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of Ontario

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**Official Report
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Monday 25 November 2013

Lundi 25 novembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 25 novembre 2013

The House met at 1030.

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

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Rick Nicholls: It is my pleasure this morning to introduce Darlene Smith-Kling, who is president of the Chatham Kent Women's Centre board of directors, and five of her other colleagues, who are not here yet, but I will mention them: Laurie Willick, Lisa Christian, Darlinys Diaz Pages, Patrizia Zonta and Melissa Bolanos. Welcome them to our Legislature.

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: I'd like to introduce my guests today. They were here in my office, and we had a very informed meeting about the Canadian Diabetes Association. I'd like to welcome Celso Oliveira, Kerry Bruder and Suneel Mehra. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Grant Crack: It gives me great pleasure today to introduce and welcome the chair of Flowers Canada, Mr. Gerard Schouwenaar, who is here with his sons, Karl and Jake, today. Welcome.

Mr. Michael Harris: I'd like to introduce a good friend of mine, Trevor Dick from the Ottawa Valley. He will be joining us today on the Legiskaters hockey team. We're looking for a W today. Welcome, Trevor, to the Legislature.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's my pleasure to welcome Don Taylor, who's the chair of the Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers. Speaker, as all honourable members know, one of the most favourite words around the Legislature this time of year is "TOGA," and not in the Greco-Roman frat house tradition. It's The Ontario Greenhouse Alliance, who is here today to deliver some wonderful, fresh poinsettias to celebrate the season and to honour greenhouse growers in Ontario.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'd like to welcome The Ontario Greenhouse Alliance to the Legislature today. In the gallery, among others, is the chair, Jan VanderHout. They are a great organization, and I'm happy to see them here again today. I hope all the members will take the time to talk to them at their reception in room 228 following question period. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today Gerry Marshall of the town of Penetanguishene. With him is Candice Moreau. She's the coordinator of the 2015 400th-anniversary-of-Champlain commemoration.

Ms. Cindy Forster: I'd like to welcome Wayne Gates. He's the president of—I think it's still Local 199 Unifor, formerly CAW. Welcome, Wayne—oh, and a councillor from Niagara Falls as well.

Mr. Jeff Yurek: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature a constituent of mine, Jason McComb, who is raising awareness of homelessness, walking from St. Thomas to Ottawa. He's in Toronto today to say hello.

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I'd like to extend a warm welcome to the family of page Zachary Piette. His mother, Suzanne Piette; his grandmother, Jackie Powell; his grandfather, Harry Powell; and his sister, Katie Piette, have all joined us today in the gallery. Welcome.

Mr. Todd Smith: On behalf of my colleague the member from Burlington, I'd like to welcome Diane Beaulieu and Trisha Porter from the Halton women's shelter in Burlington to the Legislature today.

Mr. Jack MacLaren: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to introduce my brother, Jim MacLaren, who is here from Calgary. He was looking for business opportunities in Ontario. He finds energy too expensive, so he's going back to Alberta.

Mr. Steve Clark: I know that members have been meeting this morning, and throughout the day, with folks from the Canadian Diabetes Association. I want to acknowledge and welcome Christine Albee, who is the director of government relations and advocacy for Ontario. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Just before I go to the Minister of Children and Youth Services for a point of order, a gentle reminder that we are to introduce people only. That is the best way to do things.

Introduction of guests?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I'd like to introduce Sly Castaldi, who is the executive director of Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis. I believe she's on her way in in a few minutes.

WEARING OF RIBBONS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services on a point of order.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: On a point of order, I believe you will find that we have unanimous consent that all members be permitted to wear white ribbons today in support of ending violence against women.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The Minister of Children and Youth Services is requesting unanimous consent to wear the white ribbons. Do we agree? Agreed.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Another point of order: the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Actually, an introduction, if I may: As you've heard, there are a number of individuals who are going to be around today from interval and transition houses across the province. I'd like to welcome Susan Young, the executive director of the association, as well as Thom Rolfe, the executive director of Hiatus House, who will be joining us today.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): We welcome all our guests.

ORAL QUESTIONS

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, about two months ago, I sat down with Premier Wynne, and we agreed to clear the decks of legislation, because she said that was standing in the way of putting forward a jobs plan.

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Now, two months later, we see no jobs plan, but we saw significant layoffs, like 800 jobs permanently lost at Heinz in Leamington, 170 jobs at CCL in Penetanguishene, in Simcoe, and abandonment of the Ring of Fire project. You know, I hate to say this, but I regret trusting the Premier to put forward that jobs plan. I guess I should know by now not to trust Liberals, but the greater regret I have is the fact that people have now lost their jobs—38,000 manufacturing jobs since she became Premier.

So let me ask you this: We've got two weeks left in the session. Are we finally going to see your jobs plan, or are we going to see more jobs leave the province of Ontario?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question from the Leader of the Opposition, because it's high time that that side of the House supports small business by supporting the act we provided, and that's being stalled by that member and his party.

We have a three-part jobs plan. If you read the fall economic statement, it talks about what it is we're doing to create those jobs. As a result of—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I guess just asking for a blanket order does not suffice, so I will return to people's ridings.

Carry on.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As a result of the jobs plan we have, and that we've been pursuing over the last number of years, we've made strategic investments in our province to withstand the

recession, and we've weathered it better than most jurisdictions around the world, and here in North America, for that matter.

The member opposite should embrace the strong fundamentals that exist in Ontario and the hard-working families and businesses that invest in this province. We will continue to support them, and so should you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, Speaker, sometimes I worry that the finance minister is little more than a nice suit, a nice smile and a briefing book. He seems to have no depth of understanding on this issue. No wonder we're in deep trouble.

Minister, you say your Bill 105 would have saved jobs at Heinz and CCL. I will remind you that you're actually increasing taxes for medium and large employers if the payroll is more than \$5 million. Correct me if I'm wrong, but wouldn't Bill 105 actually have increased taxes on companies the size of Heinz and CCL? Do you know your own legislation?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Well, there you have it, Mr. Speaker: The member opposite does not want to support an exemption to the employer health tax that will save 90% of all small businesses in this province not to be paying that tax. Ninety per cent of businesses in Ontario would be exempt from that tax. The member opposite is now saying he wouldn't support that initiative. Sixty thousand more small businesses would be exempt as a result of these initiatives.

Interjections.

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: It's true, Mr. Speaker, that—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: —will paid by big corporations. I've spoken to some of those corporations that see no problem whatsoever in supporting these initiatives. You should be supporting it as well.

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

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, I guess the minister didn't have a briefing note on that topic. You know that your bill actually increases taxes. Let's think of some of the losses that, sadly, we've seen: CCL, Kellogg's, John Deere, Heinz, Cat. All of those would have had a tax increase in Bill 105.

So, Minister, I'm going to ask you to move beyond the briefing notes and actually answer from the heart. I've got a plan that will actually get hydro rates under control so that businesses will invest again in our province. I've got a plan to get taxes down to encourage investment in a new machine and a new product line and hire men and women again. I've got a plan to clear aside the red tape, the hassle, the runaround to reduce the regulatory burden by at least a third. I've got a plan to put people into good jobs they can count on: middle-class comfort and security, permanent jobs, not temporary job to temporary job.

I've got a plan, so let's get going. All I'm asking you is, where the hell is yours?

Interjections.

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

I would ask the leader to withdraw.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Withdraw.

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite wants us to speak from the heart. I can tell you this: The plan that's being provided and proposed by the member opposite is a slash-and-burn policy that's going to create havoc and make it very difficult for our economy to grow and, more importantly, to sustain those businesses.

The member opposite makes claims about increased taxes. The fact of the matter is: Supporting small businesses—in the end, the net result is that it's not fully offset. We do recognize that we need to create more jobs and build our economy.

This is their plan, Mr. Speaker: Their plan calls to fire 10,000 education workers. Their plan calls to fire 2,000 health care workers. Their plan will cancel infrastructure projects across the province. They will drive down wages with their harmful right-to-work-less legislation. Their plan is to fight.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the finance minister. I mean, what a pathetic answer from the finance minister. Three chances to tell us what his plan is, or at least when it's forthcoming. I take part of the blame myself. I did trust you. I trusted the Premier to bring forward a jobs plan when I said I would clear the decks. But let me tell you what's happened since. So 800 men and women lose their jobs in Leamington, Ontario. Heinz ketchup, that was made in Ontario for 100 years, will now be made in the United States of America. This is devastating to those communities. We saw CCL on Friday laying off, closing down, 170 jobs in Penetanguishene. The Ring of Fire is gone.

