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Wednesday 5 June 2013

Mercredi 5 juin 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Wednesday 5 June 2013

Mercredi 5 juin 2013

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

STRONGER PROTECTION
FOR ONTARIO CONSUMERS ACT, 2013
LOI DE 2013 RENFORÇANT
LA PROTECTION
DU CONSOMMATEUR ONTARIEN

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 15, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 55, An Act to amend the Collection Agencies Act, the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 and the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts / Projet de loi 55, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les agences de recouvrement, la Loi de 2002 sur la protection du consommateur et la Loi de 2002 sur le courtage commercial et immobilier et apportant des modifications corrélatives à d'autres lois.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I was so pleased this morning to be advised that I was going to be given an opportunity—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Sorry, member from Durham, I've been advised of a different rotation. Thank you. If you could take your seat.

Questions and comments from the speech given by the member from Kenora–Rainy River? Questions and comments.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Good morning, Speaker. Although I wasn't here to listen to the debate from the member from Kenora–Rainy River, I read a bit of the Hansard. But I want to talk about the speech that she gave on the budget a couple of days ago. As a matter of fact, I sent her a congratulatory note at that time because I think that's well worth—

Interjection.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Are we okay, Speaker?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I have to confess that the member identified the fact that he read part of the Hansard, and I would ask him to stay focused on the bill that we are talking about. That would be very helpful.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Thank you very much, Speaker. You know, I always thought it was nice to pay com-

pliments to members in the House regardless of what side of the House they're on. There's so much negativity in the House from time to time—on all sides—that it's nice to say something. Anyway, she gave an excellent speech, and I would hope that people would read that.

But dealing with Bill 55, the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, this is an initiative that was actually brought forward a number of years ago by a then Minister of Consumer Services. We won't say who it was.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Name names.

Hon. John Gerretsen: No, I will not name names.

I think that all of these initiatives that the good minister that we have there now has brought forward are really in the interest of the consumers. They are all about consumer protection. They are about consumer protection from door-to-door sales individuals—and there's a role for them; there is a role for door-to-door salesmen. I'm not going to condemn them all. But there should be a cooling-off period, particularly for the elderly in our society who may, at times, feel that they might have been taken advantage of. That's why the cooling-off period that this bill calls for with respect to the sale, for example, of water heaters. As well, there are other initiatives in the bill that deal with improving the rules to protect buyers and sellers of real estate. Having been involved in the real estate business for many years as a lawyer, I know that greater protections are required on both sides of that issue, so there's a cooling-off period as well in that particular regard in many instances.

This is a good bill, and if any bill cries out for support from all sides of the House to better protect the consumers of Ontario, this is the bill. I would urge all the members to vote for it, and congratulations to the member from Kenora–Rainy River.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I was here on May 15, when the member from Kenora–Rainy River made her remarks. As I recall, she was very concerned specifically about the provision on the hot water heaters. This issue is, I think, a good start with aggressive salespeople who, either on the phone or standing on your doorstep, want to sell you some product you may or may not know, but they're making you think you should buy it.

In this bill, there's the provision of a cooling-off period. I think we would agree with the necessity to have a cooling-off period so that you can have sober second thought on some of the decisions you may have made. But it doesn't expunge the responsibility of the consumer

to be informed. An old expression is, “Buyer beware.” If the deal sounds too good to be true, it probably is too good to be true. That is good advice. I think it’s advice in any respect. I think of the pages here and people like that. Experience is the greatest teacher.

In this case, I hope to have an opportunity this morning to speak on this bill, because it does, in the best sense, talk to three issues that most members here would hear about. I think the provision under the loan-sharking or debt settlement business is one that—in my riding, just down the street, is one of those payday loan type offices, which I’m not a real big supporter of, although people do get into a cash crunch. They’re often the most vulnerable, and there do need to be some rules around that.

I’d say the group that I don’t really hear a lot about is the real estate brokers. Although it’s a very, very productive part of the economy in Ontario, with house sales and all that, there always needs to be consumer protection in all things we do in this Legislature.

I commend the member from Kenora–Rainy River and look forward to her two-minute response.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Mantha: I need to commend my colleague from Kenora–Rainy River. When she gave her comments and her words to this debate, I was here for part of it, and I went back to the office and, like a diligent representative, I sat down and watched the remainder of it.

Some of the biggest points I heard is something that both of us share. We have similar backgrounds as far as what we did before we came here: We actually sat with individuals and assisted them. We know the frustration they go through. We understand that sometimes there is the shame of those individuals. They don’t want to divulge the information to their family members because they get a sense, “If I tell anybody, I’ll be laughed at or I’ll be embarrassed at telling people about it.” So sometimes they hide, and we don’t get to help those people.

But through the jobs and functions and the initiatives we had, we were able to pull that information from those individuals. So we have learned first-hand of the benefit we can actually be in assisting these individuals in, first, identifying the problem; two, fixing the problem; and, three, hopefully getting some type of remedy out of it.

Both of us as well have a very large First Nations presence, and a lot of them, along with a lot of other communities in northern Ontario, were extremely taken advantage of when it comes to hydro. Unfortunately, we didn’t see that. If you were here and you had been listening, you would have noticed that very much part and the root of the comments she was making is the cost of hydro and individuals who are being taken advantage of and the aggressive pitches that are being thrown to these communities, especially targeted communities when it comes to seniors.

0910

So I commend the member for the words and the debate that she brought forward. It’s always a pleasure sit-

ting by her side, shoulder to shoulder, because I do know that we share a lot of the same problems and the same issues throughout both of our ridings.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The Minister of Consumer Services.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: If I may, Speaker—I guess it’s a point of order—I want to introduce someone very, very important to me, an important member of my family. My sister, Jill MacCharles-Crain, from Ajax is here. She has been with me through thick and thin. I just want to thank her for being here today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I’ll remind the member it’s not really a point of order, but for you I’ll let it go.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Thank you, Speaker. I appreciate it very much.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, you’re mellowing.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Yes, indeed, he is, and that’s wonderful.

Bill 55: I am obviously very keen about this, as the Minister of Consumer Services. I’m very pleased to hear how supportive everyone seems to be about standing up for consumers in Ontario. When we stand up for consumers in Ontario, we improve consumer confidence, and when we improve consumer confidence, that helps the economy. It’s just very important.

The specific measures in this bill are responding to what we know to be serious issues in the marketplace: door-to-door sales with respect to water heaters; debt settlement companies; and some improvements on real estate transactions that will make it better and more competitive in terms of how fees are constructed for real estate agents and brokers. It will bring us on par, quite frankly, with the rest of Canada. Also, it will deal with the phantom bidding situation that, unfortunately, sometimes arises when people are buying a house and they hear about these phantom biddings and the price goes up. But do these phantom bids really exist? So the component of the bill with respect to the bidding will just require confirmation about the number of phantom bids that exist.

This is all to say that these are very important measures. They are responsive to documented facts in cases of consumer issues and complaints. At the end of the day, I just hope all parties work together to move this forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Kenora–Rainy River has two minutes.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I would like to thank the Attorney General, the member from Durham, the member from Algoma–Manitoulin and the Minister of Consumer Services for their comments on my debate. I know that it may have been difficult to weigh in a little bit, because I think I spoke a few weeks ago, but I appreciate it nevertheless. Quite candidly, I appreciate the comments made by the Attorney General. I might have to review my notes, because it’s a little concerning that he’s giving me those accolades.

Back to the bill: As the Minister of Consumer Services said, she’s standing up for consumers in Ontario. I would

just like to caution her a little bit. It's true that this bill is a step in the right direction; it is doing some positive things. I think the intent is there, but it really falls short. As the member from Algoma-Manitoulin mentioned, it really falls short in the area of energy retailers. That's something that I spent the vast majority of my time talking about: all of the people who I have talked to in Kenora-Rainy River who have found themselves, one way or another, locked into these really long, really painful and really unaffordable energy contracts.

The problem that I have with this bill is that it is modelled after the protections that are in place when it comes to energy retailers. If that is the model, we're in trouble for this bill, because the Ontario Energy Board releases a top-10 list of complaints that are brought forward to the energy board, especially with respect to energy retailers. Time and time again, the top 10 issues are miscellaneous contract issues, cancellation charges that are being unfairly applied or are way too high, despite the legislation. We need to go further, and we need to take a serious look at the protections that are in place for other things.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: I appreciate the opportunity this morning to say a few words on Bill 55. Bill 55 was introduced by Minister MacCharles, the Minister of Consumer Services—welcome to her sister here, as well—on April 18. I don't think it was much before that that she was sworn in as minister.

I think it is the right thing to do. At the end of the day, you can't argue with the general concept and the idea here of consumer protection. Some would say, "A little too little." Some would say, "A little too late." These are only comments, of course. Our job as opposition is to be opposed in some sort of constructive way.

Now, you look at the bill itself. There really are three provisions. This may be just for the viewer. Most people here are very familiar with this bill.

I'm a bit surprised, actually, that it's here this morning. We're very close to the end of the session. There's co-operative housing and there are a few other bills on food safety and local food and lots of issues that are out there that aren't really resolved. I'm a bit surprised that this bill would poke its head up here this morning. I'm not sure if it will actually go anyplace beyond this provision of second reading.

I know that the NDP have been talking about the issue with respect to, in a general sense, the issue of consumer protection. That's probably a decent way to start, because consumer protection in Ontario—it's not just the water heaters. One of the things we hear about during the winter is the high cost of energy, the high cost of electricity. Now, if you want to protect the consumers in Ontario, you'd have to look more broadly than just the hot water heater. If the government was really progressive, they would look at one of the largest appliances consuming electricity in the home: the hot water heater. It's like

boiling a 40-litre or a 40-gallon kettle all the time. Think about it. What a wasteful use of energy.

In fact, there are products out there. There are in-line hot water heaters; there are solar heaters. Some countries mandate that you heat your hot water through solar. Israel is a case in point. There are other cases; I believe parts of Australia have the same thing. The point I'm making is that rather than just come up with this idea that they're going to let these people stop knocking on your door to sell you a new hot water heater, why don't they bring in a new product?

Why wouldn't they, on this new home renovation tax credit they have—which is another game entirely. Why wouldn't they allow them to save their—because seniors—you know this yourself, Mr. Speaker. I've heard you speak of it—passionately, I might add. Seniors, in their home, are finding that they can't stay there. In fact, the Liberals have a plan called Aging at Home. We actually call the plan "aging alone," because there's no home care, really—a couple of hours a day.

But here's the issue: They could have that person knocking on the door and saying, "Look, I could save you \$50 a month if you invest, say, \$2,500 in this in-line hot water heater. You could save \$50 a month." That would be a progressive move. That would be consumer protection. That would be protecting the person of modest income.

I can't disagree: There has been some very aggressive information with respect to the retailers in electricity and the other subsidiary companies of these local utilities that sell these appliances like hot water tanks and stuff like that. I, in fact, replaced mine.

Then, when you look at it, there are other options there too. That's just one topic. I wish I had an hour, because there's so much in this bill that I could talk about. But here's the issue: On the hot water, then you have the choice. Do you want to heat the water with electricity—very, very inefficient—or with natural gas? What's wrong with that?

Hon. John Gerretsen: That's the way to go.

Mr. John O'Toole: Exactly. Gas was negatively priced a few months ago. I could diverge onto that. That's a different topic too, because I'm not in favour of fracking gas—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Sit down, please.

I'd like it a little bit quieter, please. I've got about six or seven different conversations going. The member from Durham is very, very easy to hear, and I'm having trouble hearing him.

Continue.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much for that kind interruption, if that's possible.

I guess the point is that I would probably encourage and educate the consumers. This is what the government could do: Educate the consumers on some of these options about having an efficient use of hot water heaters in your home.

0920

Then I ask, if they're going to do this protection thing, how are they actually going to enforce it? They're going to have to set up a bureaucracy, something like the LHINs, to take care of enforcing these consumer protection provisions. They'll have to have a new office building built and hire several inspectors with cars to travel around the province checking. See, this is what happens when government implements things. It frightens me, actually, that part of the bill.

Now, I won't trivialize it by going on too much more on that, because I think that debt settlement is another thing. Now, you can't put them out of business, but they could make access to credit for people that are in trouble—I think governments could do a better job there as well. In fact, I think by starting early, improving the education, the budgeting information in our schools—use of money, use of credit should be a core component of education in schools. I think of the young pages here, who are probably in grade 8. We thought they were finished this week, but they're going to be here next week, I hope, because they've done a great job. When they go back, some of them are going to have to write exams. I wonder, if they're in grade 8, if they're going to take courses next year about consumer protection. This is about learning how to use credit wisely.

Once you're in this dilemma of going to these payday loan places—I just say the debt settlement issue is very prominent in the media and advertising stories about loan sharks, and customers taken to the cleaners are likely to be widely reported. I would suggest it's a good thing to report, because there are often shady circumstances in those situations.

I see advertisements on television that you get \$200 for \$20. Wait a minute. They mean \$20 a day. You get \$200, but they're going to charge you \$20 a day, and in 10 days, you'll owe them \$400. You still owe them the \$200, but you're going to owe them—so this is the unreasonable level. I think in the plain-language legislation, they should put a peak or a cap on the amount of interest that is charged. That's called debt or rent; it's actually called rent of capital.

So those are the three provisions in this bill, very briefly, the three sections of the bill dealing with consumer protection: on the hot water heaters, primarily with a cooling-off period; and then on the debt collection agencies, it's rules for the debt settlers, debt settlement they call it; and the real estate is abolishing commission and fee restrictions.

Now, that's another area where I think they're a pretty disciplined group, but the real estate brokers act has two significant components if you look at it. One of them is, first of all, it's a disclosure piece. What that means is the real estate agent can't work on both ends of the deal, as I see it. They have an inherent conflict, and they should disclose these conflicts to you. I'm not making any specific—but also the provision of tied selling. If the real estate agent says you should have a planner come into your home to stage the house, and, "I've got this very

good friend of mine who can do that for you," that staging the house part, and now you should also have this home inspection done—if they're tied to these other transactional things, I think we should be very clear about these tied selling provisions, if you follow me. This is not in there. I'm disappointed in that.

In fact, I'd like to see the bill go to committee, because I have several ideas that I want to bring forward as amendments. I know our critic has as well.

I wish I was the critic of this ministry. In fact it turns out I'm not the critic of any ministry at the moment, but that could be explained at another time. I would suspect that I have way too much criticism on almost everything that goes on here, especially when I read the clippings today. I'll just summarize this, Speaker—you'll allow me, I'm sure—the "Liberals Leave the Door Open on Proposed Fees." This concerns me. I want to protect the taxpayers of Ontario, and that's what our leader, Tim Hudak, is saying every day during question period.

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

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order. Questions and comments? The Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thanks very much, Mr. Speaker. It's always a delight for me to listen to the member from Durham. Gosh, he's talking about clippings. I'm just reading a clipping here, "Hudak Cools on Doug Ford PC Run," an interesting comment today.

Mr. Speaker, I've got to get back to Bill 55. It's interesting: I remember the last two years I was city councillor in Peterborough—that would be in 2001 and 2002. In the ward that I represented, there were a lot of seniors in the south end of Peterborough. Many of them didn't have any family in Peterborough, and people would be knocking on their doors or calling them non-stop. They were fast-talking individuals with their clipboards and their contracts, really putting enormous pressure on seniors to sign on.

I would get probably 20 or 25 calls a week, as the local city councillor. My advice was this: Don't sign anything. I would often tell them to stick with the Peterborough Utilities Services, which was owned by the city of Peterborough, a public utility. If you wanted water heaters, be it electric or gas, stick with them, because they were a very reliable organization.

The Minister of Consumer Affairs for the province of Ontario, the Honourable Tracy MacCharles, deserves a lot of credit for bringing this legislation forward, because I think that all of us in our constituency offices know this is probably the number one complaint: door-to-door salesmen, whether they have any background or not, trying to get people to sign these contracts. People get into contracts, and then they read the fine print and find out that they shouldn't have been involved in this contract at all. I know it also happens in Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, Mr. Speaker, so I know you're well aware of this problem. This will also clean up the debt services.

I want to thank you, Mr. Speaker, for getting a couple of thoughts on the record this morning.

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

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It's a privilege to speak to this particular bill. I always admire the member from Durham, when he gets up and speaks, just how articulate he is and how knowledgeable he is. Of course, he's been here in this chamber for a number of years now, and we always admire what he has to say.

When we talk about this particular bill, a couple of things come to mind. He mentioned the words "buyer beware." I remember, back in my high school days when we took Latin, it was "caveat emptor." On these kinds of issues, I really do think, feel and believe that consumers really need to be aware that there are some shady people out there. A lot of times these door-to-door salesmen will prey—that's P-R-E-Y—on some of our most vulnerable people in our communities, and that would even be our seniors, because seniors are far more trusting and understanding. As a result, they find after a while that they have in fact signed an agreement and they go, "My goodness, what have I done?"

I'll give you an example of that. Years ago, I used to work for just a tremendous organization down in the Chatham-Kent area, Union Gas—well, it was Union Gas. There would be other natural gas companies coming into our city to get people to sign up. You would show them your bill, and the first thing they did was record your account number. The next thing you know, they're transferring it over and you don't have any idea.

But there's another concern that I have as well, and that is that right now, down in our area, we have these industrial wind turbine salespeople coming along. In Chatham-Kent we probably have well over 300 industrial wind turbines. These salespeople—I often say you're only as good as your last sale—will go into a farmer's kitchen, sit down, give them the quick overview of these contracts and what the contracts are all about. People sign, not knowing what they're signing, and then regret it afterward.

Thank you very much, Speaker, for the opportunity to speak to this bill.

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

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'm happy to join the debate on Bill 55, the consumer protection act. Speaker, this is an issue that affects people in my community. What we're talking about, in many ways, is perhaps the kind of predatory salesperson. I would say that part of this is systemic, though. This is about the economy that we've created, in which more and more workers are actually desperate just to make a buck and pay the bills. Unfortunately, we're opening up new markets where people are stooping to new lows in terms of taking advantage of people. I think that's the bigger lens that we should look at this in, in that we need to actually create good jobs and not these kinds of jobs in the same sense.

0930

But, Speaker, it is about protecting consumers at the end of the day. In my riding of Davenport, often the consumers that are being taken advantage of are seniors, and it's often seniors with language barriers. I think we do need to make sure that we're moving this bill into committee, to look at it closely and to also make sure that we are protecting folks for whom English is not their first language, and to make sure that we have a really strong consumer advocate who is going to make sure that, whether your first language is Spanish or Portuguese or Italian or Vietnamese, you have somebody on your side to look at these things and to support you if you are taken advantage of.

We've seen this in a number of ways in my riding. I've been working on something with my federal counterpart, Andrew Cash; we call it pay-to-pay. Right now, some of the biggest corporations, Rogers and Bell, are actually charging people an extra couple of bucks to receive their bill. We call it pay-to-pay because you're paying to pay your bill. This is absolutely unfair, and it's taking advantage of seniors who are not online and are still paying their bills by paper. These big companies are taking advantage of this. This is just another example of why consumers definitely need protection and why we need to have this discussion and send this to committee.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: This is a very positive bill that I think should have the support, if I were guessing, of a Legislature which is looking objectively and independently at legislation that comes forward, because it responds, I think, to some very legitimate complaints that all of us have heard through our constituency offices in a variety of fields, particularly high-pressure door-to-door sales. I was pleased when the minister provided some information to the House on this and eventually gave her speech on this particular bill.

I think I detected, in the member's remarks, support for the principle of this particular bill: first of all, better protecting indebted consumers from predatory debt settlement services, which are a genuine problem, again, particularly for people in a vulnerable position.

Installed items such as water heaters are always a problem. I mean, we seem to get a rash of calls on these. We try to follow up for people, but it's clear that legislation is required.

Again, in the field of real estate, the changes that are made, I think, are positive, and they'll be supported by people in the real estate community who recognize that their best foot forward is when legitimate, good people in the field—and there are so many of them—are following the same rules that others, who might not want to follow those rules if there were not such legislation, are involved in.

I also note that this legislation has had some debate in the House. I would hope it can move to committee quickly and this legislation could be passed in this particular session. That's always a hope that I have.

Last, I would say, the member—because I'm responding to his speech—talked about user fees. I can assure you, Mr. Speaker, there was no government that imposed more user fees than the Harris Conservative government.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Some 985.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I said 978.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Durham has two minutes to reply.

Mr. John O'Toole: I was wondering if I could have unanimous consent for 10 minutes for the response, just a brief extension. Would that be unanimous consent?

Interjection: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): You're out of luck.

Mr. John O'Toole: Okay. Well, look, I'll just thank the member from Peterborough, who's a good friend of mine—he's now more advanced; he's the Minister of Agriculture—the member from Chatham-Kent-Essex, who is always eloquent and informed, I would say; the member from Davenport, a strong advocate; as well as the Minister of the Environment.

Now, the Minister of the Environment—I did listen closely. I was expecting, in consumer protection, that he might cancel the Drive Clean program today, here and now. I might have thought that. That would protect the consumers of Ontario.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a cash grab. What they're doing, it's a cash grab, though. No, it's clear that the program—the Auditor General—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Look, I know I've struck a nerve. I know that. I've touched a sensitive nerve.

The other thing I thought the Minister of the Environment might have talked about was cancelling the transformer station in my riding. He knows that I've been advocating for months on this.

Interjection: This has nothing to do with the bill.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, the bill is consumer protection. I think the taxpayers of Ontario need the protection. That's why Tim Hudak and our party are always asking questions that are defending the taxpayers of Ontario. They simply can't afford to live in Ontario anymore. That's part of it.

But in fairness to this bill, in conclusion, I would say there is clarity in a couple of them. One of them is the real estate brokers act. I would suggest, for example, a house today sells for \$500,000—I've never lived in a house like that, of course; a more modest home would be more in line. But let's say there was a million-dollar home. A \$50,000 commission? How about a straight cash deal where I say, "Look, I'll give you 10 grand to sell the house"? That is permitted in this bill.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Well, look, I say in business, and this is my advice to the pages, always look for the best deal.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm pleased to stand on behalf of the residents of Hamilton Mountain and speak to this bill. I think it's an important bill. I think that we definitely have a lot of work to do in this province in protecting our consumers, because they are the taxpayers of this province, and they're constantly dishing out of their pockets on a regular basis. When they have things come across their plates that they just can't control in life, they definitely need some help. Hopefully, this bill will move those things forward.

I have to say the bill definitely doesn't go far enough, but it will get my support in the hopes that we can get it to committee to make sure that we can make some changes to it.

This bill deals with collection agencies, and they've become a big problem. You can actually watch them on TV these days. They give out a phone number and say, "If you're in trouble, call this number, and we'll loan you the money." Well, that doesn't really give people an opportunity to read a contract. Unfortunately, that's another big problem: People don't read all the way through a contract to see what is actually in the fine print. But when you have that easy access to just pick up the phone and say, "I need a loan," then having that money deposited directly into your account—they're also withdrawing directly from your account at the same time to make sure that they get that collection. It's putting people further and further behind, which is an absolute disgrace.

Collection agencies also want upfront fees. If I'm in trouble and I'm behind on money, how am I possibly going to pay an upfront fee? That's again going to put me further in debt. That's a big concern from us. We need to make sure that bills like this are prohibiting things like that.

Cancelling an agreement without reason within a 10-day period after receiving a copy of the agreement: That is a good provision that would, I'm sure, help a lot of folks. But it also makes me question, if we're cancelling the agreement within a 10-day period, are they getting their money for that loan within that 10-day period, or do they have to wait for it? I'm not sure if we're going to cancel an agreement after I've already been given the loan. That's something that's going to have to be looked at.

It would prohibit misleading sales practices and advertising—absolutely important. Like I said, when it came to the commercials that are rapidly happening across this province with fancy-dancy songs leading people—they're going to save the day for them and make sure they get that money they need.

