider, like at a hospital. It will prescribe performance measures and standards. It will allow the ministry to establish terms that are to be deemed included in a performance agreement between the ministry and the air ambulance service provider. It will appoint provincial representatives on the air ambulance provider's board, provide whistle-blower protections for those who disclose information to an inspector, investigator or the ministry.

It also provides the means for the current air ambulance provider, Ornge, to become a provincially incorporated organization, which will even further increase accountability of the organization. It's important to note also that this legislation will apply to Ornge's critical-care land ambulances, but will not impact municipal land ambulances.

Other options were considered to bring greater oversight to Ornge, including bringing the service back into the ministry, but these options provide little value beyond the proposed steps. The current proposal is the best option that will allow us to move swiftly while not disrupting seamless patient care.

It's also important to mention a couple of other things. The member claims that the public accounts committee has limits on time a witness can appear. This is not the case. The committee itself, the public accounts committee, sets how long a witness can appear for. Public accounts has the same powers as a select committee in this respect. The opposition, I think, may be aware of this, and this is going a long way to fix the problem.

As well, Speaker, I would mention that there is an ongoing OPP investigation into this issue. The minister has responded, and we're looking forward to the results of that investigation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bill Walker: It's my pleasure to bring comments after the presentation by my colleague from Bramalea-Gore-Malton. Not only does he bring a legal background to it, he's a member of the public accounts committee and has in fact applied his keen questioning skills to the task.

He shared with us that the performance agreement, which had 15 pages of covenants, shows very clearly that the minister had the power and the ability, if she so chose to accept it, to step up.

He then went on to refer to Lynne Golding, another legal professional—very involved—who suggested that the existing performance agreement in fact provided the tools needed by the minister to take action and in fact had great powers of moral suasion.

He suggested that if those services within those agreements were not in compliance, the minister could, and in fact should, have exercised due diligence to protect the interests and, more importantly, the safety and health care of residents of Ontario.

He advised and suggested that, again, the government's duty is to provide rigorous duty to utilize health care dollars to provide the best service possible and to provide proper oversight.

He, along with many others, including my colleague from Haldimand-Norfolk, very aptly described that the horses or cows—I'm thinking horses here because they seem to want the horses to go—were out of the barn already, and it's too little too late. This legislation, yet more paperwork, yet more ways to refute and subjugate the actual substance of what we're talking about, is just a waste of time. He suggested that there was a blame game going on. The minister just wanted to keep giving it—"It's someone else's problem," rather than standing up and taking and accepting responsibility.

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He asked a very important question: How can you ensure that this never happens again if you never get to the bottom of it? As such, we need a select committee, and I agree with him. The member from Thunder Bay suggested that you can do this with a standing committee. Not so: You only get about five or eight minutes with someone testifying, and that's not acceptable.

Speaker, if government is going to be trusted, they have to do the right thing. Without that, a government has nothing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I want to congratulate the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton on his thoughts on the Ornge bill that we're talking about, Bill 50, the air ambulance act.

Previously, I wanted to look at the auditor's report that was happening when the Minister of Health ordered the investigation of Ornge. To quote here on page 9, it says, "Previously, Ontario's air ambulance operations contracted with various private sector aircraft providers to transport patients." Originally, Ornge was contracting out to the private sector to transport its patients. "Ornge decided that, rather than relying on private sector operators, it would purchase new helicopters and airplanes to provide much of Ontario's air ambulance services." So they decided to take that upon themselves. "Because of certain features that Ornge wanted its aircraft to have, an open public competitive tender was not used."

There are just so many examples of what the member for Bramalea-Gore-Malton talked about: transparency and accountability. Here this organization, Ornge, took it upon itself to decide to buy their own airplanes and not even open it up to tender the contracts.

The result was that these planes couldn't even service the patients that they were intended for. How could that have happened when we're trying to save people's lives? We don't have airplanes where you can stand up and allow some cardiac arrest, respiratory, saving measures; planes that didn't have two engines but only one. It's just appalling to know that this organization was able to do this without any accountability to this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments?

M. Shafiq Qadri: Monsieur le Président, avec votre permission, je veux présenter quelques remarques en deux points de vue : premièrement, comme un médecin, et aussi comme un député à l'Assemblée législative.

Speaker, with your permission, I'd like to present a couple of thoughts in my dual capacities not only as a physician, but also as a parliamentarian.

I think ultimately, my aspiration—and I'm sure that's shared by my honourable colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton—is to offer the very best air ambulance service to Ontarians. As I understand it, the previous performance agreement would have actually called for the cancellation of the entire air ambulance service with three years' notice. That's why we're actually moving forward with Bill 50: to amend the various parameters, constraints and the agreement.