So when Leamington lost that environment, that job creation dynamo in Heinz, what was your response? You brought forward legislation to ban smoking on patios. When we lost the Ring of Fire project, what was your response? To get Al Gore to pat you on the back for the very same policies that drove hydro rates through the roof. When are you going to bring forward a plan, or is it simply time to change the team that leads, to put forward a jobs plan that will put men and women back into good-paying jobs—

Interjections.

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, our plan has been clearly laid out in our fall economic statement. Unlike the member opposite, we believe that we need to make those investments in our people. We recognize there's a skills

shortage among certain sectors of our economy that we have attracted. We need to fill them. That's why we need to invest in them. We also recognize that we need to invest in modern infrastructure. Those strategic initiatives will enable us to have a 100,000 more new jobs in the province. And we will also do everything possible to maintain a dynamic business climate by maintaining our tax systems low relative to the other jurisdictions around North America and the world.

The fact of the matter is there is investment coming to Ontario. The fact of the matter is we have over 470,000 net new jobs since the recession. The fact of the matter is the initiatives that we've taken are working, and the member opposite doesn't see the need to make those investments, and that's worrisome.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, I'm not going to argue that the finance minister has added 300,000 jobs to the government payroll. I just think we need a healthy, thriving private sector to rebuild our middle class, and if people are working, they pay taxes to support health and education.

The problem is—and I believe you've got this in your briefing binder somewhere—we've lost 38,000 manufacturing jobs under Premier Wynne alone. We've lost 300,000 manufacturing jobs under the McGuinty-Wynne government. This is our middle class. I remember growing up in the north end of Fort Erie on Lindbergh Drive. Most of the moms and dads and my friends worked at the factory; they worked at the plant and built our middle class. It was the backbone of communities that I call home. You've broken that backbone. You hollowed out our manufacturing sector and you haven't got a clue how to turn it around. We do: Get energy rates under control. Get taxes down. Clear aside the regulatory barriers. Modernize our labour laws.

We've got a plan for 300,000 manufacturing jobs to rebuild our communities. I ask you, why don't you?

Interjections.

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

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, this is not about more government. In fact, our government has been scaling down the size of government. It's about more opportunity—opportunity that the opposition member is trying to take away. That is their claim to their purpose: Take it away, while some of the other members of the House want to just give it away.

We have to be cognizant and balanced in our approach. Here, I'll read something that a member of the Conservative Party, who was the leader of that party, says. He says, "There are business people who will say the last thing we need right now is a sort of war between the unions and businesses or the government in an economy that is just slowly recovering. I happen to believe they are right, and I don't think it's constructive right now." He says further, "I think it's probably the wrong thing to be advocating, and I don't even think it's going

to be that good for the economy.” That’s John Tory, who opposes individuals who want to fight unions, Mr. Speaker. We have to work collaboratively, in partnership.

Interjections.

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

Be seated, please. Be seated, please.

Final supplementary.

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Mr. Tim Hudak: I pointed out in my opening question that two months ago, I put my trust in Premier Wynne and the Liberals to bring forward a jobs plan. Two months later, we’ve lost more jobs, and it seems like daily there’s sad news across our province of more layoffs. And after five questions, Speaker, the finance minister does nothing but play silly games. He has not brought forward any kind of jobs plan, and I fear that he won’t as we head into the Christmas break in three weeks’ time.

When we look at your legislative agenda, you’ve found importance in who can access a tanning bed. You’ve found importance around water cooler salesmen. You’ve found importance in whether you can smoke on a patio or not. My priority is jobs, getting our economy moving again and getting hydro rates under control.

So is this the extent of your legislative agenda? And if it is, let me ask you, which one of those bills—the tanning beds, the smoking legislation or the one on water heaters—which one of those would have made Cliffs and the Ring of Fire a reality to fire up our economy? Which one of your plans would have helped bring good, well-paying jobs to northern Ontario, southern Ontario and to the oil sands in the province of Ontario when it comes to job creation?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, let me respond by advising the member, who obviously hasn’t read the fall economic statement, or the budget previously, that we have a three-point plan to invest in people by creating a youth jobs strategy. That’s \$275 million for 30,000 more jobs. We are advocating for our seniors and our consumers by fighting for their protection. We’re investing \$35 billion over the next three years by building infrastructure. We’re bringing forward green bonds and a new Trillium Trust. We’re promoting our AFP process. We’re investing in our electricity grid that they neglected for so many years, so that we can be competitive.

We are investing in our business climate. We’re cutting taxes on small business, and we’ve brought forward legislation this fall, Bill 105, that will help small businesses. You now are saying that you’re not supporting it. Say that to your business people and—how they feel that the opposition, who claim to fight for small business, is now creating and stalling its ability.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Acting Premier. People worried about finding good jobs in this province were dismayed to see yet another company

walk away from Ontario last week. Can the Acting Premier tell us what deal the government made with Cliffs Natural Resources and whether the government held up their end of that deal, Speaker?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the opportunities in the Ring of Fire and in our mineral deposits in the Far North are tremendous, and we will continue to support and do everything possible to invest in that initiative.

There are a number of proponents that are continuing to be interested in the development of the Ring of Fire. We are going to continue to do what’s necessary, and we have established a development corporation to that effect. We have a number of proponents, and we’re asking the federal government to partner in these initiatives, as they should, the same way they’ve done it for Alberta and for New Brunswick and Newfoundland. We have to make certain that we invest in those initiatives, and we will, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, in May 2012, the finance minister confirmed that the Ontario government had reached an initial agreement or a term sheet with Cliffs regarding plans to process chromite in Capreol. Will the Acting Premier make that agreement public today?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the proponent that has been involved in the negotiation—there have been others—has made their decision. It’s going to be continuing. As a government, we’ll continue to seek the best value for Ontarians. We’re asking the federal government to partner with us. We want to ensure that we do the smelting and the fabricating of the mineral resources, so we can produce stainless steel here in Ontario. All of this is part of our ability to take advantage of the Far North.

We also want to be able to work effectively and collaboratively with the First Nations and the aboriginal peoples who are affected by this initiative. That’s why we also need the federal government to partner with us.

We’ll continue to drive forward. We’ll continue to look at what’s necessary to provide for an all-weather road and a spine to the north, to enable that development, Mr. Speaker. We’ll continue to do our part.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, in May 2012, the government reached a term sheet with Cliffs Natural Resources. The question I’m asking is, can the Acting Premier at least—if they’re not going to tell us what that term sheet said, if they’re not going to make that term sheet public, can they at least tell us whether or not they actually kept their side of the agreement or were there terms that the government actually failed to meet?

Hon. Charles Sousa: There are ongoing discussions with the proponent and others. We will continue to do what’s necessary. The member opposite knows full well the sensitivities around these discussions and these negotiations.

We have always stated that the federal government needs to partner in these initiatives. There are billions of

dollars of opportunity available to us. The feds have not come forward with support for Ontario, which we need in order to take advantage of these mineral deposits.

We will continue to do our part, as I've stated already, and I'm optimistic that the opportunities continue to exist, because there is so much more interest still available to the area. We'll try to develop it as best we can.

MINING INDUSTRY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also for the Acting Premier. Transportation infrastructure is a huge challenge for bringing jobs to the Ring of Fire. Can the Acting Premier confirm that the government signed a commitment around creating a road and, if so, what was that commitment?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The development of the Ring of Fire is going to require a lot of input from the federal partners, from the aboriginal and First Nations people and from the areas that are implicated—the municipalities. We recognize that an all-weather road is going to be necessary to make it so.

There is also going to be a lot of work in regard to energy submissions, and we will continue to do that, but we're having those discussions. In order for us to develop that, we need to have a partnership with the federal government as well.

We'll continue to do our part. We've invested, and we've actually started to highlight what's necessary. The proponents recognize the potential; we will do our best to ensure that it's developed.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: People across Ontario were promised thousands of jobs—those were this Liberal government's words, “thousands of jobs”—but when it comes to actually showing the public what the government did or didn't do to deliver on that promise, we can't get a straight answer.