If companies fail to follow these new rules, the new legislation would enable the revocation of their mandatory licences. I think that's absolutely important. We know that there are collection agencies out there that are getting your money up front. There's not even necessarily the fact that your problems are going to be resolved, so there's no assurance that what you're paying for is actually going to happen. We need to make sure that that's taken care of.

Water heaters: Schedule 2 attempts to curb aggressive door-to-door water heater rental sales tactics. Again, it's doubling the existing 10-day cooling-off period to 20 days for water heaters, which provides consumers with more time to consider their decision. That's an absolutely great idea. But I hope that I don't need a water heater in a really big hurry and have to wait 20 days, so I'm interested in hearing how that would work out.

0940

Banning delivery and installation of water heaters during the 20-day cooling period: If I am in need of a water heater within 20 days, I don't think I'm going to get it under these new provisions. Hopefully, there will be some emergency timelines in there to make sure that it's getting us through that.

Allowing rules requiring companies to confirm sales by making scripted and recorded telephone calls to the consumer, and that key contract terms are disclosed and clear, in easy-to-understand language: I think that's absolutely important. When we're dealing with door-to-door salesmen, they can be very aggressive on the door. I know, myself, I've pushed people off my doorstep pretty quickly, or tried pretty quickly. It didn't quite happen. He was pretty aggressive. He just kept coming back at me with different reasons of energy, and that's exactly what it was about. It wasn't about a water heater; it was about energy.

Something that people are very concerned about in this province is the high cost of hydro rates, so when someone is coming to you and saying, "It's going to be a 5% discount on your hydro, and we're going to make sure that your bills are lower"—and I've heard it from several other members through this debate, about the cost of energy and door-to-door people trying to convince you. You know, they do convince our vulnerable residents, people with language barriers, our seniors to sign on to these contracts, and then people are stuck and they're not able to get out.

I know, myself, when I was working with a city councillor, how many people had called me and said, "I'm paying energy—my hydro has gone up to \$350," and here they had signed a contract, not realizing, thinking that their hydro was going to be lower. Thankfully, some of those folks were seniors and I was able to get them out of those contracts. But we have people with language barriers who just don't fall under that criteria, and they're stuck. So we need to make sure that we're protecting our folks when it comes to these door-to-door salesmen.

I also think that it's really important that we're confirming these sales through a phone process, so that people are aware and they're prepared that somebody is going to be knocking on their door, making that appointment, so that people at least can think about what these folks are coming to visit them about.

Making sure that there is a scripted and recorded telephone call to that customer is really important, so that we are clear, when the person is showing up at our door, that we know that the exact terms of what they're coming to visit us for are there. That's a really important thing.

Water heaters: The ministry received more than 3,200 written complaints and inquiries about door-to-door water heater people in 2012, making this the second-largest source of consumer complaints in the province. That's absolutely disconcerting, that people in this province are facing this. I would like to see numbers of how many complaints actually went forward with energy people on our doorsteps. I really hope, when this goes to committee, that we are looking at other industries that need to be included in this and not just water heaters, because we know that it's happening with many other industries.

I think that having a consumer advocate in this province would absolutely benefit people, and it would help with language barriers. It would help with our seniors. It would give people an avenue of where to take their complaints to, because people just don't know. I know that our offices are inundated with these types of calls, and without this proper legislation, we're not quite sure what to do with them either. We call their offices, we advocate, we do our darnedest to try to get people out of these contracts, but they're just not interested. They're more interested in the money that they're receiving. Having a consumer advocate would give that avenue of a voice and where to go, because we know that going through legal aid services and trying to go that route is time-consuming. It's backlogging our court systems, and that's really where it shouldn't be—maybe as the final stage. But up until that point, having somebody there to advocate on behalf of folks is absolutely vital.

I'm not sure if I mentioned already that I was contacted by one of our city councillors in Hamilton and was told that within the next two years, we would have a 33% increase to our hydro rates. I think this is something that we need to be looking at. I know that it's a little bit off-topic here, but it's in the benefit of our consumers, in the benefit of our taxpayers in this province. It's something that seriously needs to be looked at.

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

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for her comments.

I'm happy to have a couple of minutes today to speak briefly on Bill 55, the Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, and thank Minister MacCharles, our Minister of Consumer Services, for bringing this piece forward.

Speaker, like most people in the Legislature, I think all of us—certainly me, in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan—our constituency offices are likely the best place where we as members in this assembly can get the sense and the feel for what issues are of importance, what issues are percolating from the ground up and becoming very serious in our local communities, and issues related to consumer protection are at the forefront of this.

After being elected in 2003, I remember when very early on we began to see issues related to consumer protection walking in the door. I have to give a nod to a couple of my staff in my constituency office, Sharla

Knapton and Karen O'Connor, who have worked diligently over the years. I would suggest we have been able to help, in a very large way, many—unfortunately, primarily our seniors—who have been affected by these issues, where these very aggressive door-to-door salesmen are knocking on their doors and creating a lot of heartache.

The bill deals with not just the door-to-door sales piece, although that is primarily the focus. It also deals with debt settlement services. It deals with real estate, consumer protections, phantom offers, and it deals with à la carte services. So it is really progressive, and it really is necessary.

I think the first time that anybody in the Legislature did anything on this issue, it was a former member of ours, a Liberal member, David Ramsay, who's no longer with us. David retired in the last election. I remember David introducing a private member's bill some five or six years ago, which I really think began the momentum in terms of us on the government side getting more done to protect our seniors when it comes to consumer protection issues related to very aggressive door-to-door salespeople.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm pleased to rise to comment on the comments made by the member from Hamilton Mountain. No question, there needs to be some legislation for consumer protection.

One of the problems we have with this bill is the 20-day cooling-off period. Many times that's warranted, but I can't help but think of the person who has a problem with a hot water heater and needs it done tomorrow. I think there need to be some amendments brought in that would allow that to happen without the installer taking on 100% of the risk. Sometimes people install things because they need them today, and I think this bill has to reflect that—without having to go back to the original installer if they choose not to.

As well, we have some issues with the cancellation of existing agreements. That hasn't been dealt with. We see that many of the complaints that come in were actually of that nature, where people called, after a long-term contract, having problems getting out of it—in many cases, what seems to be maybe bogus damage fees. After 20 years, you're going to throw these things out, so why do you charge for a scratch on the side of it?

We're hoping to get this back to committee.

When we talk about the debt settlement—still, some of these agencies that are supposedly on your side are taking commissions back from the debtors. I think we have to look at some of the groups. I think if that's going to happen, the consumer has to know and he has to approve it. It's one thing for the person to be making the fees up front, but if he's also hired by somebody, he's going to get fees from the person that he's supposed to be working for. You have wonder about that.

Anyway, we're looking forward to getting this to committee and making some changes.

0950

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Algoma-Manitoulin.

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm pleased to rise again and talk to the bill that we're looking at, protecting our consumers. I want to thank the member from Thunder Bay-Atikokan. He reminded me of something that we should all do here as elected representatives: to recognize our staff back home, and also in our offices that we have here, because they're the ones who actually deal with the face-to-face interactions. They're the ones who are not only social workers, psychologists, a vast resource of experience; they are extremely important to each and every one of us as far as us doing our own functioning here in our offices. I want to send my thank you to my staff, who are Cindy Restoule, Cindy Haddow—who is new to my team—along with Grant Buck, and my executive assistance who I have here, Claire Prashaw. They do amazing work. They are so compassionate and empathetic when they listen to individuals—and the importance of the work that they do, which is consumer protection.

This is a great step forward, and I look forward to having those discussions over in committee. Again, I need to stress the fact that not everybody in this industry needs to be painted with the same paintbrush. However, when you're looking at an industry where you have over 3,200 complaints, there's a problem. We need to address that problem. These steps are small measures to getting us there. Once we get into committee, maybe we can take that greater step in order to assist our seniors and assist our community members so that they don't have to hide in their houses with embarrassment because they've been taken advantage of, or they don't have to feel so vulnerable when it's time, when the bills are racked up, and they have that ultimate opportunity to pay into something where they're going to eliminate a lot of your debts, and then they find out that they're in a bigger hole than they were. I'm going to enjoy listening to the debate as we talk about this, because it will definitely benefit consumers.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: Again, I think the address was a most appropriate address dealing with many of the challenges all of us face. I've heard from a couple of members now, on the opposite side: the member for Cornwall and the member for Manitoulin—I know the ridings have longer names than that. Both talk about committee and how important it is to get a good analysis at committee. The committee might decide to have people come in and make presentations or comments; they would certainly want to receive their written comments. They may want to look at it on a clause-by-clause basis, which normally happens. But to do so, we have to get these bills to committee.

I understand, when there's a very contentious bill where there's significant opposition, that a debate is going to be somewhat prolonged, and it may well be. I think, actually, if the House is working as it should, on

the very contentious bills that come before the House, there should be a full debate that takes place. Where there is a bill of this nature, where there appears to be a fairly good consensus on at least the principle of the bill, I think it's important to move this to committee at the earliest opportunity, having heard what some of the members have had to say. There's a feeling out there that governments in a minority Parliament should be more responsive to the opposition in particular, and the opposition should be more responsible than perhaps you have to be when there's a majority government. So I encourage members of the Legislature to permit this bill to go to committee for the kind of detailed analysis that it requires so that ultimately this bill, if the committee deems it appropriate, would come back either in its present form or in amended form for consideration at third reading.

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

Miss Monique Taylor: I'd like to thank the members from Thunder Bay–Atikokan, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, my colleague from Algoma–Manitoulin and the Minister of the Environment for their comments. This really is an interesting debate. It's important that we're talking about what consumers are facing in this province and legislation like this. I congratulate the minister of consumer affairs for bringing this forward. Yes, we think that it needs to be stronger, but like what was said previously, those are things that happen within the committee portion.

Part of what I didn't get to speak about was the fact that we need to ensure that consumers are educated, that there is literature, that there are radio ads, that there are different kinds of things through the media happening that allow consumers to see what's happening in the community that would maybe make them think twice about signing those kinds of contracts and making sure that those outlets are done in other languages so that everybody can understand what it is that we're talking about.

When I think about the pages in this House, I think, when they're in school, are they taught these kinds of things? So maybe put that into part of our education curriculum when we're learning about how to deal with our money and all of that—I believe that happens in grade 6, when we're looking at those kinds of things in school—that this is part of that discussion, making sure that consumers really know what they're signing before they sign a contract and making sure they read a contract before they sign it.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 55, An Act to amend the Collection Agencies Act, the Consumer Protection Act, 2002 and the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act, 2002 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

I think it's very important, as was mentioned by a number of speakers previously, that this is a bill that I think all parties in the House would support the principle

of. Who in this House would object to providing consumer protection as best we can, not only to our vulnerable seniors and others, but to everyone in the province? At the same time, I think it's very important that, when you're doing that, we do it in such a way that it will get—what should we say?—the best bang for the buck. We don't want to be like the door-to-door salesmen and sell this quickly because it sounds good today, but all of a sudden, tomorrow we find out it really wasn't to everyone's benefit or for the benefit of society in general.

So I just wanted to go through it. As I mentioned, in the title of the bill, it's quite clear that there are three main areas that are dealt with. Mr. Speaker, the best way to go through the act and what it does is to look at the schedules. In this case, there are three schedules. The first one is the Collection Agencies Act; the second one is of course the Consumer Protection Act, 2002; and the last one is the real estate brokers.

Now, on the first one, the Collection Agencies Act, I think it's important to recognize that, of course, that's to set standards for people who have money out owed to them, and then they hire people to collect that money. Mr. Speaker, it is all over the map as to how that's done.

To speak of an example, I want to say that I had the misfortune—I guess that's what you would call it—to be parked in a parking lot the other day, and I was there longer than I expected to be. When I got back, someone else had been to my car before I got there, and there was this little blue ticket on my window. I found it kind of interesting because it was not a municipal parking lot; it was a privately owned parking lot. So I looked at the little blue piece of paper as to what it was, and of course, it was a ticket. But the ticket in that type of parking lot does not have a place where you can object to the ticket or give an explanation or even suggest that maybe it was done improperly. It says on the ticket that, under the contract that I've agreed to when I parked there, they have the power to either tow it or give me a ticket, and that I have an obligation to pay the ticket or pay for the towing if they did that. It doesn't leave anything in between.

I have been looking for some time now to find this contract that they have with me, where I would have seen that prior to having entered into this contract with them. I guess we'd call it door-to-door—only it was my car door—sales that they put this on, and I find out that there isn't any place I can deal with that. So now I have a choice: It says I can send in my money, or they will turn it over to a collection agency to come and get it.

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I don't know exactly how it's going to work yet, because I'm waiting for the individual, but the individual, as far as I know, does not know who I am. So it may be a little bit more difficult for them than they had first envisioned. But this is a system where I have been entered into a contract with someone, having no knowledge of having entered into that.

I'm kind of having a bit of fun with this myself, Mr. Speaker, but there are a lot of people who get caught up

in that type of a contract, when people go door to door, who have no idea, at the end of it, when it's over and the salesman leaves, how it happened and how they got into this. So I think it's very important, as the bill does it, to mandate that all contracts be in writing so everyone can actually see the contract that they've entered into, not suppose that the seller knows what they're talking about, and also to set caps for doing the collection. Obviously, in almost all cases where a debtor hires someone to do the collection, the cost of that collection is on top of the money that they're collecting. That would have a cap on it.

Also, I think it's important to recognize the cooling-off period in these contracts, that in fact there is an opportunity to change one's mind. Having said that, putting deadlines on that cooling-off period—I think we need to look further and find ways to deal with that, because maybe it was a misunderstanding. I think it's unreasonable to accept that someone who is vulnerable at the door and got talked into a contract—the chances of them in the first 10 days realizing that they were taken advantage of are quite minimal, and I think we need to find a way to deal with that. I had many, many calls a number of years ago from people who had energy sales coming to the door. In fact, it wasn't until they got the first or second bill from the new supplier that they realized they had entered into a long-term deal with that contractor and there was no way out. I think that becomes very important.

The second thing is the water heater issue. We've heard a lot of talk about that. That is, of course, in the Consumer Protection Act. I too have a personal experience with that, having had a rental water heater for some 20 years and then deciding that I wanted a larger one. I did some research and found that I could purchase one for what I had paid for the rental one in about five years. One has to wonder whether that contract was a legitimate, good deal when I signed it. I know why I did it when I did it, and I'm sure that's the truth with a whole lot of people, but I think there needs to be a much better regime in place to make sure that everybody understands what it is they're paying for and what it is they're getting. I think it was mentioned by my colleague from Stormont-Dundas-East Glengarry—I think that's the right riding.

Interjection: South.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Having the 20-day cooling-off period, that you cannot have it installed for the first 20 days after you buy it when you have made a new deal and your water heater is not working: I think we need to be able to make an arrangement where I can have hot water as quickly as possible. One needs to make sure that there's an opening in there for that.

It's also important that the process of how you get out of the contract is clear. As I mentioned, I had a hot water heater rental. When I called the company up and said that I no longer wanted it, they asked me if it was disconnected yet. I said, "No, not yet, but it will be this afternoon."

They said, "Well, give us a call when you no longer need it."

"Well, that will be in about three hours."

"Well, could you call us back?"

So we unhooked it, we put the new one on that I had purchased, and then when I called them back, they said, "Have you got a way of disposing of it?" They had no intention of picking it up. They were just telling me that I had to unhook it so I wouldn't be using their hot water heater, which they were going to throw away anyway, without paying them for it. I think we need to have clearer guidelines for how we deal with those.

The other thing I just quickly want to wrap up with is the real estate broker's licence. I totally agree with the approach that the real estate companies must be open and accountable and transparent with offers that are being made and offers that you're bidding against. I think it's also important that if it's all open and transparent, they are able to set their prices based on a mutual agreement between the seller and the realtor. It makes great sense. Why should it be all based on a percentage of the sale price or based on a flat fee? Why could we not have that choice between how a buyer and seller are wishing to make a deal, providing it's all transparent and they're all following the same rules?

I think it's very important to make the issue about all following the same rules, Mr. Speaker, because I think there are challenges in the industry as to people not charging appropriately. But if everybody was doing it right, they would all be doing it the same way, and that's not happening. I think everyone wants regulations that give everyone the opportunity to do their business in the same manner.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I will turn it over to someone else. I see my time has almost expired; so much left to say and so little time to do it in. I will just sit down and ponder how I will get that done.

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

Mr. Michael Mantha: I'm happy to add my comments to the debate for the member from Oxford, who actually touched on something; he triggered a memory in my mind.

In our household—at least, in my household—there is one Premier. I love her to death, and I always listen to what she has to say. However, we do, on occasions, have to have committee discussions.

It was not too long ago, when we actually just relocated to Elliot Lake, where an aggressive person presented themselves at our door, trying to sell, and was successful in aggressively selling my wife into signing into a contract. We sat down, and I was quite fortunate to have that discussion with her two days before that 10-day period. I was very fortunate to get a hold—it's not an easy fix, to try and change or to get out of these contracts once you've put your name on the dotted line. It's not that easy. They find various ways of not getting hold of you, not returning your call. However, I was successful, because I'm somewhat of an aggressive person myself. When I've got my mind set on something and I want to

fix it, we go ahead and we do it. I was happy to say that I was successful in fixing this.

But it's the whole problem that happened at home, where my partner, my love of my life, felt frustrated because somebody came to her door and took advantage of a situation that we were in.

Now, that was my household. Imagine every other household that goes through this. Imagine that senior, where her son or her daughter comes up to her and tells her, "Mom, what are you doing?" That is something that impacts them for a very great period of time, and it's difficult for people to go through that.

I've spoken about this on three occasions this morning, but that is something that we really need to look at. It is so important that we really look at consumer protection for seniors and all of our communities.

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

Hon. Jeff Leal: I must say, I enjoyed the comments from the member from Oxford this morning. I think we clearly see a consensus building in this House on all sides on Bill 55 and to provide stronger consumer protection.

As I said previously, during the last two years I was a city councillor in Peterborough, it was nonstop, getting calls from seniors with these fast-talking operators coming to their front doors and really putting on a terrible amount of pressure to sign these contracts.

If I was providing some advice today, I would say to the people of Ontario, "Deal with your publicly owned municipal utility," because many of them do have water heater programs. They are municipally owned; they're publicly owned. They are doing their business in the best interests of their customers, and often they have very informative programs to help to make a thoughtful decision before you sign on the bottom line. That is with your municipally owned utilities.

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I share what the member from Oxford said. You enter these contracts. They give you 10 or 12 pieces of paper. Inevitably, if you want to cancel—they have a 1-800 number on the top. Try that 1-800 number, Mr. Speaker; I have, on behalf of constituents. The 1-800 person—they are in Timbuktu, somewhere around the world, and you're trying to explain to that person in another part of the world how you're trying to cancel a contract for somebody living in Woodstock or Elliot Lake or Thunder Bay or Cobourg, and it's virtually impossible, because they don't understand the situation—if in fact they even answer that 1-800 number, and that's a bit of a long shot to happen, for them to even do that.

There's a consensus building. This legislation will be good for consumers in Ontario. We've got to get it to committee and get it to help our citizens.

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

Mr. Jim McDonnell: It's a pleasure to get up and rise to discuss, certainly, the informed comments from our member from Oxford.

There are many issues. I'm glad to hear the Minister of Rural Affairs talk about one of the problems we see with this bill, that there's no clear legislation around the cancellation of existing contracts. That's one thing that's lost in this bill and one of the major sources of complaints that I understand we're receiving. When somebody chooses to purchase a water heater, the procedure to get out of an old contract—which may be very old, and the equipment may be paid for—is very hard to do.

That's the other thing: There's nothing that talks about the remaining costs of the previous contract. These units, I understand, cost about \$800. You're paying for them in just a couple of years. I know there are installation costs. But when you go to get out of it, there's nothing that talks about what your remaining fees are and what's the length of the contract.

I think there needs to be, just like there was in the cellphone regulations that the CRTC put out yesterday—very comprehensive—some talk about that, so that you know, when you sign a contract, what you are owing the previous company, if anything.

Then, as he talked about, the 1-800 number: Does it work? Can you get out of the contract, or is it one of these things that we understand it takes three or four months to get out of?

Certainly, some things in the debt settlement—or the amendments that we need to look at—and we've been hearing from our groups as well, the other issue of the debt settlement: Again, we've talked about some of the cancelling services. They're actually receiving funds from the debtors themselves—or the loaners themselves—so we need to make sure that that's clear to the people. We don't think it's fair that the person who is having trouble, where there's great duress, is having to pay a commission and finding out afterwards it was being paid—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. The member from Parkdale—High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I'm also commenting, of course, on the member from Oxford's comments a little earlier.

I have to say, I mean, the bill does take a small step forward for consumer rights. It's always a good thing. You're looking at somebody, for example, who signed up to a lifetime membership in Vic Tanny's. Anybody remember Vic Tanny's here? You're old if you do. Vic Tanny's died a long time ago, but I'm still alive, and I don't get the use of that.

Yes, it's very important to read contracts. Yes, it's very important to have consumer protections. I would like to suggest to the government that there are two huge areas where consumers are far from being protected. One was addressed yesterday in the member from Welland's bill, which was talking about rent controls not being extended to anybody who lives in a building that was built after 1991. That's not consumer protection.

I'd also like to point out to the government about payday lenders. If you've ever borrowed money from a payday lender, you will know that it's actually legalized usury; that's what it is. Payday lenders charge over 500%

interest. We should move against that. Government moved very slightly; it still hasn't helped the vast majority of Ontarians. Payday lenders are illegal in Quebec; they should be illegal here. That's a huge area of consumer protection that this government hasn't looked at.

So, as far as it goes, yes, it's a good thing. Would I strengthen it? Yes, I'd strengthen it by passing two bills that have been tabled before this House. Payday lending: Make them illegal or at least force them to charge no more than 35% interest. They'd all go out of business at that. Rent control: Why do we have it for people who live in buildings that were built before 1991 and not after 1991? This isn't fair.

To the member from Oxford for his comments: Absolutely, if we could strengthen this bill to include those other two bills at committee, I would say, "Way to go." But unfortunately, we can't. As far as it goes, it's not bad, but let's go far, far farther.

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

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to thank the member from Algoma-Manitoulin, the Minister of Rural Affairs, and the members from Stormont-Dundas-South Glen-garry and Parkdale-High Park for their kind comments.

I do want to speak to just a couple of points from their presentations. The cancellation fees: When you lease a car, they give you a paper and you sign on for how much you have to put up front to get the car, and then you get so much a month, and then if you want the residual at the end of the lease, there's a price on there, what it would cost you to do that; or if you walk away in between, it will calculate exactly how much you're supposed to pay for that. It would seem to me that this could be done for water heaters too, to set parameters of where you start from, where you're going and how you're getting there, and then what you do at the end of it.

I think with rentals, if there's a cost to get out, there should be a length of time after which you should be able to renegotiate at a lower price if the old heater is still running, because you've paid for it. So I think that needs to be addressed in order to have consumer protection.

The other thing I wonder about is why it is we have got in such—what shall we say?—a dilemma with hot water heaters when the furnace in the same house is part of the house and there are no lease agreements. I've never had a constituent call my office yet to talk about the lease agreement on the furnace and how they were having trouble with it. I wonder how we got into this with the water heater. I know in my case it was that originally, when the rental units started, you rented the unit with the power to run it for so much a month. Then when they disconnected the power directly to it and put it on the meter, they kept the rental going. One might want to have a look at that as to how that rental agreement should be structured.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you. It being 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30 this morning.

The House recessed from 1017 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I'd like to introduce, from Burlington, page Eric Orosz's mother, Heather Weaver-Orosz; his father, Michael Orosz; and his friend from school, his classmate Daniel Hoogsteen. The member from Niagara Falls will be introducing the grandparents.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my pleasure to introduce Emily Wright, a co-op student from Ryerson. It's her last week in my office. Thank you, Emily.