Specifically, for example, with this particular legislation, we'll appoint a supervisor, a special investigator, when the ambulance service is not being operated in the public interest, which is something that we've done similarly with hospitals. It will allow the Minister of Health to give directives to an air ambulance service provider—once again, that kind of internal oversight like we have at hospitals, as I can attest to on a first-hand basis. There's going to be added prescription and performance measures, as well as standards. It will allow the ministry to establish terms that are to be deemed included in the performance agreement between the ministry and the air ambulance service provider. Of course, there's probably about 15 other points that are being brought to bear with regard to Bill 50, the Ambulance Amendment Act.

I know that my honourable opponent, as was cited, with his legal mind, is going through each and every one of these particular initiatives and clauses, and I hope that we'll be able to move forward once again to restore confidence in the air ambulance system in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That's it for questions and comments, and we return to the member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton for his reply.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you to all the members who responded, who joined in the debate. I want to make a couple of points very clear.

One is that while the committee itself does not have time limits, those time limits are imposed by the committee members. It's simply a factor of the allotted time for that committee. Having one committee dealing with the matter and having another committee would just give you more time—would give you more time, period—to address this matter which is taking a great deal of careful attention and scrutiny to get to the bottom of. Having another committee would assist in providing more time.

When it comes to my honourable colleague's comments with regards to the purpose of this bill providing greater ability to regulate, including being able to appoint a supervisor or special advisor, the issue is this: It wasn't the case that Ornge was stonewalling the ministry's attempts to have something done. It wasn't the case that the Minister of Health had tried to get to the bottom of

something and was blocked. In fact, there was no request made. There were no issues raised. There was no oversight done. It wasn't a factor that the ministry wanted to come in and say, "Listen, let me change something here." The fact is that the ministry was not overseeing, period.

These extra powers are great. Why not? But it doesn't address the true issue here, which was that the ministry was completely blind to what was going on. It didn't ask what was going on. It didn't take the steps to find out what was going on at Ornge. That's the problem. It's not a factor of having the appropriate powers or the appropriate tools; it's the fact that the ministry didn't use those tools. It didn't take the steps required. It didn't do the oversight. That's the problem here. So while this bill will give more power, it doesn't get to the bottom of why it occurred in the first place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate?

Mr. Reza Moridi: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in this House and to speak on Bill 50, the Ambulance Amendment Act (Air Ambulances). Mr. Speaker, these proposed legislative amendments were precipitated by the problems identified by the Auditor General during his recent audit of Ornge, Ontario's air and critical-care land ambulance service.

Our government took decisive action to address the Auditor General's recommendations to establish a new standard of accountability at Ornge and to restore Ontarians' faith in the important services it provides. We committed to implement each and every one of the recommendations made by the Auditor General.

We went even further. First, we negotiated and ratified an amended performance agreement with the new Ornge board. Next, we introduced legislation to amend the Ambulance Act to enhance the government's ability to provide the necessary oversight into Ornge's activities.

Mr. Speaker, Ontario's air ambulance program was established in 1977 by the then Ministry of Health with a single aircraft based in Toronto. In June 2005, the government transferred and consolidated the air ambulance program to the Ontario Air Ambulance Services Co., known as OAA, a federally incorporated not-for-profit corporation. In November 2005, our government finalized a long-term performance agreement with the OAA. The performance agreement had an indefinite term and governed all aspects of air ambulance services in the province. The performance agreement with Ornge established Ornge's and the ministry's responsibilities and expectations in the services to be delivered by Ornge; for example, base hospital, air contracting, organ recovery services and other aeromedical services and so on.

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It also covered compliance with grant funding and government accounting requirements; data tracking, retention and reporting; quality assurance in the education and training of flight paramedics and flight dispatch staff; a complaints and incident reporting process; documentation standards; and ministry evaluation and monitoring.

By January 2006, the OAA became responsible for all operational functions of the province's air ambulance program.

In September 2006, as the newly renamed Ornge, the corporation took over the management of the air ambulance dispatch.

In 2007, Ornge signed an agreement for expanded critical-care fixed-wing air ambulance services.

And in 2008, Ornge took over responsibility to provide critical-care land ambulance services. That same year, Ornge purchased new high-performance medically equipped helicopters and added new high-performance medically equipped aircraft to its fleet.

In 2009, Ornge air purchased four hangars, located in Ottawa, Moosonee, Kenora and London.