It's been clear that the Liberals have failed to put in place the framework needed to take advantage of the Ring of Fire. Whether it's energy, roads or helping First Nations find common ground with business, the government has failed on every single count. All the while, Liberal ministers were holding press conferences and claiming that everything was just fine.

Why can't the Acting Premier share some basic information about agreements the government signed on behalf of the people of Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Our government is moving forward with development of the Ring of Fire. We are continuing to do that. We have put forward a development corporation. We have discussions that are being made with First Nations, the Métis nations and the aboriginal people. We had discussions with various proponents, not just one.

We are trying to persuade the federal government of the importance of this development, just as it's been important for the development of other regions of Canada, like Alberta, Newfoundland and New Brunswick. On-

tario deserves the same degree of attention and investment, because there are \$60 billion of opportunity, not only for Ontario, but for all of Canada.

The member opposite is asking us to provide and divulge sensitive commercial negotiations. That's improper, and that is exactly why they would put it at risk. We will not put our province at risk in these discussions. We're going to do everything necessary to move forward with the Ring of Fire.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: We know that Cliffs is only one of several companies interested in the Ring of Fire, but now people are wondering how many other companies are having the same kind of trouble with the Liberals that drove away Cliffs.

There aren't just mining jobs in northern Ontario that are at stake here. There is the potential for processing jobs and refining jobs that could mean jobs in Sudbury, jobs in Hamilton and jobs in Thunder Bay, but that requires a plan.

The government won't share the details of their bungled deal with Cliffs. Can the Acting Premier tell us his plan to work with other companies in the Ring of Fire, so that maybe Ontario can realize some of those jobs that the government likes to carp about?

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Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, it is essential that we take the opportunities that exist in the Far North in a very pragmatic and strategic way. We've established a development corporation to look into the best way to provide value for Ontario. We've had ongoing discussions with a number of proponents. We are doing exactly what is necessary to provide for the smelting and the processing here in Ontario. We recognize the obvious that she is proposing. What's not so obvious is getting to that opportunity in a very essential strategic and pragmatic way for Ontario.

We need the federal government to partner with us on these initiatives as well. I reaffirm the importance of that region to all of Canada as well as Ontario. We need to move forward in partnership on this issue.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Good morning. My question is for the Acting Premier. We have cleared the legislative decks so you can finally bring out your plan to create and stimulate the economy. Instead, what do we get? A 1-800 number for pets and a new no-smoking policy.

High taxes, mounds of red tape and triple hydro rates do not provide an open-for-business climate. Your lack of vision and hope has sent Ontario businesses packing. Xstrata Copper, Caterpillar, US Steel, Heinz, and now Cliffs Natural Resources pulling out of the greatest opportunity in a generation, the Ring of Fire—all gone.

Will you finally admit that you're taking us down the wrong path and adopt the PC Party plan to bring jobs and wealth back to the province of Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite wants to give the impression that the people of Ontario and all the businesses that continue to invest in Ontario, the work that is being done to promote our economic recovery, which, by the way, exceeds all other jurisdictions around the world, including North America—he's putting them down. Our people are working hard. We are trying to partner as much as we can to promote that economic growth.

Their answer? Cut everything, slash it all, take it away; because they don't believe in investing in our people, investing in infrastructure and supporting businesses. That is not deserving of their approach; it is of ours. We believe in the people of Ontario and in the business of Ontario. That's why we'll invest in them and that's why we'll take these initiatives to support them.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: Acting Premier, it's not as if these jobs that are leaving Ontario are disappearing completely; they're just disappearing from Ontario. They've been resurfacing elsewhere. Xstrata Copper, 672 jobs resurfaced in the province of Quebec; Caterpillar has resurfaced in Indiana; Heinz in Ohio. Will you wake up over there? The jobs and investment are fleeing Ontario. The business world is sending you a very clear message: Stop blaming it on the recession. The other provinces have recovered, the US is in recovery, and now these guys are eating our lunch. Don't you think you've created enough jobs for the United States?

Interjections.

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

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. I'm not seeking quiet for the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke to add his two cents' worth; he does that enough. Thank you.

Minister of Finance.

Hon. Charles Sousa: The member opposite suggests that we should wake up. I would say to him, wake up and recognize the importance that Ontario has made and done for the people and for the businesses of Ontario. We've actually exceeded those very jurisdictions that he's just talked about, and we'll continue to do that.

My question to him, however, is, why are you not supporting small businesses with the bill that we brought forward to support them? You're holding that up. They are creating uncertainty, and that hurts small businesses. That's creating more red tape. This is about cutting their taxes, so wake up and support small businesses.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Taras Natyshak: My question is to the Minister of Economic Development and Trade. Speaker, 740 people will be out of work in Leamington and 46 area tomato growers will lose a significant contract because of this government's inaction on preserving and protecting Ontario jobs, inaction on reducing industrial hydro rates,

inaction on creating real incentives for capital investment and inaction on training. The list of what this government hasn't done to create and preserve jobs is endless. When is this government going to get serious about preserving good-paying jobs that are the lifeblood of Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: We are working to create jobs in this province. The Southwestern Ontario Development Fund and the Eastern Ontario Development Fund alone have created and retained more than 22,000 jobs since their creation.

Our youth jobs initiative, the youth employment fund, which is an employer incentive, has already resulted, in just a couple of months, in more than 3,000 placements for young people in this province.

There's our investment with the Ford Motor Company as well, just a couple of months ago. A \$70-million investment by the province along with the federal government is creating and retaining almost 3,000 jobs at that location.

In fact, our auto sector is having the best year on record in terms of sales in Canada. We've created in the auto sector, Mr. Speaker, about 15,000 net new jobs since the bottom of the recession and, of course, that's part of the nearly 500,000 jobs—not in the public sector, as the PCs would like to say: 100% of those jobs are full-time jobs, and 80% of those jobs are in the private sector.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: The words "too little, too late" come to mind when I listen to the minister's response. Three hundred thousand manufacturing jobs have been lost while this government has been sitting idly by, rather than getting industrial electricity costs under control. For years, one jurisdiction after another has implemented targeted tax credits for investment, training and job creation while this government has done absolutely nothing.

The Premier's admission that more job losses are coming is extremely worrying for people across Ontario. When is this government going to table a real job-creation plan to begin to make up for the 300,000—300,000—good-paying jobs that have left this province under their watch?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The member opposite focuses on the 300,000 job losses in the manufacturing sector over the last decade. We believe in our manufacturing sector. We believe in the nearly one million people who are working in that sector today. It's a different sector, Mr. Speaker; it's changing. We know that the global circumstances are challenging, and we're adapting to those circumstances as well.

The Premier, the member from Windsor West and myself were in Leamington on Friday. We met with the local leadership, business leaders and union representatives of the individuals involved, to work with them to develop a plan to hopefully save that opportunity that is so important for that community in Leamington. So we are investing in our communities.

I think it's important that all of us in this Legislature not denigrate our manufacturing sector but speak about the possibilities and the opportunities and the expansion

that is taking place. We look for ways to continue to help, including improving and increasing their trade overseas.

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: This morning I've got a question for the Attorney General. In September, the minister announced that a tentative settlement had been reached in the Huronia Regional Centre class action. Some of the former residents of Huronia would like to access their files so they can apply under the settlement.

Would the minister please tell the House how these former residents may be able to get access to the files they need?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Speaker, as you know, we've reached a tentative settlement that we hope will be finalized on December 3. It's before the courts right now, and we believe that the settlement is a fair and reasonable one for all concerned.

We have acted to ensure that the residents of Huronia will have access to their files as soon as possible. As a matter of fact, I've strongly directed my ministry officials to work with the Ministry of Community and Social Services to make sure that those records will be available to those individuals, who have suffered enough in their lives. Speaker, that's happening as we speak. Those directions were given some time ago. I know there's some concern about that, but we will make sure that every resident will get the access to the records that they want.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I thank the Attorney General for that answer, obviously. But Mr. Speaker, I understand that this settlement is going to go before the courts on December 3 for the court's approval. I know that former residents of Huronia want access to their personal information and files as quickly as possible.

Those seeking their information sometimes don't seem to know where to go and are being told their files may be kept in different parts, in different ministries, of the government. This, to me, seems to be pretty unfair. It seems to be unduly complicated, and it makes life very difficult for these residents.