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm really pleased to introduce the grandparents of our page Eric, who is also the page captain. The grandparents, who have driven all the way from the beautiful city of Niagara Falls, are Joe and Marlene Orosz. Joe, welcome. I assured them that their grandson is doing an excellent job here at Queen's Park. In spite of the politicians, he's doing a great job.

Mr. John O'Toole: There's a very good friend of mine in the gallery: Bernie Condon, a former councillor in the Peterborough county area, as well as a former General Motors manager.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Mr. Speaker, I invite the entire assembly to join me in welcoming a volunteer in my campaign, from my office: Mehma Kaur.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'd like to introduce the parents of my executive assistant, Kim Howson. Calvin and Karen Howson are here with us from Georgetown.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'd like to introduce, from my constituency office, Bonnie Harrison, in the members' gallery; and with her is Erika Robson, my co-op student who is doing a fabulous job in the constituency office. We welcome them to Queen's Park. My executive assistant from the office just a few floors above, John Spink, is with them, too.

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's my pleasure to introduce Beth Gorbet and Wendy Gibson, from the Canadian Association of Natural Nutritional Practitioners. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I've got a number of members of the Oakville Provincial Youth Advisory Committee here today. From Abbey Park High School, we've got Brayden Ross and Aish Abid; from St. Thomas Aquinas, we've got Maameyaa Brako, Chantelle Colangelo, Colm Human and Nathan Greene; from St. Mildred's-Lightbourn School, we've got Ankita Sharma and Firoza Dodhi; from Oakville Trafalgar, we have Alex Glista, a former page; and from my office, we've got Grace Johnson and Ellen Kuschnik. Please welcome them to Queen's Park.

Mr. Randy Pettapiece: I'd like to introduce Linda Zimmerman and Richard Lewis, who were the winning bidders for a day at Queen's Park, from an event put on by the Stratford Shriners' club. Welcome to the assembly.

Hon. Jeff Leal: The Premier introduced the parents of Kim Howson, Calvin and Karen, but I do have a con-

nection. Calvin and I grew up together in the south end of Peterborough, and we attended high school together, so we go back a long way. I'm really happy that they're with us today.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'd like to introduce a really good friend of mine from Waterdown. Irene Woods is here. Irene, welcome.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: I want to welcome Marguerite Marlin, a PhD student at McMaster University—but a resident of Ottawa Centre—who is visiting Queen's Park today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the Minister of Finance, for Melanie Forbes: Her mother, Ana Rendeiro, and sister Kayla Forbes are visiting Melanie to watch the good job that she does. Welcome.

I'd also like to introduce, in the Speaker's gallery, former MPP Dave Neumann, from Brantford, in the 34th Parliament. Welcome.

He was also my high school grade 12 world politics teacher. I just thought I'd let you know that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I actually passed his course. I just thought I'd let you know that. Okay.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All at the same time: "Now we know," right?

MEMBERS' EXPENDITURES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have laid upon the table individual members' expenditures for the fiscal year 2012-13. Members will find these copies in their desks.

It is now time for question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the Premier. In the privacy commissioner's report released this morning, the truth about the culture of the Liberal Party of Ontario was finally revealed. Our suspicions have finally been confirmed. Government business is no longer the business of the people, and it hasn't been since that party has been in power. Crucial decisions about how public money will be spent are being made in secret, in the realm of private emails and BlackBerrys, only to be wiped from drives and computer memory, never to be seen again.

Premier, this is your party's MO. There is the public realm where we're told the government is operating; then there's the secret world, the world hidden from the opposition, the media and the public eye.

The report is only the tip of the iceberg, Premier. People are breaking the law. Let the people pass judgment on your party's record where billions are spent and no one is to blame. Will you call an election now, and let

the people finally pass judgment on your scandal-plagued government?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, I want to thank the member for the question, and I want to thank Dr.—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Leeds-Grenville will withdraw.

Mr. Steve Clark: Withdraw.

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

Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to thank Dr. Cavoukian for her report. We're examining her recommendations very closely.

But I want to be clear that from the moment that I have been in this office, we have been following all of the rules in terms of retention of documents. We have trained staff. We have made it clear what the expectations are, and we have taken additional steps to make sure that staff are aware of their responsibilities.

As I said, we've improved the orientation for new employees, and we have put in place mandatory training so that everyone knows exactly what the rules are. I would have it no other way, and we will continue in that vein, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Back to the Premier: So badly did your government want to obfuscate the fact that they have been only acting in the interests of the Liberal Party that they have deleted countless emails. Now, apparently, Mr. Speaker, the files that existed on government computers have been transferred to USB memory sticks to avoid any scrutiny. The privacy commissioner found that your party's protocol was to transfer files off of computers and, "Once this transfer is complete, original records should then be erased in such a way that they cannot be recreated...." This protocol, Premier, is against the law.

For months, the Liberals have been saying they have acted in good faith, that they've been acting to protect the public interest. Sadly, a great deal of these records are irretrievably lost. Will you do what you can to salvage what little is left of your reputation and immediately provide us with any and all remaining documents on secret drives and secret USB keys?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Let me be clear: The practice in my office and in the office of my caucus and my cabinet—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm going to go right to the members' ridings. The member from Renfrew, come to order. The member from Prince Edward-Hastings, come to order.

Finish, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Our practice has been to follow the rules. We have done that from the moment we came into office.

I just want to read what the privacy commissioner said in her report: “Throughout this entire investigation, my office received the full cooperation of all parties involved, including the Premier’s office, Cabinet Office, the MGS...”

We have been following the rules. We have made it very clear that the practices that will be in place, that have been in place since we came into this role, have been in full compliance with the rules, and we will continue in that manner.

1040

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

Mr. Rob Leone: This falls directly on this Premier and this government. In the report released earlier today, the commissioner speaks of an “inappropriate deletion of emails by the former Premier’s staff as part of the transition to the new Premier.” I quote again from the privacy commissioner: “It is difficult to escape that conclusion.”

You hand-picked your staff, Premier. Your Dalton-McGuinty-era two-email-account staff have made a decision to delete emails to avoid incrimination and have blurred the line between government and Liberal partisan interests to the point where it doesn’t exist. The privacy commissioner was clear: Your government broke the law, and the private Gmail accounts we uncovered last week further prove the point.

So we ask again, will you hand over the USB keys full of the information you tried to bury from Ontarians, or will this only end when the OPP break down the doors of the Premier’s office and confiscate—

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

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Mr. Speaker, the tenor of the question notwithstanding, let me repeat that since February we have been committed to making changes to make sure that all staff in all of our offices are complying with the rules. We have provided 130,000 documents to the justice committee, 30,000 documents to the justice committee from my office. We will continue to comply with the requests, and we will continue to make sure that all of the rules are followed by my office and across government.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. John Yakabuski: My question is also for the Premier. Commissioner Cavoukian has stated in her report that in early 2013, staff in the former Premier’s office had approached the secretary of cabinet about how to permanently delete emails and other electronic documents such as attached briefing notes. We also found that members of your staff have been using private, non-

FOIable email accounts to communicate regarding government business. Premier, the buck stops with you. People in the former Premier’s office, people who work for you, people who work in this government, are breaking the law. It is not good enough to say it won’t happen again. Who will be facing criminal charges, and who will be resigning?

Interjections.

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

Premier?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I think I’ve addressed the issues around Dr. Cavoukian’s report, and we will continue to work with the privacy commissioner. As I’ve said, we have taken extraordinary steps to make sure that all of our staff are following the rules.

Mr. Speaker, in terms of email, let me be very clear: Matters not related to government business should not be dealt with on government computers. Government business is obviously susceptible to and subject to freedom of information.

What I have said in public is that where private emails might be used is in examples like in a period of transition, when there were many volunteers who were working on their private emails; new employees who might not have had a government account; certain transitory records; certain legislative deliberations; and instances of political partisan activity that should not be using government accounts. But, Mr. Speaker, all of those rules will be followed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It’s lovely for the Premier to quote the way it should work, but that’s not the way it has worked with her government. People in the transition team from one Premier to another have broken the law. They used private emails to talk about government business. You’ve spoken so many hollow words about how you wanted this to be a transparent and open process, but your actions belie that promise.

You have done everything you can to prevent us from getting to the bottom of this scandal. We know that your words are completely disingenuous. Will you now admit—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): That’s not parliamentary. Withdraw, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

A judicial inquiry, Premier, is the only thing that will get to the bottom of your scandal. Will you now simply admit that your thirst to cling to power has corrupted you beyond repair?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. While I—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): While I’m asking for attention, I’m not getting it.

While I did not find that exactly unparliamentary, I’m going to ask all members, because of the heatedness of

this particular nature, to guard your words and race to the top. I'm just going to leave it at that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And I don't need the editorials after the Speaker makes a ruling.

Premier, please answer.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I just want to address the personal motivation that the member opposite seems to be attacking. My personal motivation for being in this place is to make sure that we deliver the services that are necessary to the lives of people in this province. I'm only here because I believe in publicly funded education, I believe in public health care, and I believe in making sure that government delivers the services that people need.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Order.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That's why I'm here. I'm in the leadership because I believe that we have a lot of work to do in terms of continuing to deliver those services and continuing to strengthen them.

Interjection.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I appreciate Dr. Cavoukian's report. We are working to make sure that every law is followed. Since February we have taken measures to make sure that those are in place.

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

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's a lovely story, Premier, but you're the boss and the buck stops with you. You are responsible. Thirteen million Ontarians deserve better than this. The commissioner has made it very clear: You broke the law. Staff were taught how to break the law and then went on to break the law, all because your government is addicted to power. The stain of this scandal is on you and every member of your government.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Stop the clock. Order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I actually stood to ask the government to come to order, and now I end up having to ask you to come to order.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'll wait.

Premier.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The team has got me excited.

Member, finish your question, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: As I said, the stain is on you and every member of your government. The people of Ontario no longer have confidence in you. Even the third party must be reconsidering their decision to prop you up.

Will you simply admit you are no longer fit to govern this province as you have lied to the people of Ontario?

Interjections.

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

I know the member is ready. Withdraw, please.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Premier.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The privacy commissioner, Dr. Cavoukian, has given us some recommendations on practices that need to be changed. When we came into office, when I took on this role, we put in place rules. We made it clear. We put training in place to make it clear what the rules were and to make sure that all staff followed those rules. We will continue in that manner.

I have done everything in my power since I came into this role to make sure that the information that was asked for was provided, to open up a process to make sure that the questions could be asked and information could be received. We will continue in that manner.

As I said, we are working with the privacy commissioner's office. She has appreciated how we have worked with her. We will continue to do that as we look at the recommendations, and I appreciate that she has made the recommendations.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier, and I think it's a pretty obvious one. Does the Premier agree that it was wrong and likely illegal for senior Liberal political staff to actually destroy information about the gas plants?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I've been very clear what the practice is in my office, and I have been clear from the day that we came into office that all of the rules will be followed and the—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): As I turned my head to look—stop the clock, please—I heard somebody say something unparliamentary, and I would offer the member an opportunity to withdraw, whoever that was. If not, I'll be watching.

Premier.

1050

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: So, Mr. Speaker, my—

Interjections.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I recognize the former member for Mississippi Mills.

Applause.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: So, Mr. Speaker, I've been—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I find it regrettable that some people have taken the moment to say things that they're not, by convention, supposed to say.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): And some people continue to talk while I'm trying to get attention.

Okay, wrap up, please.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Since February, we took steps to make sure that all political staff were aware of their responsibilities of what the rules were. That's why

we put training in place; that's why we've changed the practices in the office.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner said that destroying information "undermines" key legislation as well as "transparency and accountability...."

Will the Premier tell Ontarians what the government was trying to hide when senior Liberal political staff were destroying information?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said a number of times, we have provided all of the documents that we have been asked for. My office has provided 30,000 documents—130,000 documents across government.

We are working to make sure that all of the information that's being asked for is provided. We are following the rules in the office; we have put training in place. We will work with the privacy commissioner, as she has put forward some recommendations that we want to work on with her.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner said she has "trouble accepting that" deleting emails "was simply part of a benign attempt to efficiently manage one's email accounts." She's raising serious questions.

Does the Premier really believe that when the Minister of Energy's chief of staff, the former Premier's chief of staff, his principal secretary and his energy adviser were destroying all of these documents, they were simply trying to keep their inboxes clean?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I said, Dr. Cavoukian has raised some serious concerns. She has put recommendations forward. We have taken proactive steps, since we've been here in February, to make sure that all the rules are being followed and information is available and is retained, and all of those protocols are in place.

We will continue to work with the privacy commissioner, because I think the recommendations that she has put forward are very important, and they come out of legitimate concerns that she has raised. So we will continue to work with her.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. When the Premier took control of the Liberal Party in January, the cancelled private power deals and the impending hearings were one of the key challenges that were facing her party. At the heart of that issue was whether documents were being hidden. Did the Premier ask any questions or raise any concerns at all—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. Be seated, please. I'll hold the question. Stop the clock, please.

The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound will withdraw.

Mr. Bill Walker: Withdraw.

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

You put your question? Are you finished?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Did the Premier ask any questions or raise any concerns at all about emails being deleted in the Premier's office?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Let me remind the leader of the third party of what happened in terms of the gas plant situation when the new Premier took over—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Newmarket-Aurora, come to order; the member from Halton, come to order; and the member from Durham, come to order.

Hon. John Milloy: It was this Premier who offered a special committee to the opposition, which they rejected, and when they decided to go after a former member of the House, she worked to have the committee's mandate broadened. It was this Premier who wrote to the Auditor General and asked him to look into the Oakville situation. It was this Premier who asked Liberal members of the committee to ask for a government-wide search for documents, which the opposition rejected. It has been under this Premier's watch that we have seen 130,000 documents go to the committee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People were asking questions about missing emails long before this Premier took control of the Liberal Party. There were serious questions about senior Liberal staff deleting emails and destroying information, and the Liberal leader knew, or should have known, what was happening when she took over.

When the Premier was sworn in, did she ask any questions at all about why this information had been destroyed, or was it simply a case of, "Don't ask, don't tell"?

Hon. John Milloy: There have been 130,000 documents that have been provided to the committee, including 30,000 from the Premier's office.

In terms of the practices that are cited by the IPC in her report, the Premier has addressed that. She has talked about the measures this government has taken to make sure that we have tighter controls. She has also outlined—and I can inform the House that in my capacity as Minister of Government Services, I have asked this morning for a meeting with the IPC so that I can sit down with her and we can work together to make sure that we can strengthen our safeguards to make sure that this situation does not happen again and that rules and regulations are followed.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The commissioner reports that it is difficult to escape the conclusion that records were destroyed during the transition phase. Yet, as new leader of the Liberal Party, the Premier didn't ask any questions or raise any issues. Why didn't the Premier ask the basic questions that anyone who is genuinely concerned about missing documents would have asked?

Hon. John Milloy: We have a committee of the Legislature, which has been constituted to be called at the call of the Chair, meaning that it is up to the members themselves—of which they have a majority—on when it can meet. They can summon any witnesses they want. My understanding is, 33-plus witnesses have come forward, including the present Premier, the Minister of Energy and former Ministers of Energy. They have also been provided with 130,000 documents, including 30,000 from the Premier's office.

The current Premier has gone to great lengths to be as open and transparent as possible on this issue. Again, we have charged a committee of this Legislature, which is completely unfettered, and allowed them to look into any aspect of this situation.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, I've been surprised with your reaction to the release of a list of proposals on how to further pick the pockets of Ontarians to raise the money you need to balance your budget.

Here you are, a former bank executive, facing me, a former corporate executive. We're had to ask our subordinates to cut costs. They'd complain but they'd do it: 10%, really difficult; 5%, tough but not impossible; 2% or 3% was a walk in the park.

Here we are talking about moving towards balance, and make no mistake, Minister: Talking about it is mostly what you people do. We discovered that you have a nickel-and-dime list aimed at grabbing more and pulling it out of the economy.

We have offered to assist with a select committee, but you were dismissive of wanting to find savings. If you had a list of new revenue tools, there should be a companion list asking ministries where they could cut costs, like we both had to do in our private sector lives. Is there such a memorandum, Minister?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you for the question. It gives me the opportunity to reaffirm the outstanding work that we are doing in controlling our spending, being disciplined and determined. That's why our spending growth is less than 1% year over year. It's why we've exceeded our targets for four years running by \$21 billion. Last year alone, it was a \$5-billion reduction in our deficit. We'll continue to do that.

Of course we've reviewed and we've assessed all of the fees that are applicable to government, and we've rejected many of them that the member opposite makes reference to. We will continue to do our job. We look forward to the members opposite to support our budget as well.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'm beginning to get the idea that we in Ontario have seen Tweedledum and Tweedledee replaced by Frick and Frack. I'm beginning to think you haven't got any bright ideas on how to move this

province toward balance, maybe no ideas at all except grabbing all you can or settling with unions like OPSEU, only to have their leader laugh at you. I'm beginning to think you'd better fess up.

You may not like my party's plan, but we're the only party in this House that has advanced any plan at all. The third party wants whatever it wants, and you just give it to them. How is that constructive? And you wonder why we are not willing participants in your budget process. The answer is, because we don't want to be your accomplices.

Minister, Ontarians want to know how much more you're going to make them pay for your government's spending habits. Because of you, Ontario is now the seventh-highest borrower in the world that isn't actually a country.

Are you or aren't you capable of balancing the budget by reducing costs? If not, will you—

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

Interjections.

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

Before I start the clock, I'm getting a little anxious with some of the armchair quarterbacks who continually ask me to do somebody else's job. I will do my job. What's frustrating is that for those individuals who try to watch the clock for me and tell me how to do that, my record is about two seconds off in question period, and I check every day.

For those who claim that people are getting way too much time: Knock it off. For those who have decided that they know how to do it better here: Knock it off.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite just referenced his plan. His plan doesn't add up. It's fraught with mistakes. Even the mathematics of his plan are incorrect, and we've stated that and we've shown it to them. Now they have the audacity to suggest that they have a better plan.

I can assure the member opposite that during my discussions and deliberations with bondholders and rating agencies, they are very satisfied with what it is that we are doing. Ontario is being well received because of the strong economic fundamentals that we have, because of the plan that we have to balance, and the methodic way in which we're doing it.

The member opposite should know Ontario is the only province that has not only met those targets on an on-going basis, but we've exceeded them when the others have not. We'll continue on this path of being disciplined in our spending, and we're going to do everything possible to increase our—

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

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: To the Premier: Long before the Premier was sworn in as Liberal leader, I raised serious

questions about emails that seemed to be missing from the Premier's office. When the Premier became Liberal leader, did she raise any questions about what was missing and why?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I want to address this question, and it speaks to the issue that was raised by the leader as well.

I have said repeatedly, Mr. Speaker, that as soon as I came into this office, we put in place protocols. I made sure that staff understood what the rules were. I did ask questions about what protocols were being followed, which is why there's extra training that has been done. When new staff come in, they know what the rules are. We are following the rules.

We have turned over information, 30,000 documents from our office, and that has been all part of our commitment—my commitment, my personal commitment—to open up the process, to make sure that all of the information that was being asked for was received by the people who were asking for it.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Premier, you still haven't answered that question. You've talked about what your office has done, but when you came to office, you didn't investigate the destruction of emails, the absence of information, the inability to respond to a freedom of information request. Documents were destroyed and you didn't seem to care. Why didn't you ask the basic questions that anyone concerned about the facts would have asked?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I asked the questions about what our practice was going to be and how we were going to conduct our office and how we were going to open up the process. The government House leader has outlined what we did in terms of asking that there be a select committee put in place—which was rejected by the opposition—opening up the mandate of the justice committee, making sure that there was a forum for all the questions to be asked and answered.

We have worked with the privacy commissioner; we will continue to work with her. We have asked the Auditor General to look at both situations; he has, and is doing that. We are doing everything in our power to comply with the rules, to make sure that information is provided and to make sure that this is an open and transparent process going forward.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. Phil McNeely: Mr. Speaker, my question, through you, is for the Minister of Energy. Minister, Ontario is a leader in clean energy. Thanks to our government's investment, we've created 31,000 jobs and a resilient renewable energy sector across the province. I know that we've also been listening to municipalities to hear their ideas to improve how we site renewable energy projects and how we can better engage local communities from the beginning.

Speaker, through you to the Minister of Energy: Could the minister please update the House on the steps our

government is taking to improve the siting and procurement of renewable energy projects across Ontario?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I thank the member for the question. Our government is solidly committed to investing in renewable energy. It creates good jobs, eliminates dirty coal-fired generation and cleans up our air. We have listened to communities and mayors.

For large renewable projects, the Ontario Power Authority is creating a new bidding process where priority approval is given to projects that have prior municipal approval, making it extremely difficult for contracts to be awarded without an arrangement with the municipality. The new rules also empower and give to municipalities and other public entities extra power to engage as owners and partners in projects moving forward.

We are providing funding to small and medium-sized municipalities to create municipal energy plans, and we're increasing property taxes on wind turbines to provide revenue to municipalities. Mr. Speaker—

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

Mr. Phil McNeely: Thank you to the Minister of Energy for that update. I know my constituents will be pleased to hear that our government remains committed to investing in clean, renewable energy. Our investments have helped build enough clean energy to power 900,000 homes.

As we move forward, these changes will help strengthen our green energy economy by bringing stability and predictability to the system. Providing communities with increased local control over the planning and siting of renewable energy projects is a responsible thing to do. It will not only ensure that communities have a voice, but it will make sure that all areas benefit from continued development.

Speaker, I know that there have been specific concerns in many of Ontario's rural areas regarding renewable energy. Could the minister please update this House on what our government is doing to address the concerns of Ontario?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Thank you to the member from Ottawa-Orléans for the question. Our government has proposed new rules for siting renewable energy projects that respect rural communities and give them a stronger voice. We have struck the right balance to provide what residents deserve, what municipalities want and what the industry needs to grow and to create jobs.

But don't take my word for it. Here's what some of our fine rural mayors are saying: "It's good news for municipalities," says Kingsville mayor Nelson Santos. "Absolutely, it's a step forward," says Leamington mayor John Paterson.

I will continue to work with rural communities across Ontario and my colleagues here at Queen's Park to identify opportunities to further strengthen rural Ontario, because when rural Ontario succeeds, all Ontario is stronger.

IMMIGRATION POLICY

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Minister, Ontario already has the highest processing fees in all of Canada for employers who want to hire skilled immigrants through the Provincial Nominee Program, yet according to your treasury board document, you want to increase these fees by yet another \$500.

Minister, will you ensure that Ontario businesses, many of which are already facing significant obstacles to growth, will not be faced with another \$500 fee hike?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member for the question. As the member knows, immigration is a shared responsibility between the provincial government and the federal government, and the temporary foreign worker agreement is an agreement between the federal government and provincial government.

To date, we've only had 30 people last year who have gone through the temporary foreign worker application process here in our province, through our government. We have this mechanism there to allow for organizations that work with agriculture, that work to fill specific needs, to fill in those gaps that are necessary to make sure that Ontario is successful.

1110

This is a proposal that is currently in process. It hasn't been approved, and it's something we're exploring, but we need to make sure that at the end of the day Ontario is set up for success, and temporary foreign workers, through the PNP program, is a mechanism we'll use.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: As the minister will know, the fees associated with the PNP program are entirely provincial. Let's go over some of the fees applicable in other jurisdictions. Currently, in order to process a skilled worker in BC, they charge \$550; New Brunswick, \$250; Newfoundland, \$150; Prince Edward Island, \$150. Alberta, who are also facing skilled labour charges but through the PNP have seen their immigration rate double, does not charge a fee for this service. But what does Ontario do? Charges \$2,000 already.