In 2010, Ornge opened Canada's first transport medicine centre of excellence and, by the end of that year, reached a significant milestone, transporting its 100,000th patient.

Since their creation, air ambulance services in Ontario have undergone a number of enhancements that extended services across the entire province.

In essence, the service had three main elements: funding, dispatch and oversight provided by the ministry-based hospital system at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre, which oversaw the practice of paramedicine and air ambulance services, both helicopter and fixed-wing, that were contracted out.

For additional background, I want to turn briefly to the legislation and accountability mechanisms that govern ambulance services in Ontario. Both land and air ambulance services are governed by the Ambulance Act and regulations and standards made under that act.

The act sets out the responsibilities and expectations of the minister and other parties related to the delivery of land and air ambulance and related services.

The government provides Ornge with funding, through a contractual agreement, to deliver air ambulance services as part of the minister's obligation under the Ambulance Act to fund and ensure the provision of air ambulance service. The province also provides Ornge with funding to operate the critical-care land ambulance service.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Auditor General for his thorough and insightful review of Ornge. His advice has guided many of the actions our government is taking to fix the problems at Ornge, and we are confident that the concerns raised by the Auditor General will be addressed through the swift actions we have already taken, and through these proposed legislative amendments.

The Auditor General recommended that the ministry renegotiate the performance agreement with Ornge and establish measurable performance indicators. With the benefit of hindsight, it's clear that with the previous performance agreement, we simply did not have the oversight we needed or the power to step in sooner when it became evident that there were things going seriously wrong at Ornge.

Under the former agreement, the past leadership was able to avoid accountability and withhold information from the government concerning its for-profit companies. We simply did not have the power to regularly access financial information and monitor operations at Ornge.

It also became apparent that the limited operational and financial information that was provided to the ministry was insufficient and often inaccurate.

The old performance agreement did not require ministry approval to create for-profit entities like Ornge Global, which is where many of the problems began. The government had no control over these for-profit entities, and we were falsely assured that public dollars would not be used to fund their operations. Most of these Ornge for-profit entities are now gone, and the rest are in the process of being wound down.

In the past, Ornge also had no restrictions on assuming debt. The old performance agreement gave us no say in major acquisitions. We know that the former leadership made a significant helicopter purchase, and that they purchased and leased back their corporate headquarters.

Under the amended performance agreement, ratified by our government and the Ornge board on March 19, 2012 and now in effect, all these things have been fixed. The amended performance agreement raises the level of oversight far above that normally required of organizations receiving public funds.

Most importantly, we want to focus on safeguarding patient care at Ornge. The enhanced provisions of the amended performance agreement can be grouped under two general headings: greater accountability and transparency, and safeguarding patient safety and care.

As the Auditor General's report shows, Ornge was not providing the ministry with the appropriate operational and financial information we needed to assess the quality and value of its service, and it now appears that the information that was provided was often insufficient and/or inaccurate.

The amended performance agreement raises the level of oversight with the following measures and obligations:

- tougher funding conditions based on key performance indicators;
- increased audit and inspection powers by the ministry;
- more detailed financial planning, monitoring, control and reporting obligations;
- a committee to advise the board on quality improvement initiatives;
- a new patient advocate and complaints process to ensure patient safety, like the one used in Ontario hospitals;
- mandatory public reporting of expenses and restrictions on meals, travel and hospitality;
- quality improvement provisions that link executive compensation to performance improvement targets in an annual quality plan; and
- the mandatory approval by the minister for any changes to Ornge's corporate structure on the sale of assets by Ornge.

The Auditor General highlighted some concerns around dispatch and response times for air and critical-care land ambulance. Our government takes these concerns extremely seriously.

In the past, Ornge was not obligated to report emergency dispatch information. Going forward, the amended performance agreement will place a greater emphasis on performance standards and require increased reporting of dispatch information, including cancelled and declined air and land ambulance calls.

The performance agreement is closely aligned with the Excellent Care for All Act, which guides the province's hospitals. Quality improvements and key performance indicators will now be linked to both Ornge's funding and executive compensation. To ensure patients' safety remains paramount, a new patient advocate will be appointed, a complaints process will be developed, and it will be posted publicly.

The amended performance agreement also deals with enhancing the quality of Ornge's services based on objective, evidence-based performance indicators.

In addition, the performance agreement also provides for tougher funding conditions based on key performance indicators and a committee to advise the board on quality improvement initiatives.

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The second audit recommendation is for the ministry to conduct a formal program evaluation of critical care land ambulance transport in the province. In response, let me say that our government shares the auditor's concern that the government's expenditures should meet with value for that money. To address this concern and act upon it, the minister committed to a comprehensive program review that will evaluate the operational demand and Ornge's delivery model for both air and land ambulance.