Speaker, would the minister please tell us, when will the former residents be able to begin to access their files?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, the former residents have to be an integral part of the settlement process. It's absolutely necessary.

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They have one contact that they can make through the Ministry of Community and Social Services. They can contact Cate Parker at 416-327-6101 for assistance in accessing their records. Those records will be made available without any fees being charged at all. They are entitled to their records. Instructions have been given that those records be handed over to those residents.

We are doing whatever we can in order to make sure that the tentative settlement that was reached in September is finalized on December 3, because this case will be a template with respect to the other similar settlements

that we hope to arrange with respect to Southwestern Regional and Rideau Regional. These people have a right to know and have a right to access to their records.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Rick Nicholls: My question is to the Acting Premier. Last week, the Premier visited Leamington after Heinz announced it would be closing a plant. The Premier announced a small amount of money with no plan. In fact, she made an announcement in Windsor before telling the people of Leamington. I know the Premier doesn't know much about rural Ontario, but Windsor is almost an hour from Leamington.

The Premier's visit has done little to reassure the thousands of workers and growers and all of the families affected by the closure. One warehouse operator told me that he'll lose over \$1 million because of the closure.

When I invited the Premier to Leamington in an open letter, I thought she was going to meet with the real people affected by Heinz leaving town. Instead, she staged a photo op with dignitaries.

Will the Premier apologize for last Friday's photo op, and apologize to the people of Leamington for Liberal policies that are devastating my rural town?

Interjections.

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

Hon. Charles Sousa: The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: Mr. Speaker, I can't believe what I'm hearing from the member opposite. I'll tell you why: Last week, when I became aware that the Premier and I—and, obviously, the member from Windsor West—would be meeting with the good people of Leamington, with the political leadership, with the union representatives and with business people on the farm side and the non-farm supply chain, I immediately went to the member opposite and invited him to that meeting.

That meeting that he attended was obviously important enough to him to attend, and now he's describing it as a photo op. He was happy to be part of that photo op, that meeting which was so important, to announce Communities in Transition funds, which is a first step—that first \$200,000—so we could collectively develop a plan for that community so they could see their way forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Nicholls: Again, to the Acting Premier: The impact that the closure will have on Leamington's economy is massive, but nowhere close to the pain being felt by the families of Heinz employees. In Leamington, it's common for many generations of families to have worked for Heinz. Retired employees collecting their pensions from Heinz are worried about what happens next. Folks who were about to retire are worried about their future. Leamington's young people who were just starting their careers or saving up for school will be forced to look elsewhere. Families are scared, and they're pulling up roots and leaving Ontario.

You owe them an apology. Acting Premier, will you and the Premier apologize for crushing the hopes of Leamington's young people and for driving families away from Ontario?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: On this side, we're not going to apologize for working hard on behalf of the people of Leamington. We expect that the member opposite will apologize for that comment. He knows completely well that, before that announcement was made, I was on the phone with the mayor of Leamington; I've spoken with him numerous times. My staff have been in touch with the member opposite probably on a daily basis. That meeting last Friday was so important to the people of Leamington.

We need to take the politics out of this. We need to make sure that we're providing everything we can for the people of Leamington. I know how devastating it is to that local community, not just for the workers at that factory but for the entire community. The people who work on the farms and in supply are part of that supply chain—and the non-farm people.

I'm committed to doing everything humanly possible to help those people, and I expect the member opposite to do the same.

Interjections.

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

CHILD CARE CENTRES

Miss Monique Taylor: My question is to the Minister of Education. Unlicensed daycare inspections in Ontario have revealed a troubling number of violations: children sleeping in damp, airless rooms in soggy bedding or sitting in broken, unsanitary high chairs. What's worse, on November 13, there was another reported death of a nine-month-old toddler in an unlicensed daycare in Markham. This death, along with the death of Eva Ravikovich in Vaughan this year and the many others before her, are a troubling example of the policy this government is following in regard to unlicensed daycares.

Inspecting only when there's a complaint is too late and is resulting in tragic deaths. When will the minister act and provide some oversight of unlicensed daycares in Ontario so that parents can be sure that when they send their children to daycare that day, they will be well cared for?

Hon. Liz Sandals: I don't think we've had a question since the unfortunate death of the little baby girl. I can't think of anything more devastating than to lose an infant, so our hearts go out to the parents in this circumstance. In that particular case, I understand that the police automatically investigate whenever there is an infant death. My Ministry of Education officials have been working with the police and the coroner's office in that investigation. We have no further information. Obviously it is a matter that's actively under investigation to try and determine the cause of death. But we certainly do look forward to tabling new legislation which will—

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

Miss Monique Taylor: Back to the Minister of Education: There were 300 complaints to your ministry about unlicensed child care in the year before two-year-old Eva Ravikovich died in an illegal home daycare that was found to be filthy and overcrowded in Vaughan last July. You admitted that your ministry had not followed up on all complaints and now, while the Ombudsman is conducting an investigation into these serious allegations, another death of an innocent child.

The time to act is now. Will you, as the minister responsible for these children, bring oversight to unlicensed daycares in Ontario instead of ignoring complaints?

Hon. Liz Sandals: We have worked with our complaints people since then in terms of improving responsiveness to complaints. In fact, we are in the process of setting up a dedicated enforcement team to deal with the complaints to make sure that there is consistency and quick response in terms of reacting to the complaints.

We are also in the process of setting up a website so that parents can check and see, when they are considering a child care provider, if there is any record of complaint against that particular provider—substantiated complaints. In the interim, parents can call the Ministry of Education and check and see, if they're considering a private home daycare provider, whether there have been any—

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

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I am pleased to rise in the House today. My question is for the minister responsible for women's issues.

Violence against women is a serious issue that does not discriminate. Its victims can be poor or rich, educated or not, of any background. Intimate partner violence has been consistently identified as one of the most common forms of violence against women. Sadly, Statistics Canada indicates that over 6% of Ontario women have experienced domestic violence in the past five years.

It's important in my community of Scarborough—Guildwood and across Ontario that the government continues to play an active role in preventing violence against women. Can the minister inform the House what this government has done to raise awareness and prevent violence against women?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: I'd like to thank the member from Scarborough—Guildwood for her question and her advocacy on this important issue, one that we all know is still a timely issue that we continue to be engaged in.

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Mr. Speaker, today marks the United Nations' International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. I'd like to thank all the members in the House for wearing white ribbons and showing their support for this important day.

Our government believes it is every woman's fundamental right to live safely and securely in her home

and community, and we've backed up that belief with programs and policies aimed at ending violence against women. Our Domestic Violence Action Plan has raised awareness and strengthened both supports to victims and the justice system's response to these acts. Our Sexual Violence Action Plan works with community organizations to implement public education and training initiatives aimed at ending sexual violence. These important initiatives demonstrate our government's continuing commitment towards preventing women's abuse.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: Thank you, Minister, for that answer. I'm also pleased and would like to thank all members for wearing the white ribbons in a show of support for ending violence against women, and hopefully it spawns conversations that this must stop.

I'm pleased to hear that our government has taken action to prevent domestic and sexual violence against women. I know that these initiatives are having a positive impact on our local communities. Unfortunately, these acts of violence still do occur. When they do, women need to know that there are supports available to help them in their time of need. Our government has an important role to play in supporting and providing supports for abused women, with adequate levels of support. Minister, what is our government doing to support women who have been victims of violence?

Hon. Teresa Piruzza: Thank you, again, Speaker, we have taken action to strengthen support for women who are victims of violence. Since 2003, we have increased funding by 48% for community services that help victims of domestic violence. The funding has helped serve close to 12,000 women and 8,000 children in emergency shelters just last year.

We also continue to fund a program that provides employment training for abused and at-risk women. We know that economic security is closely tied to a woman's ability to leave an abusive partner. Since 2005, 1,800 women have built new lives for themselves and their families through this training. We've provided training to over 30,000 front-line workers to teach them how to recognize the signs of domestic violence.

We know there's more work to be done, Speaker. We remain committed to this issue, to working with our communities, our agencies and our employers to ensure that women remain safe.

JOB CREATION

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment. On Friday, we learned that CCL Container in Penetanguishene is closing its doors and heading to Mexico—170 more manufacturing jobs lost here in Ontario. It must be difficult for you to stand here every day and attempt to defend a government that only creates jobs in the public sector. Minister, we have to stop the exodus of good manufacturing and mining jobs to our southern neighbours. It's that simple.