Minister, how can you possibly expect Ontario's businesses to compete with the rest of Canada when your government's current processing fee is about four times higher than its nearest competitor? What are you going to do?

Hon. Michael Coteau: We want to make sure that Ontario is set up for success. If we compare our PNP program to other provinces—

Interjection.

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

Answer, please.

Hon. Michael Coteau: If we compare our PNP program in Ontario to other provinces, we know that Alberta and Manitoba have 5,000 each, and in Ontario we're at 1,300. We need to make sure that we get to that 5,000 mark so we can attract the best and brightest people here to our province so we can continue to be successful.

This is a proposal that we want to move forward on. It's something that we believe is right for the province. I just want to remind the member opposite that this is a cost recovery program; 98% of the actual cost of this proposal is cost recovery.

COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

Ms. Sarah Campbell: To the Minister of Infrastructure: Last week, I asked the Minister of Infrastructure about his department's decision to more than double the rent paid by the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre in Ignace. In response, he stated that they're paying \$5 a square foot for basic rent. He neglected to point out that his figure fails to include the compulsory O&M fees, realty tax and management fees and all of the repair costs, which brings their triple net lease to \$228,022.63, and translates to \$23.77 per square foot, but the minister should know this because he has access to the same information.

My question is simple: Is the minister prepared to make this situation right instead of continuing to deny the facts?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I don't think we disagree. The base rent is \$5; it was \$3.50. Every other health centre, the ones in my constituency, pay base rents much higher than \$5—\$12, \$20, \$25, plus they have to pay on top of that.

I have said many times to the member that we are trying to work with them, and there has been significant communication between my office and Mary Berglund to try and sort through how we can do that. Obviously \$3.50, which was the base rent—before it was raised; it was raised to \$5—is a relatively modest rent.

I appreciate the challenges that the health centre is facing. We are working with the Ministry of Health right now—who have correspondingly increased their grants to do that—to try and figure out a way, either by looking at the amount of space or the storage space, to find a solution to it. But they are not paying inordinately high rents compared to other health centres.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Sarah Campbell: Mary Berglund CHC has been trying to resolve this issue for three years. Whenever the issue is raised in question period or through letters to ministry officials, the response from the government is never grounded in accurate information or correct figures. This rent is so unaffordable that already they've been forced to lay off staff, and the executive director has voluntarily given herself a pay cut to help pay the bills.

The executive director is so desperate to resolve the situation and protect the viability of her CHC that she has travelled to Queen's Park today, and she's sitting with a board member in the gallery. Will the Minister of Infrastructure and the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care meet with the executive director today, after question period, to finally resolve this issue?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The short answer is yes, of course, and I had committed to the member from Ken-

ora—Rainy River that as soon as this House rises, I would come to her constituency to meet if it wasn't solved by that time. I will maintain that commitment: If we cannot resolve it before the House rises, I will come up and view the situation personally.

I would also be interested in the details of the funding formula, because the LHIN funds increases to health centres. If there is a gap there or there's information that we may be missing, I would be quite happy to be so informed.

The challenge is—and this is a challenge across government; I want to say this so all members understand—historically, over the last many decades, we were charging different rents, so there were hidden subsidies. The idea now is to get to full cost recovery so that everything is fair and transparent. If in that process there have been problems, we'll correct them.

WATER QUALITY

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of the Environment.

This week is Canadian Environment Week, which is an opportunity for people across Canada to celebrate our natural environment. The theme this year is Water—Working Together, and it's a fitting tribute to 2013 being designated as the International Year of Water Co-operation.

Considering our province borders on four Great Lakes and is home to more than a quarter of a million lakes, rivers and streams, working together to restore and protect our water is critical to maintaining our natural wealth.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please tell the House how the government is helping people in their communities, working together, to protect their local water sources?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Thank you for the question, and I'm pleased to acknowledge in the gallery a former environment minister, Norm Sterling, who is with us today.

This year's theme for Canadian Environment Week provides an excellent opportunity for people to reflect on the excellent work we've achieved together protecting such a valuable resource called water.

Our government is helping people come together through their communities and local organizations to play a role in protecting their local source of water. Our Great Lakes Guardian Community Fund supports local, co-operative activities that aim to restore and safeguard areas across the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence River basin; the Lake Partner Program is a volunteer-based water quality monitoring program which helps us monitor more than 600 inland lakes; and the Showcasing Water Innovation program fosters innovation by funding partners across the province who are finding innovative and cost-effective solutions for managing drinking water, waste water and stormwater systems. This is people working together for the environment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'd like to thank the minister for providing the House with details about the various great programs and invaluable volunteer efforts people have undertaken across the province, co-operating and working together to protect our water.

I'm also pleased to see our government taking continued action to foster community co-operation and facilitate the type of collaboration that is required to restore our fresh water back to environmental health.

Speaker, through you to the minister: Can he please elaborate on future initiatives our government will be undertaking to support local efforts to protect Ontario's fresh water sources?

Hon. James J. Bradley: Yes. Again, I'd like to thank the member for the question.

The 2013 Ontario budget is building upon the successful leadership role that communities have taken in protecting local drinking water sources across Ontario. The budget, if passed, will provide \$13.5 million to protect the quality and quantity of drinking water sources for the people of Ontario, working in partnership with small and rural municipalities.

We have to remember where this all started: Walkerton. We can draw a straight line from the Walkerton tragedy to Justice O'Connor's recommendation to the work of the source protection committees. Our government has already invested \$200 million in the local development of source water protection plans, and we look forward with anticipation to continuing to support our small and rural municipalities, with the support of my opposition colleagues in passing the budget.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: My question is to the Premier. All throughout this gas plant scandal, you have maintained that this is a problem—

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: You're going to want to hear this—you have maintained that this is all Dalton McGuinty's fault. Your House leader today issued a statement saying that since February you've put new rules in place. Our party has emails from Monique Smith, the Premier's head of transition, a senior adviser in the Premier's office and a former MPP of this assembly. In this email, she's discussing government business about privileged gas plant documents and questioning the Speaker's ruling into the contempt of Parliament. I'll provide those to you, Speaker.

1120

Do you know the date of those emails, Speaker? From Monique Smith on March 6, 2013. The Premier's most senior transition adviser is now clearly implicated in the gas plant scandal. Will you fire Monique Smith today and will you call the OPP in to investigate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member opposite has that email. The member opposite has that information. As I have said, we have done everything in our power to answer the questions and provide the information that has been asked for.

There are instances when private email needs to be used in partisan situations, in situations where it's non-government. There were instances in transition where private email was used by volunteers, by people who were part of the transition. We are working very hard to make sure that all the information is provided; witness the fact that the member opposite has the information that she was looking for.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Therein lies the problem. Yesterday her Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs said that the Liberal campaign team and the government were the same thing. That's a type of arrogance and hypocrisy that is astounding to the people whom I represent.

I have another email and it is from the Premier herself, this one on February 10, 2013. It's from Monique Smith, who was using her Premier's office email account, which meant that if she had one on February 10, 2013, she certainly had one on March 6, when she was conducting her government business on her Gmail account. What's curious about Monique Smith's February 10, 2013, email is that this one is sent to kathleenowynne@gmail.com. Premier, that's your email—your personal email—used in this gas plant cover-up. Can you tell me what other government business you're doing on your private Gmail account in order to skirt privacy laws in this—

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

Interjections.

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

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: As I have said, the member opposite has that information. The member opposite has the email and has the contents of the email. What I will do and have done is make sure that when there are questions, where there is relevant information, we provide that information and we provide the answers, which is why the member opposite has the email in question.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Minister of Health. Families with loved ones in long-term-care homes expect these homes to be safe. Yesterday the minister said that all of these homes receive annual inspections, but she neglected to mention that these are related to complaints and critical incidents.

In communities like Windsor, 90% of long-term-care homes have never received a full inspection as required by this government's own rules. Will the minister commit to providing the full resident quality inspections for every home so that families don't have to wait for a tragic incident to occur before seeing an inspector in their long-term-care home?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Yes, let me be very clear: There are three different kinds of inspections. There are the critical-incident and complaint-related inspections, and last year there were 2,347 of those inspections. There are also the RQI, the more thorough, intensive inspections. In addition, there are inspections that are done in

homes where there have been no complaints received in that year. There is an inspector in every home, every year.

I look forward to the supplementary because I think we've been over these numbers a few times. I do want to talk about some of the other excellent work that is happening in long-term-care homes to improve the quality of care.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Families have placed their trust in this government to do their job and make sure that long-term-care homes for seniors are inspected annually. When 90% of long-term-care homes in Windsor-Essex have never had a full inspection, it's clear that this government is failing at its job to protect seniors.

The government has already missed their first deadline of December 31, 2011. Will the minister provide a new timeline of when every long-term-care home in Windsor and in Ontario will actually receive a proactive, thorough inspection?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I've said, I have asked ministry officials to come forward with some options on how to strengthen inspections in long-term-care homes.

But let's talk about some of the other things that are happening. I am particularly proud of Behavioural Supports Ontario, and you've heard me talk about that, but I thought it might be interesting to hear specifically.

There's now a mobile outreach team in the Waterloo Wellington LHIN. They're following 818 residents in long-term-care homes who have behavioural challenges. Since they have become active, they've seen an 81% reduction in observed behaviours recorded for those particular patients—an 81% reduction. In addition, there has been a 63% reduction in transfers to hospital for people with mental health challenges.

Speaker, this is a remarkable success that is coming from specific investments to provide better care for people with behavioural challenges, most often dementia.

COMMUNITY SERVICE

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. My riding of Ajax-Pickering is home to many constituents who take time out of their busy schedules to volunteer their knowledge, time and service for the betterment of our community. Ontario can even boast of a slightly higher volunteer rate than Canada as a whole.

At an individual level, volunteer engagement enriches, empowers and builds a sense of belonging to my community. At the community level, volunteer engagement promotes inclusion and unity.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: How is the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration recognizing these tremendous individuals and organizations?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the honourable member for his question. Each year, Ontario benefits from the work of more than six million volunteers. These volunteers collectively contribute more than 860 million

hours annually. Our province has a long and proud tradition of volunteerism.

This spring, I was privileged to attend the June Callwood Outstanding Achievement Awards for Voluntarism. Throughout her life, the late Ms. Callwood was a tireless champion for the most vulnerable people in our society. She was a fearless activist, advocate and writer whose immeasurable accomplishments strengthened the social fabric of every community that she touched. Through her passion to serve the most disadvantaged people in our province, she helped convince others to take care of one another. As such, she has forged a long-lasting legacy here in Ontario. Named in her honour, this award recognizes individuals who donate their knowledge, their energy, their spirit and, most importantly, their time to make their communities a better place to live.

Mr. Speaker, these volunteers remind me of what it means to be a great citizen here in our great province. I was honoured to present this award—

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

Mr. Joe Dickson: Thank you, Minister. It was great to hear one of the examples of our government recognizing Ontario's outstanding volunteers.

While it is important to celebrate the hard work of these volunteers, it is also important to engage the not-for-profit sector, where many of our volunteers leave their mark. Not-for-profit organizations deliver many vital government services, promote social inclusion and help build economically and socially vibrant communities, including my community of Ajax-Pickering. Excluding hospitals, universities and colleges, the impact of the not-for-profit sector on the economy is close to \$29 billion in combined revenue annually.

Mr. Speaker, through you to the minister: What is our government doing to support the not-for-profit sector?

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to thank the member for bringing to light the importance of Ontario's not-for-profit sector. As the minister responsible for this sector, I'm proud of the 46,000 organizations serving every region and demographic in our province. The not-for-profit sector creates jobs and helps attract new investments to Ontario communities by providing strong recreational, cultural and social infrastructure.

The government and the not-for-profit sector share similar goals. That's why we launched the Partnership Project two years ago to better understand what we could do to support the not-for-profit organizations and strengthen our relationship with that sector.

To this end, we've developed a number of initiatives. For example, through our Partnership Grant Program, we're investing \$7.3 million over three years to help 27 organizations find ways to operate more efficiently, extend their reach and promote volunteerism.

This government will continue to recognize the valuable contributions of thousands of organizations that make up the Ontario not-for-profit sector and will strengthen our relationship—

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

1130

WASTE DIVERSION

Mr. Michael Harris: My question is to the Premier. Premier, in April you joined a long list of senior Liberals who have gone out on a limb to defend the eco tax scheme cooked up by your government five years ago. Despite the PC Party's repeated calls for these needless taxes to be scrapped, you told Ontarians that eco taxes were "just the cost of dealing with waste."

Premier, your position is unacceptable. Consumers shouldn't be billed \$200 million a year to fund Liberal recycling cartels. Now that you're forcing the environment minister to table a recycling bill tomorrow to make up for five years of Liberal failure on the environment, can you assure Ontarians that your government will meet the PC Party's demand to scrap eco taxes, which were created by the godfather of this tax scheme, Dalton McGuinty?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: Minister of the Environment.

Hon. James J. Bradley: One almost doesn't know how to answer that particular question, other than to say that if there were a paternity suit that would be launched on this issue, it would go to the Progressive Conservative Party, who brought in the bill, in the year 2002, which has caused so many problems, which allowed the establishment of what we would describe as cartels.

I cannot believe that you can be asking a question of this kind, when the real godfather of eco fees is your leader, the member for Niagara West-Glanbrook, who, when he was minister of consumer and commercial relations, as I think it was called then—and criticized very severely, by the way, by the former member for Owen Sound—did nothing about eco fees or the possibility of preventing them.

Our government is the government that's going to tackle this issue and ensure that it is simply a cost of doing business and not an additional fee.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Harris: It's quite humorous to hear the environment minister blame a 10-year-old piece of legislation, when Ontario's current problems all stem from the decisions made by your government.

We all know that Liberal regulations cooked up by Ontario's godfather of eco taxes, the former Premier, force consumers to pick up the tab for recycling tires, electronics, paint cans and batteries, after being surprised by these additional charges at the cash register. It is this system that has created the mess that we're in today.

Premier, when the environment minister tables his recycling bill tomorrow, can we expect to see a commitment to undo five years of Liberal damage that has cost Ontario consumers hundreds of millions of dollars and left the province's recycling rate parked at just 23%?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I have consulted widely with a number of groups, organizations and individuals on

legislation that could be brought forward in the House at a future date—bringing forward a new bill to replace the flawed bill that was passed by the Conservative government when it was in majority. Almost to a person, they have indicated that the real problem that exists is the original bill—and all of the problems that have arisen from that. They have made recommendations to me. I happen to believe, for instance, the Ontario Waste Management Association and others have some great ideas that I want to see incorporated in any legislation that might be introduced in this House.

The last thing I want to say is, I wonder if the former Minister of the Environment's scars on his back have healed.

CANCER TREATMENT

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

Yesterday, the committee heard from Baxter, the company that mixed intravenous cancer drugs for Ontario hospitals for 27 years, prior to Marchese being awarded the contract that led to the diluted chemo drug tragedy. Baxter told us that it would have been impossible for them to prepare those chemotherapy drugs at Marchese's bidding price.

My question is simple: Is the minister certain that the lower price wasn't the main deciding factor for Medbuy when they awarded the contract to Marchese?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very pleased to see that the committee is doing a very thorough job when it comes to investigating this situation.

I think it's important that we let Dr. Jake Thiessen do his work. He is doing a review of the cancer drug safety system in Ontario. He will be coming forward with recommendations.

We have moved forward on some initiatives to improve oversight. But I do think it's very important that we let Jake Thiessen do his report, that we let the committee do their work and that we review the entire knowledge that is gained through this process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: The committee is doing their work, and it is becoming more and more obvious that what the committee has been told about price being a minor factor in the decision-making is actually not the case. After weeks of hearings, it is clear that the contract was awarded without any certainty of process, communication, or clarity, for that matter.

What we do know is that Medbuy needs to find savings to justify its existence. That's why they exist. Marchese's price was less, and this seems to have carried the most weight in the decision that was made.

Will the minister admit that her system of outsourcing and privatization is in desperate need of stronger guidelines and protections, and is she prepared to take this responsibility seriously and provide comprehensive oversight of that sector?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, unfortunately the member opposite has already determined the outcome of this work, and that is unfortunate, because others have testified. Let me quote Sandy Jansen, who is the director of pharmacy services at London Health Sciences Centre. She said, "Outsourcing these two agents was not in any way an effort to save money. It was absolutely around efficiency and around safety and volumes." That is one quote.

Christine Donaldson, director of pharmacy at Windsor Regional Hospital, testified, "In that case, really, cost didn't come into it as a factor. It was more safety and risk that had actually motivated us to choose this product from Marchese or" from any other "outside buyer."

Speaker, we have heard various testimony at committee. I think it's important that people understand that this is being taken very seriously. We have acted and we will continue to act, if so recommended.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Mr. Bill Mauro: Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. In my riding of Thunder Bay–Atikokan, both my constituency offices, actually—the one in Thunder Bay and the one in Atikokan—prove to me to be the best vehicle through which I get information relative to the concerns of the people in my communities and the constituents I represent. I'd say it's probably the case for most of the members here.

One of the issues that I have consistently heard about from my constituents in Thunder Bay–Atikokan is in regard to the supports and the programming, the services and the financial investments that we made when it comes to people with developmental disabilities and their families. Minister, I'm just wondering if you can recount to the Legislature what we've done since being elected in 2003.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I appreciate the member's question, and given it's clearly coming from a place of caring, I will respond as best I can. Our government remains strongly committed to assisting folk in this sector. Last year, our government invested some \$1.7 billion on developmental services, an increase of over half a billion dollars since 2003. It's important to note that 98% of that funding goes directly to services.

The answer to the member's question: Our 2013 budget proposes to add 42.5 million additional dollars a year for developmental services, and we estimate that this will help some 1,104 families with various supports. With this new investment, our government will have invested \$620 million more; that's a 63% increase since 2003. We've got some tough work ahead, but we're committed to getting the job done.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I want to thank the minister for that response. I know that my constituents and most of the constituents across the province will be very proud of what we've managed to do when it comes to that sector.

I will say, though, however, that the \$42 million, of course, that you've just mentioned as being included in this year's budget is going to require the passing of the budget for that \$42 million to flow. I know my constituents are very interested and hopeful that both of the opposition parties will find the capacity to, first, read the budget and, second, support the budget.

Speaker, through you to the minister: once again, can you define for me, please, what that \$42 million—should we get the budget passed—will be used for to support people with developmental disabilities not only in my riding of Thunder Bay—Atikokan but right across the province?

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Mr. Speaker, those investment dollars will support a wide range of supports that are needed. Like the member, I'm obviously hopeful that the budget will pass. We hear a lot of concern about this sector from all parties in this House, and we do need to move ahead with this; the quickest way to do that is through the budget.

I just want to emphasize that this is new money. It's money that's badly needed. There's much more to be done, of course, and we'll continue to work with Ontario's developmental services sector, families and others to make sure that we have a more fair and sustainable system.

REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table an annual greenhouse gas progress report from the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Nepean—Carleton on a point of order.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I know the time for introductions has passed, but one of my close friends, one of my mentors and one of our former members of this assembly, and a cabinet minister, Norm Sterling, was here earlier, and I just wanted to acknowledge him.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Sterling was recognized in the House, but I appreciate your point of order.

The Minister of Consumer Services on a point of order.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, if you'd indulge me, I'm so happy to have my sister here today: Jill MacCharles-Crain, from Ajax, who's seen me through thick and thin. I'm just thrilled to have an important family member here with me today.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Cambridge on a point of order.

Mr. Rob Leone: I would like to correct my record. In my question today, I implied that the Premier released

the documents. I would like the record to be corrected to say that the PCs and the NDP ordered the documents released, and the Liberals should be ashamed to comply.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Before I do that, I'm going to remind all members that there is an opportunity—and it is a point of order—to correct your record, but any other editorial is to be vacated from that correction of the record.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Kenora—Rainy River on a point of order.

Ms. Sarah Campbell: I just wanted to formally welcome to the Legislature Gloria Pronger, who's the executive director of the Mary Berglund Community Health Centre, and also her board member Chicki Pesola. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from London—Fanshawe on a point of order.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I would like to formally welcome, as well, to the Legislature Linda Zimmerman and Richard Lewis from London. They're here today visiting the Legislature, and I hope they have a great time.

DEFERRED VOTES

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We have a deferred vote on Mr. Hillier's amendment to Mr. Wilson's amendment to the motion to apply a timetable to certain business of the House.

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

The division bells rang from 1143 to 1148.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Hillier has moved that Mr. Wilson's amendment to the motion to apply a timetable to certain business of the House be amended by adding the following:

"That, in the event of prorogation before the want of confidence motion standing in the name of the member from Simcoe—Grey is called, the motion shall be placed on the Orders and Notices paper on the second day of the subsequent session and shall be called on the fifth sessional day of the new session."

All those in favour of the amendment will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Annett, Ted	Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bailey, Robert	Leone, Rob	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Clark, Steve	McDonell, Jim	Smith, Todd
Dunlop, Garfield	McKenna, Jane	Thompson, Lisa M.
Elliott, Christine	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Harris, Michael	Milligan, Rob E.	Yakabuski, John
Hillier, Randy	Munro, Julia	Yurek, Jeff
Jackson, Rod	Nicholls, Rick	
Jones, Sylvia	O'Toole, John	

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): All those opposed to the amendment will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura	Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Fife, Catherine	Moridi, Reza
Balkissoon, Bas	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Murray, Glen R.
Bartolucci, Rick	Forster, Cindy	Naqvi, Yasir
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Gerretsen, John	Natyshak, Taras
Bisson, Gilles	Gélinas, France	Oraziotti, David
Bradley, James J.	Horwath, Andrea	Piruzza, Teresa
Broten, Laurel C.	Hoskins, Eric	Prue, Michael
Campbell, Sarah	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Chan, Michael	Kwinter, Monte	Schein, Jonah
Chiarelli, Bob	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Colle, Mike	MacCharles, Tracy	Singh, Jagmeet
Coteau, Michael	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Crack, Grant	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Craitor, Kim	Marchese, Rosario	Taylor, Monique
Damerla, Dipika	Matthews, Deborah	Vanthof, John
Del Duca, Steven	Mauro, Bill	Wong, Soo
Delaney, Bob	McMeekin, Ted	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dhillon, Vic	McNeely, Phil	Zimmer, David
Dickson, Joe	Meilleur, Madeleine	
DiNovo, Cheri	Miller, Paul	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 34; the nays are 64.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I declare the motion lost.

Amendment negated.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): If there are no further deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1152 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I'm very pleased to introduce my chief of staff, Camille Gooden, who has just joined us in the members' gallery. Welcome.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

GENTLEMEN OF THE ROAD SIMCOE STOPOVER

Mr. Toby Barrett: In rural Ontario, when the hottest band in the world chooses your town as its only Canadian stop on an international tour, you know it's time to slip into your dancing galoshes for a real down-home boot-stompin' jamboree, so it is with unprecedented excitement that my local community has received news a couple of months ago that Grammy Award winners Mumford and Sons are ditching the mega-sized stadiums to play a two-day festival down in the town of Simcoe.

The multi-platinum-selling British folk band are bringing with them Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeroes, Alabama Shakes, the Vaccines and others to the Norfolk County Fairgrounds on August 23 and 24 for their Gentlemen of the Road tour. The population of Simcoe will nearly double to 25,000 or, as the locals say, an average day at the Norfolk County Fair.

Mumford and Sons put out a media release: "The Gentlemen of the Road Stopovers are all about live music. We get to put them on in towns not normally frequented by touring bands in buses or splitter vans. We deliberately look for towns that have something unique, or some vibe of which they are proud, explore them and enjoy what they have to offer." So, we invite everybody to come down to Norfolk this summer and experience the vibe in our area that's attracting some of the biggest names in the music business.