This legislation is incredibly important. It gives government the powers it truly needs to provide oversight to any air ambulance provider. This legislation does the following:

- gives cabinet the power, upon the recommendation of the minister, to appoint one or more provincial representatives to the board of an air ambulance service provider;
- gives the minister the power to issue directives to an air ambulance service provider;
- gives the government the ability to include provisions in an agreement between Ontario and an air ambulance service provider; and
- provides cabinet with the power to appoint a special investigator to investigate and report on certain activities of an air ambulance service provider.

This legislation prohibits individuals from obstructing special investigators or from withholding any information required by the special investigator. This legislation requires a special investigator to provide a report to the minister upon completion of the investigation.

The legislation also provides cabinet with the power, upon the recommendation of the minister, to appoint a

supervisor to exercise the powers of the board, officers and members, and other corporate powers of an air ambulance service provider. The supervisor would have the same rights as the board of an air ambulance service provider. The supervisor would report to the minister.

This legislation also prohibits retaliation against a person who has disclosed information that relates to an air ambulance service provider to an inspector, investigator or a special investigator. Air ambulance service providers and other persons would also be prohibited from doing anything to discourage the making of such disclosures.

This legislation also allows the continuance of a provider of air ambulance service that is incorporated under the laws of any jurisdiction other than Ontario as a corporation under the Corporations Act.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation, along with the amended performance agreement, builds on the steps already taken to improve oversight at Ornge, including the launching of a forensic audit, the appointment of an interim president and CEO as well as a new board of directors, and the winding down of for-profit entities at Ornge. We have taken these measures in response to the Auditor General's recommendations, and we have taken actions to restore confidence in Ontario's air and critical care land ambulance services.

The new leadership at Ornge has established a new era of transparency and accountability at this organization. Thanks to their recommendations, commitment and dedication, there has already been terrific progress on improvements at Ornge. The leadership team at Ornge has been working to address concerns regarding the medical interiors of the helicopters, and they're now working to strengthen the online response process to:

- improve launch times;
- ensure appropriate staff coverage and coordination of resources across the province;
- evaluate the dispatch process;
- review patient safety initiatives under the supervision of Sunnybrook CEO and Ornge board member Dr. Barry McLellan; and
- review governance, oversight and procurement practices at Ornge.

There is no question that the new leadership at Ornge and the front-line staff are doing their utmost to deliver safe, reliable air ambulance services for Ontarians. They are putting their full efforts towards their core mission of providing life-saving care to Ontario patients.

I want to thank the dedicated paramedics, pilots and front-line staff at Ornge who work so hard every day to save lives. I am confident that the Auditor General's advice, combined with the actions that we are taking, will contribute to a better air ambulance service and the highest standard of care for all Ontarians. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. It being very close to 6 o'clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1756.

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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 Minister Responsible for the 2015 Pan and Parapan American Games / Ministre responsable des Jeux panaméricains et parapanaméricains de 2015
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	
Vacant	Kitchener–Waterloo	

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Grant Crack, Kim Craitor
Vic Dhillon, Michael Harris
Rob Leone, Taras Natyshak
Rick Nicholls, Michael Prue
Mario Sergio
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Bob Delaney
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Teresa Piruzza
Bob Delaney, Victor Fedeli
Cindy Forster, Monte McNaughton
Yasir Naqvi, Teresa Piruzza
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: David Oraziotti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: David Zimmer
Sarah Campbell, Michael Coteau
Joe Dickson, Rosario Marchese
David Oraziotti, Laurie Scott
Todd Smith, Jeff Yurek
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: Bill Mauro
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Donna H. Cansfield, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Jim McDonell
Phil McNeely, Randy Pettapiece
Peter Tabuns, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Shafiq Qaadri
Laura Albanese, Teresa J. Armstrong
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Mike Colle
Frank Klees, Jack MacLaren
Paul Miller, Rob E. Milligan
Shafiq Qaadri
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Gilles Bisson, Donna H. Cansfield
Steve Clark, Garfield Dunlop
Jeff Leal, Lisa MacLeod
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, France Gélinas
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Reza Moridi, Jerry J. Ouellette
Liz Sandals, Jagmeet Singh
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Michael Coteau, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Randy Hillier
Rod Jackson, Mario Sergio
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Ted Chudleigh, Dipika Damerla
Cheri DiNovo, Kevin Daniel Flynn
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Jane McKenna
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