So my question, Minister, is, when will you think outside the box and create policies that will actually create employment in the private sector? When will you listen to Tim Hudak and the PC caucus and listen to our policies?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I appreciate the question from the member opposite. With regards to CCL, of course, this is very difficult and unfortunate news for the workers and the families that are affected by these layoffs. It always is, Mr. Speaker, and I think we should remember that if there's ever a time that we should be non-partisan and make efforts to ensure that we do everything possible for these workers, including through my colleague the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, to provide job search and retraining opportunities for people across the province who unfortunately do lose their jobs—we need to invest in that. Obviously, we need to continue to do everything that we can to promote manufacturing in this province.

I remind people in this Legislature that there are roughly 800,000 people who are employed in manufacturing, and there are many cases where expansion is taking place and job creation is taking place. And that's contributing, in part, to the 500,000 full-time—80% of them in the private sector—jobs that we've created since the bottom of the recession.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Minister, maybe you can explain that answer to the mayor of the town of Penetanguishene, who's here today, and to the 170 families that won't have a very merry Christmas this year.

Ridiculous hydro rates, along with the global adjustment, excessive red tape and regulations in your environment and labour ministries, and a new boondoggle called the College of Trades are driving jobs and families away from our province. They should rename your ministry "the ministry of job losses and job creation in Mexico and the USA."

So it's another 170 jobs going to Mexico. Can you explain to the House today why any private sector company would ever set up in Ontario with your dismal policies?

Hon. Eric Hoskins: The difference between this side of the House and that, the official opposition, is that we don't denigrate our manufacturers and the employees who work with them. We believe in supporting them. In fact, the policy of the PC Party back in 2008 was not to support the auto sector. If the PC Party had had their way those years ago, we wouldn't have GM and we wouldn't have Chrysler in this province at all. The response and the policy of the PC Party a year ago, when we voted to create the Southwestern Ontario Development Fund, which together with the Eastern Ontario Development Fund has created and retained 22,000 jobs—that party opposite voted against it. The party opposite also voted against our \$300-million youth jobs strategy, which has placed 3,000 people in jobs already.

So, Mr. Speaker, I'm not taking any lessons from the party opposite. Their policy is not to support our manufacturers and not to support our employers.

Interjections.

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

RETIREMENT HOMES

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: My question is to the minister responsible for seniors. In 2010, the Liberal government assured Ontarians that their regulatory scheme for retirement homes would finally offer the protection that seniors desperately need. Yet instead of moving forward with a strong system of protection, the government chose to bring forward a regulatory system that was filled with loopholes and problems. Seniors like those who are living at the In Touch retirement home continue to be the ones paying the price for this lack of oversight, as the Toronto Star continues to document.

Will the minister finally take action to protect these seniors?

Hon. Mario Sergio: Let me thank the member for her question. Let me say this: Every senior in Ontario deserves to be living with dignity and respect in a safe and secure environment. That is why the province of Ontario was the first one to regulate every retirement home in Ontario. As of today, within some 700 retirement homes, 689 are already within the law. They are operating with the proper licence.

Let me say that the In Touch residential home was living completely out of touch. We have taken all the necessary action within the guidelines—the standards—of the Retirement Homes Act. We have been on top of this house continually. That is why the tribunal agreed with us to take away the licence from this particular house.

It is our belief—it is mine; it is the one of this government—that every senior in Ontario deserves the best, and we are doing the very best because every house is being regulated.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: This government isn't doing their very best, and they are out of touch when it comes to seniors' issues.

The Toronto Star has been raising alarm bells about the fact that even when a retirement home operator loses its licence, there is still nothing in the legislation that allows follow-up of this order or a smooth transfer of residents to a better home. The Retirement Homes Regulatory Authority registrar, Mary Beth Valentine, is quoted in the Star saying, "There is a clear problem with the legislation in that it does not require (follow-up) and it does put us in a more difficult situation."

Does the minister have a plan to protect these vulnerable seniors, or will he allow them to languish in unsafe conditions or even face homelessness?

Hon. Mario Sergio: It is very sad that after everything we have done for our seniors, with the legislation that we have introduced and passed—we were the first province to introduce legislation to combat elder abuse. We have instituted a zero policy. We have approved and installed in every retirement home the residents' bill of

rights. It is very sad. That is why the tribunal has agreed with us and this shows—Speaker, it's sending a very strong and direct message to every member of the House and to every retirement home out there that our system and our laws are working, and that is why we are here today: to protect our seniors.

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I will continue to take a look at the present legislation. It may not be the best in the world, but let me remind the member and every member of this House that it's very fresh. It has been in operation for merely one year, and we have come a long way in providing our seniors with the best protection there is. We are very proud and I'm very proud that we'll continue to provide the best care for our seniors—

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

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Ms. Soo Wong: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. Modern technology makes it possible to share ideas and information faster than ever before. In my riding of Scarborough–Agincourt, I regularly hear from residents talking about the need for governments to engage with the public in entirely new and more meaningful ways. It's my understanding that improving citizens' engagement and increasing dialogue with Ontario residents is a priority for this government.

In October, the Premier and the Minister of Government Services announced our Open Government Initiative. As part of this initiative, the engagement team will be travelling Ontario and hearing from citizens.

Speaker, through you to the minister, can he describe the engagement process, some of the places the team will be visiting and the work that has been done to date by the team?

Hon. John Milloy: I thank the member for her question. It is very important that we look at new ways of engaging Ontarians on many of the challenges that are facing our province.

As members know, through the Premier, we invited renowned experts and innovative thinkers to be part of the Open Government engagement team. The team members were chosen because of their individual expertise and talent. They are engaging with the public in a variety of ways, including using digital tools and traditional face-to-face town hall meetings around the province.

In fact, one of these meetings is being held today at Ryerson University here in Toronto. The Open Government engagement team will meet in the Digital Media Zone from 6 to 9 p.m. People can register for the event at opengov@ontario.ca or they can just show up. These consultations will help inform the team's report, which will include recommendations for the implementation of Open Government initiatives in Ontario, and we hope to make the report public next spring.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Soo Wong: I thank the minister for that response. It looks like Ontario is embracing Open Government. This will mean that our government will be more responsive and accessible to the people of this province. I know that across the province, residents are pleased to see government being more open, accessible and responsive.

I understand that the Open Government engagement team is made up of leading thinkers, innovators and members of the tech community. Speaker, through you to the minister, can he share with the House the credentials of the engagement team members?

Hon. John Milloy: We have a very talented group, including Dr. Don Lenihan; he's the chair of the team. He's an internationally recognized expert on democracy and public engagement, accountability and service delivery. He is an adviser and educator to senior public servants and a prolific author.

Another member, Leslie Church, leads global communications and public affairs for Google Canada.

David Eaves, another member, works with companies and government on strategy and innovation. He has been invited to speak to or consult for organizations like Code for America, the White House Presidential Innovation Fellows, and the World Bank.

Of course, members will know Norm Sterling, a former member of this Legislature, a cabinet minister and someone who is intimately involved in the development of our province's access to information system.

Ray Sharma, another member, is the founder and president of XMG Studio Inc., Canada's largest independent mobile games developer. I don't have time here to describe all the members of the team, but I think you get the flavour of who's on that team. We look forward to their work and their report.

TEACHERS

Mr. Rob Leone: My question is for the Minister of Education. While the NDP continues to stand behind the Premier's wrong-headed approach to teacher hiring, the PCs stand alone in wanting a fair and transparent process that ensures that principals can hire the best teachers for our students.

One principal from Sudbury says the following: "I've had to hire people that I would have otherwise not selected. I've missed out on the chance to bring first-rate people in because they don't sit in the 'top five' eligible candidates list. We're a small board, so word gets around quickly as to who is a five-star candidate and who is not. I find it counter-intuitive that we would accept any policy that would inhibit us from putting who we assess to be the best possible candidate in front of students." This is from a principal in Sudbury.

Can the Minister of Education tell Ontario principals why she does not trust them to put the best teachers in front of our students?

Hon. Liz Sandals: We actually value our principals. Our principals are absolutely key to the education sys-

tem. When principals are leading their schools, as you well know, Speaker, they are actually the key to turning around schools, to make sure that schools have a safe and accepting school climate. Absolutely, the work that our principals do in schools is key.