AIR-RAIL LINK

Mr. Jonah Schein: Today I will reintroduce my private member's bill to push forward the electrification of the Union Pearson Express air-rail link. The Liberal government's decision to run diesel trains on this line has drawn widespread criticism, both for the negative health impacts it will have on our community and on our air quality and because it will fail to ease gridlock and move people effectively in our city.

For years, our west-end community has called for immediate electrification on the line. The Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, the Asthma Society of Canada and the medical officer of health for Toronto have all expressed concerns about the diesel plan, and they support immediate electrification. Toronto city council has passed a motion in favour of electrification, so as to allow additional stops on the route and provide an affordable downtown relief line in the west end of Toronto.

The Auditor General has questioned the government's business model for the proposed diesel line, calling Metrolinx's ridership projections "overly optimistic," as higher-than-usual fares will discourage ridership. Transit expert Joell Ann Vanderwagen called the Liberals' diesel plan "the worst current example of wasted resources and opportunity," and advocates for electric train service as "common sense," an "effective alternative that would create a GTA-wide rapid transit network now—not 30 years down the road." Just today, the world-renowned scientist David Suzuki added his voice to the growing list of people concerned about this government's plan.

So today I'm asking Premier Wynne and the Liberal government of Ontario to listen to these good people and to commit to do it once, do it right the first time and electrify the Union Pearson air-rail link from day one.

CARASSAUGA FESTIVAL

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: On May 24, I had the pleasure to be a part of the opening ceremony of the Carassauga festival at the Hershey Centre in my great riding of Mississauga-Brampton South. Carassauga is a festival of cultures which provides Ontarians an opportunity to discover the world in their own backyard.

This year, the attendees were introduced to the cultures of 72 countries. They experienced their dances, their music, their arts, their history, their dresses and their exotic foods.

Carassauga promotes, among citizens, an understanding and respect for difference. It is the celebration of Ontario's greatest strength, its diversity.

Mr. Speaker, I'm proud to be a part of a government which encourages its citizens to protect and promote their culture and heritage.

I would like to congratulate the Carassauga festival's organizing team and hundreds of volunteers for their enthusiasm, dedication and hard work.

JOHN VERWEY

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize John Verwey of Auburn, Ontario. He's a five-time Dominion Darts champion. But this isn't the first trophy—this last win—for John. As a member of the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 420 in Blyth, John was named Ontario Legion Men's Singles Champion and Darts Ontario Men's Singles Champion as well.

John's latest darts singles title was won early last month in Chester, Nova Scotia. He is the only player to have won more than two singles titles and the only player to have won the singles back-to-back title in 2012 and 2013—quite a feat.

John has taken his skills all the way to the world championships in England, and he has beaten some of professional darts' biggest names at the World Cup level, including three-time champion John Lowe.

John first got into playing darts as a pastime 25 years ago—something he and his wife, Heather, could play to spend time together. It soon grew to be a lot more. In 2007, he was ranked 32 in the world, and playing at the masters level. He skilfully moved up through the ranks.

John is married with three children. He is an electrician by trade at Bruce Power. Most importantly, he enjoys working on his farm and spending time with his grandchildren.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate John on all of his successes at the local, provincial, national and international levels.

DONNA-LYNN McCALLUM

Mr. Michael Prue: It is with a very heavy heart that I speak today about my friend Donna-Lynn McCallum. She died last week; we buried her on Monday.

Donna-Lynn McCallum was, of all who knew her—the proudest person I ever met to live in East York. She was part of Team East York, which helped to fight against the amalgamation of our beloved borough. But mostly in the community, she is remembered as being a photographer.

She was the person who accompanied me and so many others to every single community event for the last 20 years in East York, photographing and cataloguing the people, the events, the places, the times and all of those things that make East York a truly unique and wonderful community. She particularly loved going to events with the Tamil and Bangladeshi communities because of the colourful costumes. We just thought the world of her.

She was the recipient of an East York Bulldog, which was the highest award we could give to anybody, municipally. She received that Bulldog because of her dogged determination to keep politicians to account, both at city hall and at Queen's Park, in order to make sure our community was not forgotten.

This past year, we presented her with the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Medal for all of the wonderful photographs she has taken.

She will be missed by everyone in our community, and all we can say is, Godspeed, Donna-Lynn.

STELLA GEORGE

Ms. Soo Wong: I rise today to recognize the life of a remarkable woman and constituent of Scarborough—Agincourt, Stella George.

Stella was born on July 5, 1908, in Guyana and left in 1934 for England, where she trained as a midwife and joined the overseas nursing service. She was selected to work in Africa because of her African descent and went to Nigeria in 1935.

While living in Lagos, she saw that mothers would travel very far from outside the city, carrying their babies on their backs, in order to see one of the few available doctors. This inspired Stella to petition to the Nigerian government to set up medical clinics outside the city. As a result, the government began constructing these health clinics in 1948 and 1949 to service women and children beyond the city limits.

Trained as a midwife, she teamed up with doctors to offer services for women to give birth at home. After only one month, the team had delivered over 100 babies at home, and the service was later taken over by public health.

Stella George moved to Scarborough—Agincourt's St. Paul's L'Amoreaux Centre in 1985. There, she continued to volunteer and contributed well over 6,000 hours as a volunteer for over two decades.

1510

Stella always had a problem saying no to helping others. She would say, "When I do a little thing, it's a big thing to someone else. I feel so appreciated that I want to do more."

Mr. Speaker, this remarkable woman passed away peacefully on May 30, in her 104th year. I believe we can all learn from Stella's love for her neighbours and her commitment to her ideals.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Since my election in 2011, I have served my constituents using a customer service approach. We have opened four offices throughout my riding: one in Strathroy, one in Wallaceburg, and also in Glencoe and Forest.

I strive to make the services that are available as accessible as possible. That is why I recently made some changes to my MPP website, www.montemcnaughton-mpp.com, to make it more accessible for people with

physical disabilities. Everyone deserves to access important information and government services, so I was pleased to add an assistive technology application to my MPP website. The eSSential Accessibility application allows people to use voice-recognition technology to access vital government services.

I'm excited to be the first MPP in the province to offer this type of keyboard and mouse replacement solution for people with physical disabilities, and I would encourage all members of this House to do the same for their constituents.

PRISONERS' MASSACRE ANNIVERSARY

Ms. Helena Jaczek: There are many families of Iranian heritage in my great riding of Oak Ridges–Markham and in the Richmond Hill riding of my colleague MPP Reza Moridi, and many here with us today in the public gallery. I rise today to recognize a grim anniversary that our constituents will never forget.

This summer marks the 25th anniversary of the largest massacre of political prisoners in Iran. In the summer of 1988, thousands of political prisoners were executed without trial. Most conservative estimates suggest nearly 5,000 Iranian political prisoners lost their lives during this period.

Many independent legal assessments have concluded that the killings amount to crimes against humanity under international law. Those who carried out this massacre have never been brought to trial. The families of their victims here in Ontario and around the world await justice. Those who lost loved ones can never be truly whole. We want our constituents to know that we support them.

Today, Canada's federal members of Parliament will consider a motion at the House of Commons to recognize the 1988 summer massacre as constituting a crime against humanity. I hope that the loss felt by our constituents and by Iranians around the country is recognized by the federal government, and from its official recognition, they find some small measure of comfort.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Research and Innovation on a point of order.

Hon. Reza Moridi: I have a point of order. I believe that we have unanimous consent to observe a moment of silence to commemorate the victims of the 1998 execution of Iranian political prisoners by the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The minister has asked for a moment of silence designating the massacre. With the members' permission, I will finish the statements and then come back at the end of statements for a moment of silence. Is that acceptable to the member?

Hon. Reza Moridi: Yes, Speaker.

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

Unanimous consent: Agreed? Agreed. Thank you.

The member for Burlington.

BURLINGTON SOUND OF MUSIC FESTIVAL

Mrs. Jane McKenna: For the last 34 summers, the Burlington Sound of Music Festival has grown to become not just the city's premier festival but also one of the province's must-see attractions. The event draws close to a quarter-million visitors annually to the city's waterfront and downtown to enjoy a unique blend of new and emerging artists, Canadian icons and retro favourites.

Past performers include Tom Cochrane, Cowboy Junkies, Ronnie Hawkins, Natalie MacMaster, the Jim Cuddy Band, Serena Ryder, Tom Wilson, Tokyo Police Club, Devo, Men Without Hats, Carly Rae Jepsen, Arkells—the list goes on and on—alongside excellent homegrown acts like Finger Eleven and Walk Off The Earth.

This year's lineup will feature new wave icons the Spoons, a Burlington band that grew up alongside the festival. Just last year, the group celebrated the 30-year anniversary of its landmark album, *Arias and Symphonies*, and the hit single *Nova Heart*.

You'll also be able to catch acts like Raine Maida, Lights, 54-40, April Wine, illScarlett, Platinum Blonde, Jully Black, Honeymoon Suite, Alyssa Reid and many, many more. I would like to invite everyone in the Legislature, and all those tuning in across the province, to visit Burlington's Sound of Music Festival on the best day ever—besides Mother's Day—Father's Day, June 13 to 16, and to discover what all the buzz is about.

PRISONERS' MASSACRE ANNIVERSARY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to the unanimous consent to have a moment's silence for the individuals who lost their lives to this disaster, I would ask all members of the House to stand for a moment of silence.

The House observed a moment's silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their co-operation.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

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

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Anne Stokes): Mr. Tabuns presents the committee's report as follows and moves its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr10, An Act to revive Marsh & Co. Hospitality Realty Inc.

Bill Pr17, An Act to revive Triple "D" Holdings Ltd.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed. No further action required. Thank you.

Report adopted.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Research and Innovation on a point of order.

Hon. Reza Moridi: I would like to correct my record. I said the year 1998; the actual year is 1988.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member has a right to correct his record, and that will now show.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

METROLINX AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR METROLINX

Mr. Schein moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 84, An Act to amend the Metrolinx Act, 2006 /
Projet de loi 84, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur
Metrolinx.

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. Jonah Schein: My bill would pave the way for immediate electrification of the Union Pearson Express air-rail link. It amends the Metrolinx Act, 2006, to require Metrolinx to ensure that any passenger railway system established between downtown Toronto and Toronto Pearson International Airport is not powered by diesel fuel. This is my second time introducing this bill.

COMPANIES STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT DES LOIS VISANT LES COMPAGNIES

Ms. MacCharles moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 85, An Act to amend various companies statutes and to amend other statutes consequential to the Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, 2010 / Projet de loi 85, Loi modifiant diverses lois visant les compagnies et apportant à d'autres lois des modifications corrélatives découlant de la Loi de 2010 sur les organisations sans but lucratif.

1520

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.

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, I'll make my comments during ministerial statements, please.

INFRASTRUCTURE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 SUR LA RESPONSABILISATION EN MATIÈRE D'INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Jackson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 86, An Act to amend the Ministry of Infrastructure Act, 2011 with respect to public works agreements / Projet de loi 86, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2011 sur le ministère de l'Infrastructure en ce qui concerne les ententes sur les ouvrages publics.

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. Rod Jackson: This act will see to it that if any infrastructure project over \$5 million that has been entered into by the government is exited by the government within a writ period, all executive council pay is docked for 25%. That's all executive council, for 25%, for one full year, for the time they are an MPP.

OSPCA OVERSIGHT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA SURVEILLANCE DE LA SPAO

Mr. MacLaren moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 87, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act / Projet de loi 87, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société de protection des animaux de l'Ontario.

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. Jack MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, the new section 21.1 of the act gives the Ombudsman the power, under the Ombudsman Act, to investigate complaints relating to the society, affiliated societies and the Animal Care Review Board.

CHILD AND FAMILY SERVICES AMENDMENT ACT (CHILDREN 16 YEARS OF AGE AND OLDER), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES SERVICES À L'ENFANCE ET À LA FAMILLE (ENFANTS DE 16 ANS ET PLUS)

Mr. Jackson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 88, An Act to amend the Child and Family Services Act with respect to children 16 years of age and older / Projet de loi 88, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les

services à l'enfance et à la famille en ce qui concerne les enfants de 16 ans et plus.

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. Rod Jackson: This bill looks to bring Ontario into—actually honour the United Nations convention with respect to children. Currently, we're the only jurisdiction in the developed world that does not provide adequate resources for children who go into care at the age of 16, 17 or 18. Right now, if you're a child and you go into care and you're 15 years old, you get support through CAS and other means up until the age of 21. If you go into care when you're 16 years old, you have absolutely no resources available to you, aside from Ontario Works, the medical system and other public resources.

This actually will cost the government less money to deal with a problem at the front end rather than the back end, and it'll help children who are 16 years old, 17 years old and 18 years old have resources to be able to succeed in the society that we have today.

OSPCA FAIRNESS ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR L'ÉQUITÉ À LA SPAO

Mr. MacLaren moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 89, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act / Projet de loi 89, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société de protection des animaux de l'Ontario.

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. Jack MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, section 15 of the act currently permits the society to serve on an animal's owner or custodian a statement of account respecting the food, care or treatment that an inspector or agent of the society provided to the animal. If the owner or custodian refuses to pay or cannot be found, the society has the power to sell or dispose of the animal. That section is repealed and replaced with a rule that provides that under no circumstances is an owner or custodian required to pay the cost to the society or an affiliated society for providing food, care or treatment to an animal.

Further, new section 15.0.1 of the act provides rules concerning when an animal may be returned to its owner or custodian in circumstances where the owner or custodian has been charged with an offence pertaining to the welfare of animals or the prevention of cruelty to animals and the animal has been taken into custody by the society or an affiliated society.

ONTARIO SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF CRUELTY TO ANIMALS AMENDMENT ACT (CHOICE OF VETERINARIAN), 2013 LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA SOCIÉTÉ DE PROTECTION DES ANIMAUX DE L'ONTARIO (CHOIX DU VÉTÉRINAIRE)

Mr. MacLaren moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 90, An Act to amend the Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act / Projet de loi 90, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la Société de protection des animaux de l'Ontario.

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. Jack MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, sections 11.4 to 14 of the act currently permit veterinarians to perform various functions, such as accompanying inspectors or agents of the society during inspections, providing treatment and care to an animal and providing advice about the removal and destruction of an animal. New section 14.1 of the act allows animal owners or custodians to select the veterinarian or approve the choice of the veterinarian.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. Further introduction of bills?

It is now time for ministerial statements. The Minister of Consumer Services—forgive me; my apologies. I did something I'm not supposed to do, and that is to miss motions.

Motions? Motions? Last call for motions. Thank you.

It is now time for ministerial statements.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Liberals don't want to work.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Do I hear someone heckling?

The Minister of Consumer Services.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

NOT-FOR PROFIT CORPORATIONS

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: In 2010, Ontario's Not-for-Profit Corporations Act, or ONCA, was passed in this Legislature with the support of all three parties. This reflects ONCA's importance as foundational legislation, providing modern corporate law to the province's more than 50,000 not-for-profit corporations. The act establishes modern governance rules for what we call the third sector. Not-for-profit corporations contribute \$50 billion to the province's economy and employ 15% of our total workforce.

1530

But even with the passing of ONCA, our work is not finished. In order for ONCA to be proclaimed and for it to come into force, today I'm introducing the Companies Statute Law Amendment Act, 2013. This bill proposes consequential, clarifying and transitional amendments that are required to proclaim ONCA.

ONCA is targeted to come into effect no earlier than January 2014, to give the sector time to make the changes and adjustments that the new law will require. These amendments would affect 86 statutes overseen by more than 15 ministries in the Ontario government. They are all minor, non-contentious, technical amendments. Many of these amendments would simply update references to the 60-year-old Corporations Act that currently governs most not-for-profit corporations in Ontario. Until this act is passed, ONCA, which has broad support of stakeholders in the not-for-profit sector, cannot be proclaimed.

The amendments I'm tabling today are critical to provide up-to-date rules to govern Ontario's not-for-profit organizations and, if passed, would help ensure greater transparency and accountability.

The proposed consequential amendments, if passed, would, for example, change references in the statutes from the current Corporations Act to ONCA, which will generally govern Ontario's not-for-profit corporations once it is proclaimed. The proposed clarifying amendments would address provisions that may be ambiguous in ONCA and the Corporations Act. The proposed transitional amendments would address items to facilitate a corporation's transition from one act to another.

A proposed amendment, if passed, would also respond to a key concern of stakeholders in clarifying that new, limited voting rights for non-members would apply during the three-year transition period for existing not-for-profit corporations. This would provide more time to work on this aspect with the sector.

ONCA will provide not-for-profit corporations with many benefits, including more modern corporate governance, improved accountability and an easier process to incorporate. We are working very closely with stakeholders and groups such as Community Legal Education Ontario group to develop tools and supports for a smooth transition and implementation.

Let's take the steps to complete this very important journey that this House began three years ago. A thriving, modern not-for-profit sector is depending on all of us to fulfill this commitment.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT
AWARENESS WEEK

SEMAINE DE SENSIBILISATION
AU HARCÈLEMENT SEXUEL

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I stand today to recognize the week of June 1 through 7 as Sexual Harassment Awareness Week in Ontario.

C'est l'occasion pour tous les Ontariens et Ontariennes de réfléchir à ce que nous pouvons faire pour mettre fin au harcèlement sexuel dans notre société.

This is a week for all Ontarians to consider what we can do to eliminate sexual harassment in our society. Writing in 1979, legal scholar Catharine A. MacKinnon defined sexual harassment as "the unwanted imposition of sexual requirements in the context of a relationship of unequal power." And while this broad definition still applies, I think we would all agree that derogatory comments based on sexual orientation or gender identity also constitute sexual harassment.

What Professor MacKinnon could not have anticipated over 30 years ago was the advent of the digital age and the many new forms of sexual harassment it has enabled. In fact, 95% of online harassment is directed at women. Who in 1979 could have imagined that a woman could be harassed in the privacy of her own room by an unknown person halfway around the world, or that this harassment could be secretly recorded, easily distributed and almost impossible to fully erase.

Les victimes de cette forme de harcèlement subissent un traumatisme mental et social inimaginable, dont les conséquences sont parfois tragiques. Nous devons impérativement réagir à ces menaces.

Victims of such harassment suffer unimaginable mental and social harm, with sometimes tragic consequences. It is imperative that we respond to these threats.

As minister responsible for women's issues for the past four years, I am proud of the steps our government has taken to prevent sexual harassment. We support Western University's learning network, which is researching and providing practical tools to respond to technology-based violence against women. We also support a social marketing public education campaign that integrates a focus on cybersexual violence.

We've urged the federal government to amend the Criminal Code of Canada to make it an offence to distribute intimate visual recordings of a person without that person's consent. And in 2012, our government passed the Accepting Schools Act, which requires school boards to prevent and address bullying, discrimination and harassment among students in our schools.

Ces mesures visent à créer un Ontario libre de toute violence sexuelle et de tout harcèlement sexuel. Nous avons tous le devoir d'apprendre ce que nous pouvons faire pour mettre fin au harcèlement sexuel et favoriser des relations égales et saines.

These are steps we're taking towards achieving an Ontario that is free from sexual violence and harassment. We all have a responsibility to learn what we can do to stop sexual harassment and support equal, healthy relationships.

Earlier this year, former executive director of UN Women, Michelle Bachelet, said, "We find ourselves at a unique global moment and opportunity. The momentum is there to break through the barriers to ending sexual violence and harassment in public spaces."

Let us seize this momentum and take the necessary steps to create communities—online, in schools and in

workplaces—that are free from gender inequality, discrimination and any form of harassment.

Cette semaine, et tout au long de l'année, montrons que l'Ontario est bien une société juste, sûre et équitable.

Let us demonstrate this week and throughout the year that Ontario is indeed a fair, safe and just society.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries?

It's time for responses.

NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATIONS

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm happy to rise to speak to the bill on the not-for-profit corporations. I think these corporations play a huge part in our communities. These are like-minded people that get together, in many cases not from the point of view of making money from it but for the betterment of the community.

I myself was involved in a few of these, in my former role as the mayor of South Glengarry, our Glengarry nurse-practitioner clinic—I was there when the organization started up, and we had to go through the regulations to put it in place—nothing short of a major hurdle for a group of volunteers who really pulled together in their own free time.

I'm happy to see that there have been some changes where, actually, we encourage and we make it easier for these volunteers, in most cases, or in all cases, to come together and do something that's for the good of the community.

I've had a severe concern when I look at the trouble with getting volunteers over the last number of years. There seems to be fewer numbers of people willing to donate their time. In many cases, it's the same people in multiple organizations. That speaks more so, because there's nobody else to do the work.

Some of these organizations have to be set up so that they can get results, they can be a little bit of fun. Liability can be limited, so that people aren't threatening their own livelihoods when they're involved with these organizations.

I look forward to looking at the bill in detail. I think that we've heard some comments from some of the not-for-profits that are really having a hard time to survive. One not-for-profit in my area, the Maple Ridge Cemetery—really looking after the cemetery in North Dundas. The alternative to that would be turning it back to the township, at a huge cost. This group was just looking to survive, to the point where the money they were raising was going into admin, insurance, things that really didn't help the organization. To take that over, from the township's point of view, would be in the neighbourhood of \$40,000.

You can see just what the drain would be on society if we didn't have these. I'll let my colleague talk on the other bill. I'm certainly looking forward to this.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT AWARENESS WEEK

Ms. Laurie Scott: As the PC critic for women's issues, I'm pleased today to rise on behalf of Tim Hudak

and the PC caucus to mark Sexual Harassment Awareness Week.

Since I assumed the critic role, it seems that I have made a lot of statements on the subject of sexual harassment and sexual assault, most recently on May 1, marking Sexual Assault Prevention Month. Unfortunately, it's a sad commentary that these issues are not going away.

1540

Sexual harassment is a form of bullying that can have tragic consequences for its victims. For those on the receiving end, sexual harassment can represent a life-altering event that has changed them so drastically that they never fully recover from it. It can take many forms. It can be ugly and direct, such as leering or unwelcome touching or sexual invitations; and it can also be an insensitive attempt at humour, with the hurt and discomfort often unintentional.

All these forms of harassment, I think we all agree, need to stop. For an advanced and educated society, this type of behaviour is not acceptable. The most recent sexual harassment data for Canada indicates that in the previous 12 months, 10% of women between the ages of 18 and 24 experienced sexual harassment in the workplace, and of the reported cases of workplace sexual harassment, 55% were perpetuated by co-workers.

Surveys repeatedly show that 90% of Canadian women claim to have experienced some form of sexual harassment during their working lives. Just this week, we read in the paper about the young girl who was followed off the bus by a bus driver harassing her and making improper overtures. If it weren't for the quick thinking of this young lady, the situation could have had very tragic results. I think we all feel it's a heartfelt tragedy that this still exists so prevalently in our society.

I know there are many good community groups and individuals that offer support, and I thank them for their dedicated efforts all across our communities. I know in Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock, my riding, Kawartha/Haliburton Victim Services provides direct support and referral services to the residents of Haliburton county and the city of Kawartha Lakes, in partnership with police emergency services and community agencies.

I thank them again for their dedication to solving this, I would say, escalating and frightening statistic that we have in our society. I'm glad to have the opportunity to speak and to raise awareness continuously for this in our society, so that we can make things better.

NOT-FOR-PROFIT CORPORATIONS

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I take great pride in rising today on behalf of the NDP and our leader, Andrea Horwath, in response to the not-for-profit amendment act.

The non-profit sector is a very crucial sector in our communities. In fact, much of the great work that is accomplished and that is done in communities outside of

the public sector is done by not-for-profit organizations and groups.

The non-profit sector is not only economically important and vital to our society, representing 7.1% of Ontario's GDP and providing over a million jobs, but it is essential as a social tool to creating change.

As it stands, from consultations with the Ontario Non-profit Network, the current existing legislation that governs not-for-profit corporations has certain limitations which would have created barriers to these non-profit sector organizations. So these amendments are vital to ensure that these great organizations are able to do the good work they do.

There are many sectors where, if we encourage more non-profit or not-for-profit corporations, we could see great additions or great benefits to our society, particularly where profits would put in question the quality of services. For example, child care and care for our seniors: The non-profit sector would create a viable alternative to public services. It's something that could provide a complement to public services. It's a great opportunity for us to allow an alternative and viable source of great care, where we are not putting profits before people, but where we are putting the needs and the benefits of our community, of the clients, ahead of profits.

I'm very happy that these amendments—if, in my cursory, brief overview of them, they do satisfy these concerns—look like they will address the issues of governance with respect to members' rights. They will allow the operations of non-profit organizations to benefit their communities in the best way possible.

One of the particular concerns that the Ontario Nonprofit Network addressed was the fact that 25% to 30% of not-for-profits' membership is embedded in their operations. Without these amendments, they would be subject to a significant disruption if a small fraction of their members were dissatisfied. These amendments will allow for non-profits to work in a very efficient manner.

I support this bill and I look forward to reading it in further detail.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT AWARENESS WEEK

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my honour to rise for the NDP and our leader, Andrea Horwath, to speak to Sexual Harassment Awareness Week. You know, really, there are two parts to the answer to this—let's not focus on the problem; let's focus on some solutions here.

One is to address inequality, which is still rampant, because those who are unequal, those who are oppressed are picked on more. That's just true no matter what the issue, and women are still unequal to men in this community.

In Ontario, we make 72 cents on the dollar. Our Victim Services just around the corner—the only Victim Services that handles clients, victims of sexual harassment across the Toronto area—is working on about

10% of what it used to work on per client in terms of funding. We're not funding that. One in every 100 workplaces ever sees somebody from the Ministry of Labour. So, good luck if you're harassed at work. Most women just leave or get fired. That's the reality. Nobody is there to help them. We know that. We hear about that.

Forty per cent of all boards in Canada have no women on them at all. That's unacceptable. That's inequality. As long as that exists, we'll still have this problem.

Number two, education: Yesterday we had some educators here, and they were talking about beefing up our programs in our schools. Many years ago, I tabled a bill called Holly's Law, named after Holly Jones, a poor little girl who was killed. It was her mother, Maria Jones, who was the impetus behind that. She was saying that they need to have training materials in every school so that little children—children of all ages—can learn to speak to their teachers and to an adult about what is bothering them and who is bothering them. This speaks to online harassment. Again, the government was extremely resistant to doing that.

Our teachers need to be able to talk about what is appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. That's also critical, and that has to be looked at as well. So if we approach it as a solution, a base problem rather than as an intractable one, we can actually do something about this. We need to face up to inequality and really redirect our funds to education.

Thank you very much.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements. It is now time for petitions. I'm told that I should go to the member from Durham, because he's going to be very brief.

PETITIONS

WATER QUALITY

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to present a petition from the riding of Durham. It reads as follows—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a new one, actually.

“Whereas under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario regulation 319/08, public health inspectors are required to undertake risk assessments of small drinking water systems;

“Whereas many of these small drinking water systems are located in homes operating bed and breakfasts in rural Ontario;

“Whereas private homes that are the sites of bed and breakfasts already have potable drinking water used by the homeowners and their families every day;

“Whereas many of these bed and breakfasts have established the quality of their drinking water through years of regular testing;

“Whereas these home-based businesses are facing high costs to comply with the new requirements of regulation 319/08;

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

“That the Minister of Health amend Ontario regulation 319/08 to give the testing track record of a small drinking water system greater weight in the risk assessment process. Furthermore we, the undersigned, ask that bed and breakfasts operated within a private home with a drinking water supply meeting all the requirements of a private home not be subject to regulation 319/08.”

I'm pleased to present this on behalf of Jane Smith and others, and present it to Carlo, one of the pages here.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rosario Marchese: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the University of Toronto, with Infrastructure Ontario, approved a plan to replace grass with synthetic turf on its back campus field for the 2015 Pan/Parapan Am Games; and

“Whereas the back campus plan will degrade the fabric of the campus and destroy one of the most substantial green spaces in downtown Toronto;

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

“That the Legislative Assembly direct the minister responsible for the Pan/Parapan Am Games to withdraw his support for this project and seek a sustainable alternative venue to the back campus field. The back campus is one of the original features of the university and a cultural heritage landscape. Designed with restrictive specifications for international field hockey ... pitches, the plan raises many social and environmental concerns. The government of Ontario and the University of Toronto ought to lead the world in designing sustainable open spaces for Canada's largest city.”

I'm a big supporter of this petition, and I will sign it.

1550

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Alzheimer's disease is a degenerative brain disease that causes thinking and memory impairment. Alzheimer's disease is progressive, worsens over time, and will eventually lead to death;

“Whereas there are an estimated” 200,000 “Ontarians diagnosed with Alzheimer's and related dementia today, and that number is set to increase by 40% in the next 10 years;

“Whereas Alzheimer's disease creates social, emotional and economic burdens on the family and friends of those suffering with the disease;

“Whereas the total economic burden of dementia in Ontario is expected to increase by more than \$770 million per year through to 2020;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to establish an Alzheimer's advisory council to advise the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on matters pertaining to strategy respecting research, treatment and the prevention of Alzheimer's and other related dementia.”

I am delighted to affix my name and to give it to Lamiha.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Jerry J. Onellette: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning to delist OHIP physiotherapy clinics as of August 1st, 2013, which represents cuts in physiotherapy services to seniors, children and people with disabilities who currently receive care at designated OHIP physiotherapy clinics; and

“Whereas people who are currently eligible for OHIP physiotherapy treatments can receive 100 treatments per year plus an additional 50 treatments annually if medically necessary. The proposed change will reduce the number of allowable treatments to 12 per year; while enhancing geographical access is positive, the actual physiotherapy that any individual receives will be greatly reduced; and

“Whereas the current OHIP physiotherapy providers have been providing seniors, children and people with disabilities with individualized treatments for over 48 years, and these services have been proven to help improve function, mobility, activities of daily living, pain, and falls risk;

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

“To review and reverse the decision to drastically cut OHIP physiotherapy services to our most vulnerable population—seniors, children and people with disabilities; and to maintain the policy that seniors, children and people with disabilities continue to receive up to 100 treatments per year at eligible clinics, with a mechanism to access an additional 50 treatments when medically necessary.”

I affix my signature in support.

ONTARIO MUNICIPAL BOARD

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

“Whereas the Ontario Municipal Board is a provincial agency composed of unelected members unaccountable to Ontarians; and

“Whereas the Ontario Municipal Board has the power to unilaterally alter local development decisions made by municipalities and their communities; and

“Whereas the city of Toronto is the largest city in Ontario; and

“Whereas the city of Toronto has a planning department composed of professional planners, an extensive legal department and 44 full-time city councillors directly elected by its citizens; and

“Whereas Toronto’s city council voted overwhelmingly in February 2012 to request an exemption from the Ontario Municipal Board’s jurisdiction;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to recognize the ability of the city of Toronto to handle its own urban planning and development; and

“Further, that the Ontario Municipal Board no longer have jurisdiction over the city of Toronto.”

I couldn’t agree more; I will affix my signature and give it to Jessica to take to the table.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craitor: This petition is to the Legislative Assembly on behalf of grandparents:

“Whereas the people of Ontario deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their grandparents as requested in Bill 48 put forward by MPP Kim Craitor; and

“Whereas currently, subsection 21(1) of the act provides that a parent of a child or any other person may apply to a court for certain orders respecting custody of or access to the child. An amendment to that subsection specifies that a grandparent may apply for such an order; and

“Whereas currently subclause 24(2)(a)(i) of the act provides that where a court makes a determination relating to certain applications in respect of custody of or access to a child, the court shall consider, among other things, the love, affection and emotional ties between the child and each person entitled to or claiming custody of or access to the child. An amendment to that subclause specifies that this includes grandparents; and

“Whereas relationships between children and grandparents are a special bond that should be maintained;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children’s Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children’s relationships with their grandparents.”

I’m pleased to sign my name to this petition.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Todd Smith: I’m pleased to present this on behalf of hundreds of residents of Prince Edward–Hastings and across Ontario.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health is planning on cutting physiotherapy services to seniors in long-term-

care homes—from an estimated \$110 million to \$58.5 million; and

“Whereas with this change seniors will not receive the care they are currently entitled to through their current OHIP physiotherapy providers, who the government plans to delist from OHIP on August 1st, 2013; and

“Whereas the government has announced that the funding level, the number of treatments a resident could receive, has not been specified and will be reduced from a maximum of 150 visits/year to some unknown level, which means the hours of care and number of staff providing seniors with physiotherapy will also be significantly reduced as of August 1st, 2013; and

“Whereas our current OHIP physiotherapy providers have been providing seniors with individualized treatments for over 48 years, and these services have been proven to help seniors improve in their activities of daily living, mobility, pain and falls risk;

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

“To review and reverse this drastic cut of OHIP physiotherapy services to seniors, our most vulnerable population, and to continue with \$110 million physiotherapy funding for seniors in long-term-care homes.”

PROPERTY TAXATION

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

“Whereas a number of major companies in the forest sector have filed appeals to the Assessment Review Board (ARB) to reclaim a significant portion of their municipal property taxes paid across the province during the years 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008; and

“Whereas Domtar Inc. has filed such an appeal related to property taxes paid to the township of James for the years 2005, 2006, 2007 and 2008; and

“Whereas decisions made by the ARB are retroactive resulting in rebates being ordered despite the fact that services were provided in good faith based on values provided by the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. (MPAC);

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

“1. There will be a toll of \$0.37/cu.m. charged on wood travelling on municipal streets/roads retroactive to the first date of appeal.

“2. Applications for provincial funding should be revised to include a condition that only applicants who have not appealed their municipal property assessment within the past five years be considered.

“3. The province will assume payments of all municipal property tax rebates awarded to the forest industry.”

I agree with the intent of this petition, would like to sign it and give it to page Melanie.

ALZHEIMER’S DISEASE

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease is a degenerative brain disease that causes thinking and memory impairment. Alzheimer’s disease is progressive, worsens over time, and will eventually lead to death;

“Whereas there are an estimated” 200,000 “Ontarians diagnosed with Alzheimer’s and related dementia today, and that number is set to increase by 40% in the next 10 years;

“Whereas Alzheimer’s disease creates social, emotional and economic burdens on the family and friends of those suffering with the disease;

“Whereas the total economic burden of dementia in Ontario is expected to increase by more than \$770 million per year through to 2020;

“We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to establish an Alzheimer’s advisory council to advise the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on matters pertaining to strategy respecting research, treatment and the prevention of Alzheimer’s and other related dementia.”

I’ll sign my name and give this to Jimmy.

PHYSIOTHERAPY SERVICES

Mr. Jeff Yurek: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ministry of Health plans to eliminate OHIP funded physiotherapy services currently offered in retirement homes by the lowest cost providers—designated physiotherapy clinics—in order to switch service providers on August 1, 2013;

“Whereas the total level of funding available for physiotherapy services for seniors and eligible patients will be reduced by \$16 million;

“Whereas the ministry intends to reallocate funding through the LHINs and CCACs for the administration and procurement of physiotherapy services in effect creating an additional, costly level of bureaucracy;

1600

“Whereas current designated physiotherapy providers—that have a proven 48 year track record of improving seniors’ activities of daily life, mobility, pain, and falls risk—will be delisted from OHIP;

“Whereas the largest growing segment of the population is seniors whose access to physiotherapy services will be greatly impaired by this decision;

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

“To review and reverse the Ministry of Health’s decisions to delist designated physiotherapy providers from OHIP and reduce the number of treatments seniors and eligible patients have access to at a retirement home.”

I agree with this petition and affix my signature.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr. Michael Mantha: Today I have, once again, hundreds of signatures, which were presented to both

myself and my colleague from Nickel Belt from residents along Manitoulin Island, across the north shore.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario ranks ninth of 10 provinces in terms of the total per capita funding allocated to long-term care; and

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care data shows that there are more than 30,000 people in Ontario waiting for long-term-care placements and wait-times have tripled since 2005; and

“Whereas there is a perpetual shortage of staff in long-term-care facilities and residents often wait an unreasonable length of time to receive care—e.g. to be attended to for toileting needs; to be fed; to receive a bath; for pain medication. Since 2008, funding for 2.8 paid hours of care per resident per day has been provided. In that budget year, a promise was made to increase this funding to 4.0 hours per resident per day by 2012. This has not been done; and

“Whereas the personal support worker program has no provincial governing body that would provide provincial standards and regulation to assure the best care for residents who are being admitted with higher physical, psychological and emotional needs. Currently, training across the province is varied, inconsistent and insufficient;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to:

“(1) immediately increase the number of paid hours of nursing and personal care per resident per day to 4.0 hours (as promised in 2008);

“(2) develop a plan to phase in future increases so that the number of paid hours per resident per day of nursing and personal care is 5.0 hours by January 2015;

“(3) establish a licensing body, such as a college, that will provide registration, accreditation and certification for all personal support workers in the province.”

I support this petition and I will present it to page Laura to bring it down to the table.

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

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Resuming the debate adjourned on June 4, 2013, on the amendment to the motion to apply a timetable to certain business of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The rotation goes to the NDP. Not saying? Then the government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I’m pleased to be standing here today to speak, I guess technically now, on the amendment to the motion.

I want to walk members through where we are right now in terms of the motion in front of the House. As members know, we began debating on this programming

motion over a week ago. Since that time, this matter has completely dominated the business of the House. According to our records, 37 members have now had the opportunity to speak to the programming motion and the subsequent amendments; 28 of those members are from the official opposition.

Debate on the programming motion has been wide-ranging. Members have had the opportunity to speak not only to the amendments, but also to the original motion itself.

Our party has made it clear that we support this motion; the third party has made it clear in their speeches that they support this motion. The official opposition are the only ones intent on continuing this debate, and it seems their goal is simply to delay.

The motion has already been debated for almost 13 hours, and as I said when I first spoke to these issues, when I spoke to the motion itself, the programming motion itself is a simple procedural motion. It sets out a process for Bill 65, the budget bill, to go to a second reading vote to be dealt with at committee in a reasonable length of time, and then to come back here again to this House for a reasonable debate around third reading, should it pass committee.

It is a simple procedural motion and it's time that it comes to a vote. It's time to get Bill 65 into committee. There are important time-sensitive items in Bill 65, and the process for passage of the bill needs to be moved along. It's important that the committee begin its process.

At the same time, this House can move on to debate substantive matters. There are a number of pieces of important legislation already introduced which the government would like to debate and move through the legislative process. We can't devote the necessary time to these important matters if we are forced to continue debating this procedural motion.

For example, Mr. Speaker, we have Bill 51, Security for Courts, Electricity Generating Facilities and Nuclear Facilities Act; Bill 55, Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, which has only been debated for just over an hour; Bill 30, the Skin Cancer Protection Act or, as it's called, the tanning beds act; Bill 21, Employment Standards Amendment Act, or the family caregiver leave act, as it's often called.

Yesterday, my colleague introduced the Protection of Public Participation Act, an important piece of legislation that aims to tackle strategic lawsuits that curb democratic rights. We'd like to spend time debating that legislation, but we can't until the programming motion is dealt with.

As a result, I move that this question now be put.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Mr. Milloy has moved that the question be now put. It's my ruling that there has been enough debate on this—over 12 hours.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard some noes.

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

I believe the nays have it, in my opinion.

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

The division bells rang from 1608 to 1638.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Members, please take your seats.

Mr. Milloy has moved that the question be now put.

All those in favour of the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	DiNovo, Cheri	Meilleur, Madeleine
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John
Balkissoon, Bas	Fife, Catherine	Moridi, Reza
Bartolucci, Rick	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Forster, Cindy	Naqvi, Yasir
Bisson, Gilles	Gerretsen, John	Natyshak, Taras
Bradley, James J.	Gélinas, France	Oraziotti, David
Brotten, Laurel C.	Horwath, Andrea	Piruzza, Teresa
Campbell, Sarah	Hoskins, Eric	Prue, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chan, Michael	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Chiarelli, Bob	Kwinter, Monte	Schein, Jonah
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Singh, Jagmeet
Crack, Grant	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Craitor, Kim	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Dameria, Dipika	Marchese, Rosario	Vanthof, John
Del Duca, Steven	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Zimmer, David
Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bailey, Robert	Leone, Rob	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Clark, Steve	McDonell, Jim	Smith, Todd
Dunlop, Garfield	McKenna, Jane	Thompson, Lisa M.
Elliott, Christine	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie	Milligan, Rob E.	Wilson, Jim
Hillier, Randy	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Jackson, Rod	Nicholls, Rick	Yurek, Jeff
Jones, Sylvia	O'Toole, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 62; the nays are 32.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I declare the motion carried.

The question is now on the main motion. On May 28, Mr. Milloy moved government notice of motion 19. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Hearing a no, all those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1641 to 1642.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): On May 28, Mr. Milloy moved government notice of motion 19, applying the timetable to the consideration of certain business of this House.

All those in favour of this motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	DiNovo, Cheri	Meilleur, Madeleine
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John
Balkissoon, Bas	Fife, Catherine	Moridi, Reza
Bartolucci, Rick	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Murray, Glen R.

Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Forster, Cindy	Naqvi, Yasir
Bisson, Gilles	Gerretsen, John	Natyshak, Taras
Bradley, James J.	Gélinas, France	Oraziotti, David
Brotten, Laurel C.	Horwath, Andrea	Piruzza, Teresa
Campbell, Sarah	Hoskins, Eric	Prue, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chan, Michael	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Chiarelli, Bob	Kwinter, Monte	Schein, Jonah
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Singh, Jagmeet
Crack, Grant	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Craitor, Kim	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Damerla, Dipika	Marchese, Rosario	Vanthof, John
Del Duca, Steven	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Zimmer, David
Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): All those opposed to the motion, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Bailey, Robert	Leone, Rob	Pettapiece, Randy
Barrett, Toby	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Clark, Steve	McDonell, Jim	Smith, Todd
Dunlop, Garfield	McKenna, Jane	Thompson, Lisa M.
Elliott, Christine	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Hardeman, Ernie	Milligan, Rob E.	Wilson, Jim
Hillier, Randy	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Jackson, Rod	Nicholls, Rick	Yurek, Jeff
Jones, Sylvia	O'Toole, John	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 62; the nays are 32.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I declare the main motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

PROSPEROUS AND FAIR ONTARIO ACT (BUDGET MEASURES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 POUR UN ONTARIO PROSPÈRE ET ÉQUITABLE (MESURES BUDGÉTAIRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on May 16, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 65, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts / Projet de loi 65, Loi visant à mettre en œuvre les mesures budgétaires et à édicter et à modifier diverses lois.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Pursuant to the programming motion just passed, second reading moved on May 7, 2013, I am now required to put the question.

Division on second reading of Bill 65: Mr. Gerretsen has moved second reading of Bill 65, An Act to implement Budget measures and to enact and amend various Acts.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion will say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1646 to 1651.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Members, take your seats.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	DiNovo, Cheri	Meilleur, Madeleine
Armstrong, Teresa J.	Duguid, Brad	Milloy, John
Balkissoon, Bas	Fife, Catherine	Moridi, Reza
Bartolucci, Rick	Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Murray, Glen R.
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Forster, Cindy	Naqvi, Yasir
Bisson, Gilles	Gerretsen, John	Natyshak, Taras
Bradley, James J.	Gélinas, France	Oraziotti, David
Brotten, Laurel C.	Horwath, Andrea	Piruzza, Teresa
Campbell, Sarah	Hoskins, Eric	Prue, Michael
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jaczek, Helena	Qaadri, Shafiq
Chan, Michael	Jeffrey, Linda	Sandals, Liz
Chiarelli, Bob	Kwinter, Monte	Schein, Jonah
Colle, Mike	Leal, Jeff	Sergio, Mario
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Singh, Jagmeet
Crack, Grant	Mangat, Amrit	Sousa, Charles
Craitor, Kim	Mantha, Michael	Tabuns, Peter
Damerla, Dipika	Marchese, Rosario	Vanthof, John
Del Duca, Steven	Matthews, Deborah	Wong, Soo
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Wynne, Kathleen O.
Dhillon, Vic	McMeekin, Ted	Zimmer, David
Dickson, Joe	McNeely, Phil	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Those opposed, please stand and be counted one at a time by the Clerk.

Nays

Arnott, Ted	Jones, Sylvia	O'Toole, John
Bailey, Robert	Klees, Frank	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Barrett, Toby	Leone, Rob	Pettapiece, Randy
Chudleigh, Ted	MacLaren, Jack	Scott, Laurie
Clark, Steve	MacLeod, Lisa	Shurman, Peter
Dunlop, Garfield	McDonell, Jim	Smith, Todd
Elliott, Christine	McKenna, Jane	Thompson, Lisa M.
Hardeman, Ernie	McNaughton, Monte	Walker, Bill
Hillier, Randy	Milligan, Rob E.	Wilson, Jim
Hudak, Tim	Munro, Julia	Yakabuski, John
Jackson, Rod	Nicholls, Rick	Yurek, Jeff

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 62; the nays are 33.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This bill is therefore referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT (LEAVES TO HELP FAMILIES), 2013 LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (CONGÉS POUR AIDER LES FAMILLES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on March 18, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 21, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver, critically ill

child care and crime-related child death or disappearance leaves of absence / *Projet de loi 21, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour les aidants naturels, le congé pour soins à un enfant gravement malade et le congé en cas de décès ou de disparition d'un enfant dans des circonstances criminelles.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Further debate? Mr. Singh has the floor.

Interjections.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: Thank you, thank you. It's a great honour to receive such accolades from my colleagues. Please feel free to leave if you want to; I entertain that at this point. If you want to stay, though, I'll have some excellent comments for you to listen to.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Order. I remind the members that the House is in session.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I assure you that I'll address the assembly with some novel ideas that you've never heard on this bill whatsoever in your life, so I do encourage you all to listen.

This bill: It makes a lot of sense that if someone is sick—the Minister of Labour had a great idea that if someone is sick, if someone is ill, then you should be able to take care of them. That seems very sensible, that seems very reasonable, and the fact that we allow an employee that opportunity to take a leave so they can take care of their loved one makes a lot of sense. But the inherent problem is this: If we don't provide any sort of funding, if we don't provide any sort of income replacement, if we don't provide any sort of mechanism so that the person who is taking that leave is able to support themselves or the person that they're taking care of, the bill lacks some substance.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Enforcement.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: The other issue, a great issue that my colleague the member from Welland brings up, is that if we have already a severe lack of supervision and enforcement on the part of the Ministry of Labour, how will this bill be enforced? What if an employee does take this leave, but the employer says, "You know what? You've taken this leave, you left me without an employee, and I'm going to fill that position with another person," and you go back to get that same job and you don't have it anymore? What protection do you have if the enforcement is already so weak in the Ministry of Labour? What guarantee do you have that you'll actually get back to that job, and how can we effectively and practically ensure that different companies are actually following through with this legislation?

It calls to mind the big question of enforcement. The law is only as meaningful and as powerful and as practical as the enforcement, as its implementation, as the resources that are available so that it will follow through and you will actually get that leave.

So there are two issues so far that we've covered. One is that without any funding associated with this bill, people don't have any real means to support themselves

if they take this leave and they are no longer working, and secondly, without enforcement, without the ability to ensure that the Ministry of Labour actually gets out to different companies, different employers, to ensure that people who are using this law and who are taking advantage of this leave are not actually punished or subsequently dismissed from their employment.