In fact, we have worked with our principals over the last six or eight months to come to agreements with our principals' associations. We are currently doing a study with our principals on principal workload and professionalism. So we, in fact, have a very warm relationship with our principals.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, since the minister doesn't think that principals are up to the job, she should listen to parents. One principal from Ottawa writes the following regarding regulation 274: "Parents are justifiably angry. They have no patience for the length of time it takes to fill a vacancy. HR cannot keep up with the demands this mandate puts on them."

Minister, it might surprise you, but parents want to be able to have a say in which teachers are in front of their kids. The collective bargaining process that you have outlined in Bill 122 shuts out the concerns of parents. Parents know what's best for their children, yet you're not giving them an outlet to express their concerns through their MPPs.

This is not simply about your stance on regulation 274. It's the message that your stance sends to parents, principals and new teachers alike. Minister, reconsider that stance. Repeal regulation 274, or the PC caucus has no reason to support Bill 122.

Hon. Liz Sandals: Now we get to the heart of the matter. We have the government opposite, or the party opposite, that's on record as saying that they don't want to work with unions, refusing to support collective bargaining legislation that will improve the relationship with both employer boards and unions. So we now get to the heart of it.

They're hiding behind reg 274, which my critic says we snuck into legislation. Again, I think they have a challenge with reading, Speaker, because the legislation, which they supported, said that it would implement the MOU signed with OECTA, and if they had read the MOU that was signed with OECTA, they would have seen that it had the wording in reg 274 embedded in it. They voted for it.

HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Minister of Consumer Services. Most of the Tarion Warranty Corp.'s funding comes from Ontario's homeowners, but Tarion does not answer to consumers; it answers to the developers it is supposed to regulate. Tarion spends consumer money on lawyers in order to fight consumers at the Licence Appeal Tribunal while protecting builders.

Tarion has a CEO, a COO and nine vice-presidents but, as far as we can tell, zero proper building inspectors. The average compensation at Tarion is over \$100,000 per

year, and Tarion even uses consumer enrolment fees to host an annual awards banquet that celebrates builders.

My question is, is Tarion another Ornge? If not, will the government make Tarion open up its books and prove it?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: I thank the member opposite for the question. I just want to acknowledge, and I believe the member opposite knows, that Tarion has made substantial changes to its operations in consumer protection in recent years. But I do acknowledge there's always room for improvement, and I expect Tarion to continue to look for ways to improve customer service.

It has committed to providing new ways to be transparent and increase the value of information that they provide. I have met with Tarion leadership. Speaker, it's very important to note that very recently, Tarion made changes to its operations. In fact, it changed the board composition such that it's now equal as to industry and consumer reps.

I'll continue to work with Tarion very closely to make sure that they provide the best possible customer service to their clients, the people who are warranted under this program.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The only change this government has made in 37 years, seven or eight years ago, was to add four appointees by the government. That's the only change you made. Nothing else has happened. It's still controlled by developers. Tarion is the only delegated authority with the power to create its own regulations without government approval—the only one.

The province forces homebuyers to buy warranty protection from Tarion but does nothing to ensure that consumers get value for their money. The Ontario Ombudsman cannot investigate Tarion, and the Auditor General cannot investigate Tarion. When will the minister reform Tarion into an agency that protects consumers instead of builders?

Hon. Tracy MacCharles: Speaker, my understanding is that when the NDP were in power, they did nothing to reform Tarion.

Let's look at what this government has done to reform Tarion. We formed a new consumer advisory council; we created the role of the new homebuyer ombudsperson, to create an independent review for homeowners; and we made changes to the major structural defect warranty in the three-to-seven-year category.

The member knows that, as an independent, not-for-profit corporation that does not receive government funding—the new home warranty act does not provide the authority to request an audit. However, if this Legislature determines that the Auditor General should be asked to provide a third party audit of some kind, I will of course respect the will of the Legislature and I will fully welcome the recommendations of a report.

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

The House recessed from 1141 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Introduction of guests. Introduction of guests. Introduction of guests. Government House leader.

Hon. John Milloy: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I was stalling, hoping they would arrive. I have a group from my riding, from Forest Heights Collegiate, that is with us today at Queen's Park. I met with them at lunchtime, and they'll be joining us in the gallery any moment, so I'd like to welcome them to the Legislature.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

TEACHERS

Mr. Rob Leone: I want to take some time today to recognize three teachers from Waterloo region—one from my riding of Cambridge—who bravely stood up and did the right thing earlier this year.

When unions were demanding that their teachers strike and work to rule, these teachers chose to focus on what was best for the students. They chose to uphold the honour of their profession, rather than succumbing to the bullying tactics of so-called "solidarity." At a time when bullying has become a focus of real concern in the province and in the country, these teachers chose to stand up to the intimidating forces around them and stand by the values of a profession in which they take pride.

Unfortunately, the union leadership did not see it that way. It was recently reported that these teachers would be punished through public shaming. If naming and shaming these teachers, who have the strength of character to stand for what's right, isn't bullying, I don't know what is. What kind of lesson is this reaction teaching our kids who observe it?

Good teachers are so important to our education system in this province. We all know, as former students and as parents, how much of an impact good teaching can have on our lives and our futures. These Waterloo region teachers chose to be role models for their students, prioritizing learning in the classroom over political posturing, and for that, I want to sincerely thank them.

POLAR SPLASH

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I rise today to recognize a pretty cool event that took place in my hometown of Belle River over the weekend. The fifth annual Polar Splash took place at the Belle River Beach, proceeds benefitting the Community Support Centre and the Lakeshore Community Food Bank. Their mission is to give hope to each and every person affected by disability, unemployment or stress, to provide a wraparound approach to community care.

In 2009, the first annual Polar Splash dip took place. They raised \$7,000. In 2010, as their clientele grew past Lakeshore and Essex, they expanded the community

support to bring seniors together to share lunches and soup twice a week. In 2011, they celebrated 28 years by introducing a new program, including the rollout of a countywide dialysis transportation model. And in 2012, their hours of service went up 13,000 from the previous year, to over 53,000.

While other service groups' budgets' administrative costs go as high as 27%, Community Support Centre's is around 4.1% of their budget, making them a tremendously effective deliverer of public service and support services in our community.

I want to thank and congratulate all the participants who took the brave dip into the frigid waters of Lake St. Clair—it was quite icy—and congratulate the organizers and committee members: Tracey Bailey, who is a good friend of mine; Rene G. Roy, who is a community leader; and Lyle Morris, who headed up the committee to organize it. It's a great time, for a great cause, and I want to congratulate them.

BRUCE HOUSE

Mr. John Fraser: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the 25th anniversary of Bruce House, an important organization in the riding of my colleague the member from Ottawa Centre. This is a remarkable organization that provides compassionate care and support to those living with HIV and AIDS in our community. Their work is based on the belief that everyone has the right to live and die with dignity.

Bruce House is led by Jay Koornstra, who took over as executive director in 2001. He's well known in our Ottawa community as a long-time advocate for the LGBTQ community and a passionate supporter for those who have been affected by HIV and AIDS. He leads a caring and compassionate staff who work hard every day to make life a little easier for their patients.

Bruce House's longevity is truly a testament to the kind of care they provide. This Saturday, November 25, they will celebrate this important milestone with a special evening of music and celebration, featuring the Capital Chordettes and the Ottawa Gay Men's Chorus, at the Church of the Ascension in Ottawa.

Bruce House has helped to better the lives of patients living with HIV and AIDS in Ottawa and, in doing so, has created a more inclusive community that benefits us all.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the staff and their volunteers at Bruce House and thank them for all their hard work.

BRUCE POWER

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: Today, I am pleased to stand and talk about some good job news in my riding of Huron–Bruce. Bruce Power is a public-private partnership that has their 2,300-acre nuclear generator site on the shores of Lake Huron in my riding.

On November 21, Waterstone Human Capital named Bruce Power as one of Canada's most admired corporate cultures. Bruce Power was awarded the nomination to Canada's 10 Most Admired Corporate Cultures under the Enterprise category. The company was recognized for corporate social responsibility, organizational performance, cultural alignment, and vision and leadership.