The other issue that has been raised in this House, and I support this issue, is the concept of the time period or the duration. There are circumstances where people don't need an extended period; they don't need to take off months. They need to take off every Monday to help someone go to a dialysis appointment or they need to take off every Friday afternoon to ensure that someone can make it to their cancer treatment. The way that the leave is framed doesn't allow the flexibility to let people take leave in a meaningful way. Sometimes you don't need to take weeks and weeks off; you just need, throughout a week, a scheduled time where you can leave to be able to provide that care. This bill does not provide for that specific circumstance where you don't need an extended period of time but you need an interval-basis leave where you can leave at selected periods throughout a week or throughout a day to be able to provide care.

But broader than just the idea of allowing employees, working people, the opportunity to take time off to take care of their loved ones, it calls to mind our overall approach to the way we take care of our injured and members of our community who are ill or who are facing some serious injuries or illnesses.

1700

It also draws to mind something that the member from Parkdale—High Park brought up: the approach taken in some Scandinavian countries where the governments in those countries actually pay family members to provide care for their own family members who either have developmental issues or have other illnesses or other impairments. You can actually provide funding to the family member so that if someone actually wants to stay home and take care of an ill or unwell person, if there was funding that the government provided to a family member, that would be a strategic and innovative way to provide direct care by someone—a loved one—who wants to provide that care, but also provide them with a means to earn a living.

That would be a very progressive, forward-thinking way of delivering care, and delivering care in a way that breaks some of the models we think of when we think of care. This would be something that I hope we can look at.

When we're talking about this type of employee leave, we should start thinking about these other models of care, these other ways that we can deliver good, quality services to our community, to our loved ones, in a way that breaks from the traditional models of thinking that can actually work as a way that often when we think of investments in our community, we think that they're costs. Often when we change the model or you invest, you actually save in the long run.

One of the best examples I can think of is the idea of home care. Home care investment, putting in investments

in terms of allowing people to stay in their home, to be taken care of in their home, could actually prevent people from being admitted into long-term-care facilities, which are far more costly.

This is an opportunity for us to open the discussion around if we're requiring employers to allow employees to have a leave, that while they're taking that time to provide care for their loved ones, let's look at that idea of home care, that idea of investing in people, putting in that care for loved ones in their home, delivering in a manner that's direct—without any administrative costs, without any bureaucratic costs—direct delivery of services that provides an investment in someone's health that could save costs in the long run.

All too often we don't realize the savings we could enjoy if we make a little bit of an investment. While home care is one example, allowing family members who are caring for their loved ones and taking a leave from their employment, perhaps looking at funding them, providing them with government funds, is a more effective way of delivering health care than our over-reliance on the hospital system. There are many examples that if we shift the way we deliver our care, that we could save money and provide better care.

Just touching on hospitals broadly, that model of care, if we don't give an employee the opportunity to take that time off from their work so that they can take care of a loved one—a child who's ill or a family member, like a mother or father—that person might get even more ill and then have to receive acute care from a hospital, and that cost is far more than a little investment up front.

It also opens up the discussion and allows us to talk about the idea of investing in more health promotion. If we had invested in greater health promotion—many of the illnesses that people face and have to take time off to care for their loved one are preventable. One of the most preventable illnesses, which is one of the highest costs to our society, is diabetes. Diabetes is one of those things we can directly address. We can reduce the incidence of diabetes by two very straightforward things: proper nutrition and exercise. If we made an investment into our society, into our communities, by providing opportunities for exercise, by providing opportunities for better nutrition, making food that is good for you more affordable and making food that's good for you the easier option—and one of the slogans that I strongly support is that if you make the healthy choice the easier choice, people will make that choice. It's very straightforward.

I think it needs to be repeated: If you make the healthy choice the easier choice, people will make that choice. They will choose to be healthy. But if all the opportunities for exercise and all the opportunities to eat well are difficult or hard—there are barriers to it, there are economic barriers to it—people won't do it. You have to tie in a broader picture, a broader notion, of health care to address some of these issues. If you look at it in a myopic, narrow frame, we're not going to come up with solutions that will work in this time and age.

There is fiscal restraint that people are talking about, but I oppose that; I resist that idea. We can invest to save

money as opposed to tightening our belts to save money—that's a tired model. Obviously, in certain circumstances, we have to look at reducing our costs. But a far more powerful way of saving in the long run and creating a sustainable society is investing in our society, investing in our people. One way to do that would be to invest in health promotion to prevent these illnesses so that family members wouldn't have to take time off from work to care for loved ones; we could prevent it in the first place.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to be given an opportunity to speak following my colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. I think some of the comments he made are quite appropriate when we go to committee with this particular bill. Some of the suggestions he had dealing with a flexible timeline—I certainly recognize as a registered nurse the times when a family member needs to take time off for appointments and to follow up with the tests and what have you.

The other piece that the member made some suggestions on is the approaches in dealing with a sick loved one. I think the concern I would have is his comment about how to fund this type of caregiver leave. I think the question has to be asked: which section and the cost associated with this kind of caregiver leave. But I think that the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton has some very, very good suggestions. I think it's valid for us to take this to committee and have further conversations, and then to have further discussions with the community.

I think the key piece here, for this proposed legislation from the Minister of Labour, is the fact that we as a government recognize that family members who have loved ones who are ill or in critical care or missing—a missing child or a crime-related child death—should be given an opportunity and provided leave, and be compassionate about this kind of incident. The proposed legislation, if passed, would support families across Ontario, and ensure they will not lose their job while looking after their loved one during a time of distress and during a critical time.

I know that this particular bill has been debated for many, many hours. It is my hope that we can expedite this and go to committee.

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

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I appreciate the opportunity to comment on the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton's statement on Bill 21.

Yes, of course, it certainly would be very difficult in the enforcement of the bill, and how that's going to play out and what is going to take place with the Ministry of Labour—how they're going to be able to determine with the employers as to how it does or does not take place. I agree with that.

Some of the other areas, though. The flexibility of time: We're not quite sure why it is basically mandated for the time frame that's listed there. Quite frankly, it

could be for compensation reasons in order to try to have the federal government come into play in order to be a participant in this—as opposed to what I agree with the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton could be if somebody only needs half a day off to take someone for a particular case or for dialysis, as he mentioned.

I know that my own mother, for example, when she was taking care of her sister, would have had to take an entire week off in order to take her to the hospital. It was a rather sad case, where she had an epidural put in for a knee replacement and was paralyzed. As a result, she now has to go in on a regular basis. So she helps out there.

The issue about paying to provide care: I'm not so sure that I effectively agree with the member in that perspective. I mean, individuals are going to pay family members to take care of their own family members. Are they the same qualified individuals? Do they have the experience? Are they physiotherapists who are out there? Are they trained in specific areas to look at that? It's an area that would require a lot of research and a lot more detail. It was interesting that the member brought it up, but I'm not so sure that I would be supportive of it. I'd have to do further research into it.

I would hope the member does realize that in the case of those receiving military benefits, there is availability now that some of those benefits are paid by the government of Canada—they have individuals who can take care of their own family members within their own home. But that's a limited amount of funds.

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

1710

Ms. Cindy Forster: I want to thank the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton for his comments on this family leave bill. Now, I think the biggest concerns we had when this was introduced before prorogation, the last time, was the fact that it was a block of time that you had to take. Clearly, the government listened and changed that block of eight weeks into individual one-week blocks, but that in itself won't address those people who find themselves in precarious work.

We all recently received a report from the Ontario Federation of Labour, I believe, and McMaster University about all of the people working in precarious employment, who probably couldn't afford to take a day off, let alone take a week off, so I think this legislation needs to be amended to allow for shorter periods of time for people to do it. It may also be a situation where there are a number of family members who want to share that care and be able to share that period of time off.

The other problem is enforcement. We know that the Employment Standards Act already has a lot of areas where enforcement is a huge issue. We hear from people every day who don't have enforcement around their vacation pay, their unpaid wages, their severance issues. This is an issue where it's going to need some enforcement, because, as I said, there are these people who may be afraid to take a day off and perhaps lose their job. So

who's going to enforce it, and what is that enforcement going to look like, to ensure that people actually have the ability to use this legislation, if and when it's passed?

Those are my comments. Thanks for the opportunity.

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

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's a pleasure to rise and make a few comments in relation to the remarks from our colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton.

I think the fundamental issue here is that this is about compassion. I think we've all had constituents in our offices coming to tell us a sad story of looking after an individual in their family with a serious illness and the type of toll that it takes. Anything we can do to lighten that load is very important. The job-protected leave of absence of up to eight weeks is an important aspect. It was very interesting to listen to our colleague from Welland, with a number of good ideas related to how that might be operationalized to really address the needs of individuals. Certainly, dividing the time up makes sense.

I was really pleased to see the kind of endorsement that we've received for this Employment Standards Amendment Act. Societies and associations that we all respect a great deal are very supportive. They are societies that relate to chronic illness. We have the Multiple Sclerosis Society, the Parkinson Society, the Alzheimer Society and the Canadian Cancer Society, all dealing with very difficult, chronic conditions that take a great deal of care for the individuals and such a toll on the family caregiver.

I'm enthusiastic about ensuring that this gets to committee in a timely fashion so that we can have more of a type of discussion that will result in what I anticipate is an excellent bill.

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

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I'd like to thank all of the participants in this debate: the member from Scarborough–Agincourt, the member from Oshawa, my colleague the member from Welland, and also my colleague from the public accounts committee, the member from Oak Ridges–Markham.

At its core, this is the type of bill that, in terms of its benefit to people, there is certainly a benefit. We can accept that. There are some additions and some amendments that could be brought that would make this bill better, and we will do our best to bring those amendments forward, particularly when it comes to flexibility. The reality is that people may not need a week at a time. This issue has come up again and again; I think there's a bit of a consensus on this, that the circumstances around people's employment—having the flexibility to take time off is something that we need to include.

My colleague from Welland brings up a very important point. There was a report released by McMaster and the United Way, and it talked about the nature of employment. The reality is that precarious employment is such a common phenomenon that the study found that about 50% of people in the workforce are in a precarious

type of employment. Not all those are temporary employments, like temporary employment agencies; some of those are contract work. But that's a serious phenomenon.

Given that circumstance—people with precarious employment—what would be the impact if someone who has precarious employment wants to take time off to care for their loved one? There has to be some additional protection for folks in those circumstances. That's a reality that people are facing.

We know that precarious employment is linked to poverty. It's linked to your success in society. So we need to ensure that there's greater protection for folks like that, broadly, in terms of doing away with precarious employment and moving toward full-time employment, but particularly, in this circumstance, that employees who want to take leave should have greater protection.

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

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to be given an opportunity to speak about Bill 21. The proposed legislation focuses on amendments to employment standards and on several sections of the Employment Standards Act.

First, the bill talks about amending section 49.3, dealing with family caregiver leave. In this particular section, it talks about how the "employee is entitled to a leave of absence without pay to provide care or support to a family member who has a serious medical condition."

Second, the bill also talks about amending section 49.4 of the Employment Standards Act that deals with critically ill child care leave. An employee "employed by his or her employer for at least six consecutive months is entitled to a leave of absence without pay of up to 37 weeks to provide care or support to a critically ill child."

Third, the bill, if passed, will amend section 49.5 of the Employment Standards Act. This particular section allows an employee who is employed by his or her employer for six consecutive months a leave without pay if his or her child "dies or disappears and it is probable, considering the circumstances, that the child died or disappeared as a result of a crime."

Last, it also will amend section 52.1 of the Employment Standards Act that's related to the leaves to be taken in its entirety as is related to the act.

Mr. Speaker, the proposed Bill 21 is really about compassion. If the bill is passed, it recognizes the importance of families and job security for each employee in the province of Ontario, that they will be given an opportunity to take a leave when there is a family member who is critically ill, or a child who has been murdered, missing or deceased.

The government, through the Minister of Labour, has brought this before the House. Why do we need this particular bill? There are several reasons why we need this bill. Let me go through them with you. First, the legislation, if passed, is giving working Ontarians the one thing they need the most when it comes to caring for seriously ill or injured family members—I know every

member of this House has that kind of experience; we will get a call from our constituency office or our own personal experiences where we have to take time off from work.

The other piece here is, during a time of crisis it is best for family members to look after their loved ones instead of worrying about their jobs and the security of their job. So the proposed legislation, if passed, would give hard-working Ontarians unpaid, job-protected time away from work to care for their loved ones. This is very, very important, Mr. Speaker.

The other piece is, every employee in Ontario, whether they work full-time, part-time, permanent or on contract, would be covered and protected by this legislation if they are eligible. They will be protected, Mr. Speaker.

The other piece is, I know that when we brought this particular legislation to the House last round there were some concerns raised about potential abuses of the legislation. Let me share with the members of the House about this concern. The proposed legislation, if passed, has a number of provisions to reduce the potential for abuse by employees.

First, the leave would be unpaid, so it's not like they will be paid, notwithstanding the possible entitlement to EI benefits, which would likely prevent employees from taking or prolonging a leave when it is not necessary.

1720

Second is the requirement for a medical certificate issued by a qualified health professional stating that the child is critically ill and requires care or support by one or more parents and setting out a period of time which a child requires the care or support.

Third, the bill also requires the employees to notify the employer in writing that they would be taking care of a critically ill child—care leave—including a written plan setting out the specific time when they will be taking the leave.

Fourth, the proposed bill will also talk about the period of time that they will be on leave.

Fifth, the bill will apply to an employee who is a parent of a critically ill child under the age of 18.

Finally, the also bill reflects the fact that the federal government right now has passed a bill similar to ours, if we pass our bill; about 6,000 federal employees across Canada will benefit from recent changes to the Employment Insurance Act. Only a relatively small portion are entitled to this kind of benefit.

The proposed legislation is good for everybody, not just an employee, but also an employer. We also have heard from the various stakeholders in consultation supporting the bill. When this was first brought to the House in January, 2012, to then-Minister Jeffrey, the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, the CME, wrote in support of the bill. I'm going to share those comments with the House: that the government needs to consider economic impact of the legislation in consulting with the industry, but that they also support the intent of the bill.

The Alzheimer Society of Ontario applauded the government for introducing the bill, saying that if passed,

it would be a welcome solution to many of the caregivers and families living with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia. Our colleague from Etobicoke had brought in a proposed motion about Alzheimer's, because that is the fastest-growing seniors-related illness in Ontario. The aging population with dementia and Alzheimer's—we know we have constituents like that in our community and maybe even family members with this particular illness.

The Ontario Home Care Association also supports the bill. They support families as they fulfil their caregiving responsibilities. The OHCA stated that the bill demonstrated government's awareness of the challenges many families are going through.

The other piece is that we also received comments and support of the bill from the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. They said that the proposed legislation is good for employees, but also that employees may not be able to afford to take time off and businesses may need to find out times to support those employees.

Another organization, the Bayshore Home Health organization, said that the eight-week family caregiver leaves would give Ontarians time to care for family members suffering from serious illness. Bayshore Home Health also cited the family caregiver leave as an inspiration for their Facebook challenge calling for funding to establish a paid leave for workers who are providing for elderly relatives.

The proposed legislation by the Minister of Labour clearly has some support. Yes, I did hear earlier my colleague from Bramalea–Gore–Malton make some suggestions about improvement of the bill, and that is the right thing to do when we go to committee in terms of this legislation.

The other thing: If the legislation is passed it will provide—a key component of the bill is job protection for the caregiver, to provide protection for the caregiver who is an employee, to care for their spouse; a parent, a step-parent, a foster parent of the employee or the employee's spouse; a child, step-child or foster child to the employee or employee's spouse; grandparents, step-grandparents, grandchild or step-grandchild of the employee or the employee's spouse; the spouse of a child of an employee; the employee's brother or sister; or relatives of the employee who is a dependent of the employees for their care or assistance. The proposed legislation is very prescriptive in terms of who is eligible to be under this caregiver leave.

The other piece of this legislation also supports the government's focus on ensuring patients in the health care system get the right care at the right time at the right place. It also ensures family members to be eligible to provide direct support to an ill relative—a vital component part. It also means that the home is being supported by the employees at the right time.

Often, in our business as members of provincial Parliament, we hear stories where a family member has to look after a loved one discharged from a home and

who wants to die at home. I know, as a nurse, many of my patients want to die at home. Through this proposed legislation, if passed, the family member will be given an opportunity to look after their loved one at home and also to support their family members in a time of crisis, Mr. Speaker. It will provide not just emotional support, but also by freeing up health care beds, it will shorten the wait times in the hospitals as well as the emergency rooms.

The proposed legislation also builds on the existing family medical leave, which is a leave to provide care or support to certain individuals if the individual has a serious medical condition with significant risk of death occurring within a period of 26 months.

I know my colleagues across both parties will be supportive of this bill. There may be some fine-tuning, Mr. Speaker, and that is the right thing to do. At the end of the day, all of us in this Legislature have a purpose in this House: making sure that we provide the lead in our discussions in terms of legislation, but also reaching out to support families across Ontario.

I'm going to share an experience with the members of the House. Shortly after this legislation was first introduced in 2012, Mr. Speaker, the same morning that I was speaking in support of the bill by Minister Jeffrey—that morning, I had to leave the House immediately after my presentation because my own sister-in-law was fighting for her life, and I had to take time off from the Legislature to be with her, and with my brother, because she was in critical care. I know every member of this House has had those personal experiences—for me, both as a sister-in-law and also as a registered nurse. We know family members need time off, and when there is time off available to them and their job is protected, there is an opportunity.

The other piece, Mr. Speaker, about this legislation that is very, very important is the fact that the employee is given a specific time, a duration of the leave. For example, with respect to the crime-related child death or disappearance, the employee would be able to take a leave up to 104 weeks with respect to the death of a child, and up to 52 weeks with respect to the disappearance of a child. An employee would not be entitled to a leave of absence if the employee is charged with the crime or it is probable, considering the circumstances, that the child was a party to the crime. So there are boundaries or parameters about this particular bill to prevent potential abuse and also to address those concerns that have been raised in the previous introduction of the bill.

The other piece here is, what is the impact of this bill in terms of the employees and employers? If the bill is passed, all employees covered by the Employment Standards Act would be eligible for the leaves. This includes full-time employees, part-time employees and employees on fixed-term contracts, because we know that across the province there are many employees who are on contract. The Employment Standards Act does not apply to some workers, like religious, judicial or elected office-holders and a few other categories of workers.

However, only employees who have been employed by their employer for at least six consecutive months would be entitled to the proposed critically ill child care leave and the proposed crime-related child death or disappearance leave. This will mirror the federal legislation in terms of leaves as has been passed.

The other piece here is, what will be exempted from the legislation? All employees covered by the ESA would be eligible for leave, but the ESA does not apply to some workers, like police officers, clergy and judicial office-holders.

The other piece about this particular leave: There are seven types of leaves of absence under the Employment Standards Act, so I'm going to share with the House about this piece, Mr. Speaker. We currently have pregnancy leave, up to 17 weeks.

1730

We also have parental leave up to 35 weeks right now for a birth mother or up to 37 weeks for all other new parents. There's already, currently, family medical leave up to eight weeks. We also have organ donor leave up to 13 weeks, with the possibility of an extension, in some cases, for an additional period of up to 13 weeks. There's also personal emergency leave up to 10 days. There's also declared emergency leave for as long as a provincial emergency is declared under the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act. Last but not least, Mr. Speaker, there's a reservist leave for the time an employee is deployed by Canadian Forces operations. Currently in Ontario, we already have a variety of leaves, so the proposed legislation is specifically targeted to family caregivers, to support them when they look after their loved ones during critical times.

The other piece here is, what are some of the differences between the personal emergency leave versus the family medical leave? That's often been asked of me when I return to the constituency office. Here are some of the differences: The personal emergency leave provides short-term, unpaid job protection up to 10 days per calendar year for a broad list of personal and family emergencies and illnesses, as well as bereavement. Only employees whose employer regularly employs 50 or more employees are eligible to take the personal emergency leave. The family medical leave provides a longer time period of unpaid job protection, and this is only up to eight weeks, only in cases where a family member has a serious medical condition with a significant risk of death within a period of 26 weeks. Employees taking a family medical leave may be eligible for federal employment insurance, EI, for compassionate care benefits. The other difference, in terms of the proposed family caregiver leave, is it's only up to eight weeks of unpaid job protection leave for employees who care for a family member with a serious medical condition that requires their care or support, even if there's no risk for imminent death.

The proposed list of eligible family members—I spoke about that earlier, but I want to reiterate the fact that the proposed family caregiver leaves mirror the personal

emergency leave and also include the ability to prescribe other individuals by the regulations. Under the family medical leave, the list is broadened to include other family members, such as family members or neighbours or friends.

The proposed critically ill care leave will provide unpaid, job-protected leave of up to 37 weeks within a 52-week period when an employee wants to provide support or care of a critically ill child who is under the age of 18. Having spent some time working for the Hospital for Sick Children, I can tell you that many of the parents and extended family members will look upon this particular section of the legislation to provide that care. I don't know of anybody who has spent time working with a sick child or a critically ill child who would not support this particular bill. Many members of this House either know somebody or have worked with somebody who has a child or a neighbour with a child who has been sick. This particular section of the legislation will provide the compassion, provide the care, but most importantly, it will provide some protection. There's nothing worse than when you're caring for a loved sick child, at home or in the hospital—that they have to worry about their jobs and they have to worry about the survival of the family. The proposed legislation will ensure the family member is given that protection.

The other piece of the proposed legislation talks about a crime-related child death or disappearance. This is the worst thing that can happen to a family member, when a child is killed or there is an unfortunate death or disappearance. The proposed legislation, if passed, will provide some compassion, but more importantly, job protection, which is much needed for employees who have a child in this unforeseen death or disappearance.

Mr. Speaker, there are many, many reasons why this bill needs to be passed, but more importantly, we need to look upon my colleagues opposite to move this legislation forward, to go to committee, so that it can be fine-tuned, and then it can be supported and be passed into legislation by the end of this year, so that every Ontario family will be supported and cared for.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Before I move on to questions and comments, I beg to inform the House that I have today laid upon the table the 2012-13 annual report of the Integrity Commissioner of Ontario.

Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Scarborough—Agincourt is a nurse, and she mentioned the key operative words here, “compassion” and “consensus.” It's very appropriate that we've had a couple of votes here today on the budget, which would not be compassion so much as coalition—coalition with the NDP government.

I guess my sense is that I'd be happier if a good friend of mine, Leanne Chan, was here because she has a very good grasp of the budget measures and things like that.

But there was a phrase used that I thought was quite an overworked phrase, really. It's “the right care at the right time in the right place.” It's in the context of the physiotherapists here yesterday—so outraged about the

carpet pulled out from under seniors in Ontario. It's that lack of compassion that is demonstrated here daily.

So with all due respect for Ms. Wong, I would say that I find the three substantive recommendations in here quite acceptable, and I will hopefully get some time to speak on this bill. I'd like to have an hour, but I could probably do it in 20 minutes.

The point here really is this: There isn't one cent of government money in this—not one nickel of government money. What they're doing is downloading on employers and small business. If I was an employer with, say, five or 10 employees, I'm mandated now to find a replacement employee and give the person the time off, which is appropriate. Most well-intended employers would do that, but there should be some measures so that the small family business could accommodate this change. But no, Premier Wynne is going to be benevolent, giving everything away.

I have more to say on this lack of accountability by the government. We had questions here today on this very topic of the Premier unwilling to recognize that the privacy commissioner said she committed a crime. Basically, that's what—

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

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, it's an honour to speak on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming–Cochrane on this issue, Bill 21, the family caregiver leave act. My colleagues here gave me a good line. They said you can't legislate compassion. You either have compassion or you don't. This is the kind of bill that can do some good things for some people, but to use the compassion card especially—it's not often I agree with the member from Durham, but I will give him this one—when you're removing physiotherapy services from a lot of seniors, that's a bit of a stretch.