As their president and CEO, Duncan Hawthorne, proudly noted, Bruce Power was given this award because, over the company's 12 years, they have created a workplace that not only strives to be a leader in the nuclear field but also focuses on safety, local communities and recognizing employees for great performances.

However, this award applauds more than just an excellent corporate culture. Bruce Power is an example of an outstanding public-private partnership. Public-private partnerships in energy sectors allow for stable, sustainable, long-term growth by bringing private sector expertise and efficiency into the industry.

Bruce Power's public-private partnership model has secured \$7 billion in private investments into public assets and enabled the company to thrive and Ontario to realize a stable, affordable source of energy.

This is great news. Congratulations to Bruce Power and its employees.

CENTRE 55

Mr. Michael Prue: I rise today to talk about Centre 55, which is a social support agency in the riding of Beaches–East York. Every year, they do such wonderful work around a whole broad range of issues, but I just want to talk about two of them.

This past Sunday was the Santa Claus parade that Centre 55 organized along Kingston Road. There were literally thousands upon thousands of kids out there, along with their families, to watch Santa and to get some of the treats that were being passed out.

But Centre 55 is really gearing up for what is called Share a Christmas. They have a mascot called Hamper the Reindeer, and they give out Christmas hampers to families in Beaches–East York that are in need.

Every year, hundreds of volunteers come together to sort the food and all of the goods that are being given away inside of the hampers. They even know if a family has a pet. There's even a little something for each of the pets in the distribution.

Centre 55 is located at 97 Main Street. Their telephone number is 416-691-1113, extension 226. You can call Cameron, Evonne or Nancy. They're looking for volunteers, and they're going to have a delivery on December 22 to the families. Anyone who can give them support before that time is greatly needed.

HAMILTON TIGER-CATS

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I rise in the House today to congratulate the Hamilton Tiger-Cats on a very success-

ful season. Despite the unfortunate loss last night to a great team in Saskatchewan, the Ticats turned around their season, winning the last four games, and they made Ontario very proud by making it to the 101st Grey Cup. After upsetting the Argos last week, the declared underdogs won that game 36-24, claimed the Eastern Division title, and made it to the championship game.

This year, a team with 18 CFL rookies on the roster spent many hours commuting to and from a temporary stadium at the University of Guelph.

The Ticats came a long way, and overcame many odds and many injuries. In the first 40 years of the team's history, they qualified for the playoffs every year, aside from three, and they won seven Grey Cup championships. In 1972, they made the list of being one of only four teams to claim that championship at home. Since 1990, the team has only qualified for the playoffs 10 times and won the Grey Cup once, in 1999.

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Making it to this year's Grey Cup was a huge accomplishment, something we should all celebrate. We can't wait for next year's season, when the Ticats will be playing in the newly retrofitted stadium, Tim Hortons Field.

So congratulations, Ticats, on overcoming the odds and representing Ontario. They made us very proud.

EMILY MacDONALD

Mr. Jim McDonell: I'm pleased to rise today to honour a grand lady in my riding of Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry who was born on Gore Road south of Williamstown in 1904. Emily MacDonald, who lived in her own house on William Street in Williamstown until she was almost 105, celebrated her 109th birthday on November 5 at Maxville Manor, surrounded by friends and family.

Emily MacDonald was one of nine children and the second-eldest of two daughters born to noted Glengarry athlete John Kenneth Alexander MacDonald and Flora MacDonald, who were married in St. Raphael's. Emily never married and stayed in Williamstown to care for her ailing mother, afterwards joining her brother in Connecticut and working there in the health care sector until 1970, when she returned to Williamstown.

Emily, who is as sharp as a tack, talks of many events and changes that have occurred over her long and rewarding life. She recalls the day her father went off to defend our country in the First World War and remembers how her mother cried over his departure.

After returning to Glengarry, Emily soon became involved in her parish, the Ladies' Guild and other organizations, but always preferred to stay out of the limelight. I always remember Emily standing at the table at the parish supper, handing out food well into her 90s. She's a great fan of Celtic and Scottish music, and loved to dance and garden, and still enjoys socializing, laughter and fun.

I certainly am honoured to have had Emily as a neighbour of mine, and I look forward to celebrating many more birthdays. Happy birthday, Emily.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Phil McNeely: I want to bring renewed attention and to call for greater action to be taken to protect our environment. Just last week, we heard that Canada ranked last on a list of the world's 27 wealthiest countries for its environmental record. Another report ranked Canada's federal efforts to tackle greenhouse gases 55th out of 58 countries, just barely ahead of Iran, Kazakhstan and Saudi Arabia.

This past year, carbon dioxide levels in our atmosphere passed 400 parts per million. The CO₂ level continues to rise faster and faster. We cannot sit back and continue to emit greenhouse gases the way we do. It's time all countries lowered their emissions. We must think of our children's and our grandchildren's future and that of our wonderful environment.

One of the most significant ways Ontario has reduced carbon emissions was our government's decision to get out of coal. No other national or subnational government has taken as big a step as Ontario in reducing our collective carbon footprint. When Mr. Gore was here last week, he said that future generations will ask, "How did you find the moral courage to act against climate change?" And part of the answer will be: "Ontario and Ontarians led the way."

Last month, this government passed my private member's motion to implement home energy efficiency disclosures. In a few years, Ontario could have most of our homes energy-efficient. Home energy efficiency disclosures in Ontario will help to further reduce our carbon footprint by creating employment and saving Ontarians dollars.

It's time the federal government follows Ontario's lead on getting the rest of Canada out of coal and reducing our carbon footprint.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. John O'Toole: On November 7, I had the opportunity to attend the fifth annual Clarington Energy Summit, hosted by Ontario Power Generation and the Clarington Board of Trade. Those community leaders in attendance learned more about the ongoing planning for the energy projects in Durham. Most importantly, we gained in-depth knowledge of the Darlington nuclear refurbishment project, and it's my hope that this project goes ahead on time and on schedule.

However, the recent cancellation by Premier Wynne of the new build, which would have created thousands more jobs, was a very serious disappointment in the community. As well as providing safe, reliable and carbon-friendly energy, nuclear energy is very comparable on the positive side when compared to unreliable renewables.

Key energy companies were represented, featuring Dietmar Reiner, senior vice-president of nuclear refurbishment at OPG; Howard Titus, the facilities manager at Covanta Durham-York's energy-from-waste project; Daniel Hoornweg, professor at UOIT and chief safety

and risk officer for the province of Ontario at TSSA; as well as Amir Shalaby, who is the vice-president of power systems planning at the Ontario Power Association, whom I questioned on the new long-term energy plan: Why this cancellation at this time? Stephen Somerville, VP of Competitive Power Ventures, was another very admirable presenter.

Mr. Speaker, it's very true that energy is the strength of Ontario; it's also the strength of the economy. The plan they are on right now with this government is simply wrong. We've seen it with job losses throughout Ontario. They have—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Thank you. I thank all members for their comments.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Standing order 63(a) provides that “the Standing Committee on Estimates shall present one report with respect to all of the estimates and supplementary estimates considered pursuant to standing orders 60 and 62 no later than the third Thursday in November of each calendar year.”

The House not having received a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates for certain ministries and offices on Thursday, November 21, 2013, as required by the standing orders of this House, pursuant to standing order 63(b), the estimates before the committee of the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs; Ministry of Energy; Ministry of Education; Ministry of Infrastructure; Ministry of Children and Youth Services; Office of Francophone Affairs; and Ministry of Consumer Services are deemed to be passed by the committee and are deemed to be reported to and received by the House.

Report deemed received.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CAPPING TOP PUBLIC SECTOR SALARIES ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 SUR LE PLAFONNEMENT DES HAUTS TRAITEMENTS DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

Ms. Horwath moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 136, An Act to cap the top public sector salaries /
Projet de loi 136, Loi plafonnant les hauts traitements du
secteur public.

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

First reading agreed to.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, once again I'm introducing a bill that enacts the Capping Top Public Sector Salaries Act, 2013. Under this act, a public sector employee's salary shall not exceed the amount that is twice the Premier's annual salary. Exceptions, of course, are provided for salaries that were established before the bill comes into force, because we don't tear up contracts; for salaries that are established under collective agreements, because we don't tear up those kinds of contracts either; and for salaries of employees that are prescribed by regulation for work of a scientific or technical nature.

This is several times now that I've introduced this concept, and I hope I can get Liberals and Conservatives to actually support it this time.