This is the type of bill that can make a difference to some people. It's the type of bill that can make a lot of difference to some people. It makes it a relevant—not irrelevant—a relevant thing to talk about, and I think we can make some improvements, specifically that it has to be a week's duration every time you take the leave. That would work for some people, but as already has already been said in this House, there are a lot of cases where it could make a much bigger impact if the durations were shorter. Some people need to help a seriously ill family member for one day a week, for a longer period, and it would make a big difference to both the person who's receiving the care and the person who's giving the care. It would make as big a difference as if they took a week. I think that's something we really have to concentrate on.

There are other things that we could make better in this act. The one thing we have to really keep in mind is there are people who—although this act makes sense on paper, if they're not aware of it or if the employer doesn't follow it, it won't help them at all, and that's something we really have to be cognizant of.

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

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I have to confess that I have a particular fondness for newer members of this House who are serving in their first term. I generally find them—not all but—

Mr. John Yakabuski: What's wrong with the guys who are in their third term?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Because there are cranky people sometimes who interrupt you, Mr. Speaker, as opposed to those like the member for Scarborough–Agincourt, who really brings some refreshing ideas and is very positive, and I want to commend her.

1740

The member for Welland, I thought, gave one of the most intelligent two-minute speeches I've heard. She really looked at the legislation, understood how we could improve it, and constructively put some positive ideas. I endorse them. I agree with the critique; I think it's a positive critique.

When we're having a healthy debate here, we can debate things like, you can't legislate compassion, as my friend from Timiskaming–Cochrane points out. But you can have uncompassionate and indifferent laws. This is a law that creates conditions for compassion.

I fundamentally disagree with some of the folks who say things—and as my friend David Crombie always says, everything is connected to everything else. I have 50,000 seniors, many of them in my constituency—mostly older women—who are now going to get real physiotherapy, who couldn't do it. I'm sorry; I've gone to all of the seniors' homes and the retirement homes, and I've talked to it—and every Friday, these elderly women, who are now going to get that kind of service. We have four large companies that almost have an oligarchy, that are for-profit. I would ask the members in the third party, before they come to a conclusion, to look very carefully at the corporate spin you're being spun, because if you look carefully at it, we are going to actually have tens of thousands more folks who are going to get real physiotherapy.

These are all things that I think are consistent with compassion. Even though you can't legislate it, you can certainly endorse and support it in law.

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

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm happy to rise on this bill as it really speaks to somebody I know at home, a friend of mine whose daughter is very sick. She has cancer, and the outlook is somewhat questionable. As a single mother trying to make ends meet, and through being forced to stay at home and look after her daughter, she has lost her employment.

I can see that sometimes bills like this are very much in demand. You have to look after people who are struggling and trying to look for programs that would help out over this time period.

We see in this government—they talk the story, but there's really nothing there.

A simple act would be to put somebody in a home and walk away, but that's not the country or family way. But

it means losing a job. It's very unfortunate. I think it just speaks to how badly this legislation is required. It's something that hits home for people who have really hit the wall, have tried all the medical services they can get. There is certainly a limit.

We hear about the budget, talking today, and we hear a government that has, I think, lost its way. Today the privacy commissioner was talking about the destruction of records. The messages I hear every day—people ask me what I think of this House, and it surprises me when you know the details behind something but you just don't hear a government perhaps say what I would think the truth is.

I think that sometimes you have to do the right thing. This is one bill that we're looking forward to, but there are many opportunities where we see the right thing not being done.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): The member from Scarborough–Agincourt has two minutes.

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm pleased to hear the comments and feedback from my colleagues from Durham and Timiskaming–Cochrane, the Minister of Transportation and Infrastructure, and my colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

I think the comments that were shared by my colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane about compassion were really powerful words. Yes, you cannot legislate compassion, but our responsibility as members of this House is to create the environment that will encourage compassion. It's creating the environment.

I was very pleased to hear the comments from my colleague from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry about his constituent losing her job to look after her loved one at home—because this is what this proposed legislation will do.

The comments from my colleague concerned about the PTs and what have you: Mr. Speaker, this bill is more than just about the change of physiotherapy services out there. This bill is to ensure that every Ontarian who is a full-time, part-time or contract employee is protected and given an opportunity to look after a loved one who is ill—who has a critically ill child, or someone whose child has been murdered or has disappeared. This is what the bill does.

I'm looking forward to when this bill goes to committee and we can improve it, like the Minister of Infrastructure and Transportation said. Some of the comments made—my colleague from Welland had some really good suggestions. When it goes to committee, it will have an opportunity to improve.

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

Mr. John O'Toole: With all respect, I do want to make it very clear that our leader, Tim Hudak, and the PC caucus support the bill. We support the bill to the extent that it should go to committee hearings. As such, compassion is not something unique to any party here. Let's make that very clear. I believe each of us in this room is in support of helping those in our society, in our

communities. That should be very clear. Let's not have any portraying that some party is more benevolent.

What is contradictory to that argument is, if you're really being considerate of those around you, you shouldn't be spending their money so carelessly. A billion-dollar waste in saving five Liberal seats is unacceptable in Ontario. Today, holding information from the privacy commissioner is unacceptable; some call it criminal. So let's put it in context here—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: They broke the law.

Now, I do want to keep the tone down because there's been a lot of co-operation today, especially between the NDP and the Liberal Party. We're standing up for the most vulnerable in society, the people who can no longer afford their energy bills, their tax bills. I will stick to the topic, though.

It's important to put in context the purpose of the bill. I want to repeat—some of what I might say is redundant because it's been said—we are in support of the bill. It should go to committee.

Let's put the frame around it. Let's get the proper understanding. For the people of Ontario, this bill is actually showing some respect for the work done by Stephen Harper. This bill is actually a copy. It's implicated by the federal employment insurance benefits already in place. In fairness, I believe that was the right move that Stephen Harper and his government put in place. I think, respectfully, the government under—I think it came under Kathleen Wynne; no, no, it was before. This came up in—let me see here.

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: No. Bill 21 was March 5, 2013. So it came under Premier Wynne; I concede that and I commend that. It's a feel-good, important bill, but this is important too: There's not one cent of provincial money in here, not for the bereaved family, not for the child in distress, not for the loss of a child. But what has happened recently—I think this thing has to all be put in a broader context. These are the articles in the paper; these are some political footnotes that I've got. Here's what it says right in the media this morning: It says the LCBO workers were handed a \$1,600 signing—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): If the member from Timmins–James Bay could keep it down.

Mr. John O'Toole: This is an article—I didn't write this. It's the news; it's the truth. It says right here that Ontario gave its unionized LCBO workers \$1,600 each for signing—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Point of order from the member from Scarborough–Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: The member is not speaking to Bill 21. I don't know how the LCBO has anything to do with Bill 21.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): Thank you for your point of order. If I feel that the member goes too far drifting away from the bill, he'll be the first one to be notified by me.

And the member from Timmins–James Bay is making a lot of noise. He might want to go back in his own seat.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Not a problem, Speaker. I know when I'm insulted. I'm out of here.

Mr. John O'Toole: He may have to take a plane ride to Timmins or something.

Anyway, our deputy leader, Christine Elliott, said, "the Liberal government is prepared to go to any length to appease labour unions."

Honestly, most of these things in a workplace environment are negotiated solutions. I want tabled the consultations that were held—and she made reference that the Canadian manufacturers' group had endorsed this. This is the important thing. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business, those groups—and I respect, if they have consulted with them, that they have done so.

1750

What is our biggest challenge in the province of Ontario? I put to the people of Ontario: It's jobs and the economy. All of this discussion is important; I get it. Where are we? We're on the wrong road; there's no question about that.

This bill is compassionate.

In fact, putting the bill in context for the viewers, the bill changes the Employment Standards Act. The bill is a page and a half long. It does some things—I'm going to put it down here, so that the people can have it in context.

Family caregiver leave is an unpaid job protection leave for up to eight weeks for each year, for an employee to provide care or support to a family member who has a serious medical condition. It could be a spouse, it could be a child. I agree 100% with the objective.

The next one is, critically ill child care leave is unpaid, job-protected leave for up to 37 weeks, for an employee to provide care or support for a child under 18—what if they're 19?—with a critical illness.

Third, crime-related child death or disappearance leave is unpaid, job-protected leave for up to 104 weeks, for an employee whose child has died where it was likely the result of a crime—I hope there isn't a big committee that has to decide whether it's a crime or not—and up to 52 weeks for an employee whose child has disappeared as a result of a crime.

That's where the amendment process—and why it should go to a committee.

So I have focused on the bill.

I have 20 minutes, so I may wander to a few more related issues. But each of these—an addition to family medical leave, which is important; that's under section 49.1 of the Employment Standards Act, and personal emergency leave, which is under section 50.

This is another modification. For instance, members of my own family—we'll just leave it at that, without making this a sad story about my life or a happy story. For a loved one—each week, I took them for chemotherapy. That was a Wednesday of each week for a number of weeks. The amendment that I would recommend in the most positive of terms is—why do they have to

take a week each time? It has to be taken in weeks. That's what it says in the bill.

Our leader, Tim Hudak, as well as Mr. Hillier, the critic—have made it very clear to us that we are supportive. This is the third time I've said that. But we have some ideas. In fact, we have some ideas to deal with the budget, too. We have some ideas, but they weren't listened to. Once again, we want this to go to committee. We're prepared to put these things on the table and add positive, productive, accountable solutions. This is how we tend to work.

I did work in personnel for about 10 years for a very large company. I've been away from that company for so long that they have run on hard times—perhaps because I left. No, I'm only kidding. We have to have a bit of humour in these times.

So that's one of the issues I would put on the table.

The largest statement about how we're doing—if you always put your finger in the water to see if the water is hot or cold—I like to put my finger on the pulse of the economy. How is it doing? Just touch the economy, listen to the people. How is it? Some 300,000 families don't even have a job, let alone get unpaid leave. This is a measurement of the economy, objectively done in the market that we're in.

When I looked at the context of the reporting on the LCBO, they were saying, "Warren 'Smokey' Thomas, president of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU), said that the employer dropped demands for significant concessions from staff"—so they not only gave them the 3% raise. Who can argue about that? What's the cost of living? This is the truth. You cannot increase spending faster than the increase in revenue. It doesn't work. In fact, Don Drummond said, in his very exhaustive report about the reform of the public sector, which I just happen to have a copy of—there are 360 recommendations. What he said in here, basically, is that there is a structural deficit.

Now, I believe that Ms. Wynne—pardon me, Premier Wynne—wants to do the right thing. And if she did, she'd stop spending these pages' future. Okay? Because right now, servicing the debt is the third-largest expenditure. It sounds rhetorical, it sounds like the same language—when I was chair of finance in Durham and I met with Floyd Laughren and Ed Philip at the time—it's the same deal. They have a structural deficit. Their debt on interest—if the interest rate goes up in Ontario, we're euchred.

Now, what's this got to do with Bill 21? We support Bill 21. There are three things that it does. We would like it to go to committee. We have three amendments already drafted. I'm discouraged when I think of the other things that we could be working on. We've voted on the very primary stages of the budget today, and there will be a committee to adopt some of the spending amendments—about \$1.2 billion—by the NDP government—or caucus. Well, it's a coalition government now. There's the left side of the ideology equation here, and then there's the right side. There's only one left and one right now; at least you got that sorted out.

Anyway, this is worth reading. This is mandatory reading for anybody in Ontario that really wants to know objectively—this is Don Drummond. This fellow was actually Paul Martin's deputy minister. He's a very bright guy. Paul Martin's the guy that balanced the budget federally; he downloaded everything to the provinces, is what he did.

Interjection: Yes, that helped.

Mr. John O'Toole: No, seriously, he did. He started "the cascading effect," as they call it. He took the federal transfer payments to almost a 30% cut, and it happened in Bob Rae's time. Then Bob went and joined them. Look, if you follow the game here—not just the games that are going on here—

Interjection: It was going on back then, too, John.

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes. So I can only say this to you: that we support the bill—well, I've said that. So I don't want anybody in their two-minute hits suggesting for a moment that our leader, Tim Hudak—I think he has some wonderful ideas for Ontario. He has a plan for jobs. He has a plan for the economy. He has a plan for the future of Ontario. He has a plan for hope and prosperity.

But I did listen earlier to the member from Scarborough—Agincourt, and I—and I mean this quite genuinely and seriously—applaud her compassion. She does have a natural tone of compassion. You really do; as a nurse, I think that's part of your makeup and your personality. I do commend you for that and respect it, but I do hear different opinions on that. I'd say that on our side we're very compassionate.

You know what empowering people is? It's not giving them something. It's giving them pride in being something. Do you understand? This bill here—

Interjections.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Like physiotherapy from seniors?

Mr. John O'Toole: I don't even want to go down that road. I met with the physios yesterday, and in fact it was—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: The one comment—I'm trying to stay on track here and relate it to my constituents. A week ago tomorrow, a constituent of mine—I'll mention the name, Laurie Fowler—has been advocating through me to the Minister of Health, Minister Matthews, on behalf of her mother. Now, the advocacy was not for a

day off. The advocacy was to have an EAP—an exceptional access—for a drug referred to as Esbriet. Now, her mother—she's in her seventies; we'll leave it at that—this Ms. Fowler has impressed me with her compassion, and this is why I'm bringing it up. She is spending time today helping her mother, and it's those caregivers in Ontario that I most care about. When I think about it, those caregivers that are taking the spouse of the child to Sick Kids, the spouse of the child to receive chemotherapy, the spouse of the child for special treatment—this is where the pressure in society—in fact, that's part of what this whole thing with the physiotherapists is about: They're taking an entitlement away.

Ms. Wong should know that, because the treachery of this change in physiotherapy—

Interjection.

Mr. John O'Toole: Through Paul, what they're actually doing—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Or through the Speaker; pardon me.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Brother Speaker.

Mr. John O'Toole: Brother Paul, Brother Speaker.

The whole thing they're doing is that they're taking the \$200 million out of the OHIP fund and they're moving it into the LHIN fund. This is a barrel with no bottom. You just keep pouring it in the top, and they say, "We haven't got any money left." It's just tragic.

Now then, the shell game is just beginning. Then they've broken the \$200 million—less \$44 million—into three little pots, and you won't be able to find any of the pots shortly. How much is for the long-term care? Zero.

What's going to happen now—I think they should give taxi chits out to the seniors—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): I'd like to thank the member from Durham. We have now approached the magic hour of 6 o'clock—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): And the member is finished. Thank you.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paul Miller): This House stands adjourned until 9 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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Laurie Scott, Todd Smith
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France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Phil McNeely, Norm Miller
Jerry J. Ouellette, Shafiq Qaadri
Jagmeet Singh
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Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Jane McKenna
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Continued from back cover

Community service

Mr. Joe Dickson	2541
Hon. Michael Coteau	2541

Waste diversion

Mr. Michael Harris.....	2542
Hon. James J. Bradley.....	2542

Cancer treatment

Mme France Gélinas	2543
Hon. Deborah Matthews	2543

Services for the developmentally disabled

Mr. Bill Mauro	2543
Hon. Ted McMeekin.....	2543

Report, Environmental Commissioner of Ontario

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac).....	2544
------------------------------------	------

Visitors

Ms. Lisa MacLeod	2544
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	2544

Correction of record

Mr. Rob Leone	2544
---------------------	------

Visitors

Ms. Sarah Campbell.....	2544
Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong.....	2544

DEFERRED VOTES / VOTES DIFFÉRÉS

Order of business

Amendment negatived	2545
---------------------------	------

**INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS /
PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS**

Hon. Tracy MacCharles	2545
-----------------------------	------

**MEMBERS' STATEMENTS /
DÉCLARATIONS DES DÉPUTÉS**

Gentlemen of the Road Simcoe Stopover

Mr. Toby Barrett	2545
------------------------	------

Air-rail link

Mr. Jonah Schein.....	2545
-----------------------	------

Carassauga festival

Mrs. Amrit Mangat	2545
-------------------------	------

John Verwey

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson	2546
----------------------------	------

Donna-Lynn McCallum

Mr. Michael Prue	2546
------------------------	------

Stella George

Ms. Soo Wong.....	2546
-------------------	------

Accessibility for the disabled

Mr. Monte McNaughton	2546
----------------------------	------

Prisoners' massacre anniversary

Ms. Helena Jaczek.....	2547
Hon. Reza Moridi.....	2547

Burlington Sound of Music Festival

Mrs. Jane McKenna.....	2547
------------------------	------

Prisoners' massacre anniversary

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	2547
-------------------------------------	------

**REPORTS BY COMMITTEES /
RAPPORTS DES COMITÉS**

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private
Bills**

Mr. Peter Tabuns	2547
Report adopted	2548

Correction of record

Hon. Reza Moridi.....	2548
-----------------------	------

**INTRODUCTION OF BILLS /
DÉPÔT DES PROJETS DE LOI**

**Metrolinx Amendment Act, 2013, Bill 84, Mr. Schein
/ Loi de 2013 modifiant la Loi sur Metrolinx, projet
de loi 84, M. Schein**

First reading agreed to.....	2548
Mr. Jonah Schein.....	2548

**Companies Statute Law Amendment Act, 2013, Bill
85, Ms. MacCharles / Loi de 2013 modifiant des
lois visant les compagnies, projet de loi 85,
Mme MacCharles**

First reading agreed to.....	2548
------------------------------	------

**Infrastructure Accountability Act, 2013, Bill 86,
Mr. Jackson / Loi de 2013 sur la responsabilisation
en matière d'infrastructure, projet de loi 86,
M. Jackson**

First reading agreed to.....	2548
Mr. Rod Jackson.....	2548

**OSPCA Oversight Act, 2013, Bill 87, Mr. MacLaren
/ Loi de 2013 sur la surveillance de la SPAO, projet
de loi 87, M. MacLaren**

First reading agreed to.....	2548
Mr. Jack MacLaren	2548

**Child and Family Services Amendment Act
(Children 16 Years of Age and Older), 2013, Bill
88, Mr. Jackson / Loi de 2013 modifiant la Loi sur
les services à l'enfance et à la famille (enfants de 16
ans et plus), projet de loi 88, M. Jackson**

First reading agreed to.....	2549
Mr. Rod Jackson.....	2549

**OSPCA Fairness Act, 2013, Bill 89, Mr. MacLaren /
Loi de 2013 sur l'équité à la SPAO, projet de loi 89,
M. MacLaren**

First reading agreed to.....2549
Mr. Jack MacLaren2549

**Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to
Animals Amendment Act (Choice of Veterinarian),
2013, Bill 90, Mr. MacLaren / Loi de 2013
modifiant la Loi sur la Société de protection des
animaux de l'Ontario (choix du vétérinaire), projet
de loi 90, M. MacLaren**

First reading agreed to.....2549
Mr. Jack MacLaren2549

**STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES / DÉCLARATIONS
MINISTÉRIELLES ET RÉPONSES**

Not-for profit corporations

Hon. Tracy MacCharles2549

**Sexual Harassment Awareness Week / Semaine de
sensibilisation au harcèlement sexuel**

Hon. Laurel C. Broten.....2550

Not-for-profit corporations

Mr. Jim McDonell.....2551

Sexual Harassment Awareness Week

Ms. Laurie Scott.....2551

Not-for-profit corporations

Mr. Jagmeet Singh2551

Sexual Harassment Awareness Week

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....2552

PETITIONS / PÉTITIONS

Water quality

Mr. John O'Toole.....2552

Pan Am Games

Mr. Rosario Marchese.....2553

Alzheimer's disease

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield2553

Physiotherapy services

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette.....2553

Ontario Municipal Board

Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....2553

Child custody

Mr. Kim Craitor2554

Physiotherapy services

Mr. Todd Smith.....2554

Property taxation

Mr. John Vanthof2554

Alzheimer's disease

Mrs. Donna H. Cansfield.....2554

Physiotherapy services

Mr. Jeff Yurek.....2555

Long-term care

Mr. Michael Mantha.....2555

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Order of business

Hon. John Milloy2555

Motion agreed to2557

**Prosperous and Fair Ontario Act (Budget
Measures), 2013, Bill 65, Mr. Sousa / Loi de 2013
pour un Ontario prospère et équitable (mesures
budgétaires), projet de loi 65, M. Sousa**

Second reading agreed to2557

**Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to
Help Families), 2013, Bill 21, Mr. Naqvi / Loi de
2013 modifiant la Loi sur les normes d'emploi
(congés pour aider les familles), projet de loi 21,
M. Naqvi**

Mr. Jagmeet Singh2558

Ms. Soo Wong.....2559

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette.....2559

Ms. Cindy Forster.....2560

Ms. Helena Jaczek.....2560

Mr. Jagmeet Singh2560

Ms. Soo Wong.....2561

Mr. John O'Toole.....2563

Mr. John Vanthof2564

Hon. Glen R. Murray.....2564

Mr. Jim McDonell2564

Ms. Soo Wong.....2565

Mr. John O'Toole.....2565

Second reading debate deemed adjourned2567

CONTENTS / TABLE DES MATIÈRES

Wednesday 5 June 2013 / Mercredi 5 juin 2013

ORDERS OF THE DAY / ORDRE DU JOUR

Stronger Protection for Ontario Consumers Act, 2013, Bill 55, Ms. MacCharles / Loi de 2013 renforçant la protection du consommateur ontarien, projet de loi 55, Mme MacCharles

Hon. John Gerretsen.....	2521
Mr. John O'Toole.....	2521
Mr. Michael Mantha	2522
Hon. Tracy MacCharles	2522
Ms. Sarah Campbell.....	2522
Mr. John O'Toole.....	2523
Hon. Jeff Leal.....	2524
Mr. Rick Nicholls.....	2525
Mr. Jonah Schein.....	2525
Hon. James J. Bradley.....	2525
Mr. John O'Toole.....	2526
Miss Monique Taylor.....	2526
Mr. Bill Mauro.....	2527
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	2528
Mr. Michael Mantha	2528
Hon. James J. Bradley.....	2528
Miss Monique Taylor.....	2529
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	2529
Mr. Michael Mantha	2530
Hon. Jeff Leal.....	2531
Mr. Jim McDonell.....	2531
Ms. Cheri DiNovo.....	2531
Mr. Ernie Hardeman	2532
Second reading debate deemed adjourned	2532

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS / PRÉSENTATION DES VISITEURS

Mrs. Jane McKenna	2532
Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	2532
Mr. Kim Craitor	2532
Mr. John O'Toole.....	2532
Mr. Jagmeet Singh	2532
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2532
Ms. Laurie Scott.....	2532
Ms. Catherine Fife	2532
Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn	2532
Mr. Randy Pettapiece.....	2532
Hon. Jeff Leal.....	2532
Hon. Ted McMeekin	2533

Hon. Yasir Naqvi	2533
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	2533
Members' expenditures	
The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac)	2533

ORAL QUESTIONS / QUESTIONS ORALES

Access to information

Mr. Rob Leone	2533
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2533

Access to information

Mr. John Yakabuski	2534
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2534

Access to information

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	2535
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2535

Access to information

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	2536
Hon. John Milloy	2536

Government spending

Mr. Peter Shurman	2537
Hon. Charles Sousa	2537

Access to information

Mr. Peter Tabuns.....	2537
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2538

Renewable energy

Mr. Phil McNeely	2538
Hon. Bob Chiarelli	2538
Hon. Jeff Leal.....	2538

Immigration policy

Mrs. Christine Elliott.....	2539
Hon. Michael Coteau.....	2539

Community health services

Ms. Sarah Campbell.....	2539
Hon. Glen R. Murray.....	2539

Water quality

Ms. Soo Wong.....	2540
Hon. James J. Bradley	2540

Access to information

Ms. Lisa MacLeod.....	2540
Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne	2540

Long-term care

Ms. Andrea Horwath.....	2541
Hon. Deborah Matthews	2541

Continued on inside back cover