PAVED SHOULDER CONSTRUCTION AND BICYCLING ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LA CONSTRUCTION D'ACCOTEMENTS STABILISÉS ET LA CIRCULATION DES BICYCLETTES

Mr. Norm Miller moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 137, An Act to amend the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act and the Highway Traffic Act to construct paved shoulders and permit bicycles to ride on them /
Projet de loi 137, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement des voies publiques et des transports en commun et le Code de la route pour construire des accotements stabilisés et permettre aux bicyclettes d'y circuler.

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. Norm Miller: The bill amends the Public Transportation and Highway Improvement Act to require the Minister of Transportation to construct paved shoulders on prescribed portions of the King's highway. The minister is required to construct paved shoulders on prescribed portions of the King's highway when there is a significant undertaking to repave or resurface that portion. However, the minister is not required to construct a paved shoulder where doing so would be impractical. These paved shoulders must be at least one metre wide and must be marked with a sign warning drivers to watch out and share the road with pedestrians and cyclists.

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The bill also amends the Highway Traffic Act to allow bicycles to be ridden on paved shoulders.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. In introduction of bills, I missed the last rotation. Minister of the Environment.

ENDING COAL FOR
CLEANER AIR ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR
L'ABANDON DU CHARBON
POUR UN AIR PLUS PROPRE

Mr. Bradley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 138, An Act to amend the Environmental Protection Act to require the cessation of coal use to generate electricity at generation facilities / Projet de loi 138, Loi modifiant la Loi sur la protection de l'environnement pour exiger la cessation de l'utilisation du charbon pour produire de l'électricité dans les installations de production.

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. James J. Bradley: I'll make my statement during the time allocated for ministerial statements.

TARION ACCOUNTABILITY
AND OVERSIGHT ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR
LA RESPONSABILISATION
ET LA SURVEILLANCE DE TARION

Mr. Marchese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 139, An Act to amend various Acts in respect of the corporation designated under the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act / Projet de loi 139, Loi modifiant diverses lois à l'égard de la société désignée en application de la Loi sur le Régime de garanties des logements neufs 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. Rosario Marchese: The Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act is amended to provide that the minister responsible for that act shall appoint the majority of Tarion's board members. The minister and Tarion are required to enter into an accountability agreement.

Tarion's objects are extended to include serving as a consumer protection agency. Tarion is required to publish a directory of home builders on the Internet, and the directory must contain specified information about each builder's performance.

The definition of "home" in the Ontario New Home Warranties Plan Act is amended to include units in conversion condominiums, and warranties in respect of specified matters related to condominiums are extended from one year to five years.

The Auditor General is given the authority to audit Tarion's operations, and the Ombudsman Act is amended

to permit the Ombudsman to conduct investigations in respect of Tarion.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY
AND RESPONSES

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm standing today to strengthen this government's commitment to fighting climate change and to protecting the environment and the health of the people of the province of Ontario. I have the honour of introducing legislation that, if passed, would ensure that the health and environmental benefits of prohibiting coal use in Ontario are protected by legislation.

Ontario's phase-out of coal-fired electricity is the single largest greenhouse gas reduction initiative in all of North America. Ending coal use is a decisive step that has led former US vice-president Al Gore to call Ontario a world leader in fighting climate change. Ending coal in Ontario means we will all have cleaner air to breathe, while saving the people of Ontario \$4.4 billion a year in health, financial and environmental costs.

As stewards of the environment and guardians of our province's future, we believe that prohibiting coal use in Ontario is the right course to take. Ontario's elimination of coal-fired electricity generation is equivalent to taking up to seven million cars off the road.

I'm proposing this legislation, the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act, to ensure that once the power generating facilities at Atikokan, Lambton, Nanticoke and Thunder Bay stop burning coal, coal-fired generation in Ontario will remain a practice of the past.

This legislation would, if passed by the assembly, prohibit the use of coal at stand-alone generating facilities in Ontario after December 31, 2014, thereby preventing new stand-alone coal-fired generating facilities in Ontario. We have industrial facilities in Ontario that use coal for production purposes but not for the primary purpose of generating electricity. Facilities of this type would not be subject to the prohibition.

Other jurisdictions have also recognized the high environmental and health costs of coal-fired generation and are beginning to phase out coal use. At the recent COP 19 meetings in Warsaw, the United Kingdom and the United States announced their intention to stop funding coal projects in developing countries. The dirty coal era is coming to an end not only in Ontario; it is beginning to happen on a global scale.

Here in Ontario, we have taken the lead on ending coal-fired generation. Our actions and the actions of other governments are being taken because people's health and the stability of our planet's climate are in jeopardy.

Combating climate change is not an easy task. It has been called the defining issue of our time, and it threatens not only Ontario's economy and growth but that of all nations. It is truly a global issue. Many of the recent

weather events around the world are being attributed by scientists to a rise in ocean temperature, a direct result of too many greenhouse gases in our planet's atmosphere.

It is this government's commitment to fight climate change and to protect public health that has inspired us to introduce this bill. I encourage all members of this House to stand with us in supporting this proposed legislation.

DIABETES

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, November is Diabetes Awareness Month in Canada. This gives us the opportunity to raise awareness about diabetes and diabetes prevention in Ontario. It's also an opportunity to thank the many health care providers who work tirelessly to provide high-quality care to people living with diabetes and pre-diabetes, and who help us deliver the Ontario diabetes strategy.

Later today, I'll be attending the Queen's Park reception hosted by the Canadian Diabetes Association, and I hope all MPPs are able to join us.

The Canadian Diabetes Association is a remarkable advocate for people with diabetes. They provide education to health care professionals, they support research, and they help translate that research into practical applications. I know that we have many representatives from the Canadian Diabetes Association in the chamber with us. Thank you to volunteers and staff at the Canadian Diabetes Association for all that you do.

Diabetes is a chronic disease that can cause serious complications like blindness, kidney disease, heart disease and amputation, if not managed properly. The Canadian Diabetes Association estimates there are nearly 1.4 million people in Ontario who have been diagnosed with diabetes. That's nearly 10% of the population. It represents some \$5.6 billion in estimated direct and indirect costs to the health care system, and that number is growing rapidly. By 2020, it's estimated that the number of people living with diabetes will reach almost two million, with an estimated cost of \$7 billion to the health care system.

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To date, there are no known ways to prevent type 1 diabetes; however, research is clear that for many people the risk of type 2 diabetes can be delayed or prevented through healthy eating, weight management and exercise.

Fortunately, both type 1 and type 2 diabetes can be managed to result in better health outcomes. One way we're helping to manage the disease is by funding insulin pumps. I'm proud to say that in 2006, Ontario became the first province to fully fund insulin pumps for children and youth with type 1 diabetes. The program was expanded to include adults with type 1 diabetes in September 2008. So far, the program has provided more than 15,000 Ontarians with funding for the purchase of insulin pumps and related supplies.

We also provide an annual grant to seniors who take insulin by injection, and under the Monitoring for Health Program administered by the Canadian Diabetes Associa-

tion, Ontario residents receive funding for the equipment and supplies used to test blood glucose levels.

To improve health outcomes for people living with diabetes in Ontario, our government announced the Ontario Diabetes Strategy in 2008. Through this strategy, we've made investments aimed at reducing the risk and prevalence of diabetes, we've provided greater support to people to help manage their diabetes, and we've improved access to and the quality of diabetes services and care in Ontario.

I'm proud to say that the strategy has an impressive list of accomplishments. As of June 2010, 100% of Ontarians with diabetes who wished to have a primary care provider—a doctor or a nurse practitioner—now have one. We've established diabetes regional coordination centres in each of the 14 LHINs to coordinate diabetes services and foster the adoption of clinical best practices in diabetes management. We've provided diabetes self-management skills training to over 8,000 individuals and over 7,250 health care providers.

We've established six centres for complex diabetes care. They provide a one-stop shop for specialized patient-centred care and treatment for people with diabetes who have multiple medical conditions and complex health needs. Speaker, I've had the pleasure of visiting three of our centres for complex diabetes care, and I can tell you they are making a tremendous difference in the lives of those they serve.

And we've put in place community-based diabetes prevention initiatives that have reached more than 62,000 individuals who are at high risk of developing type 2 diabetes.

While we've come a long way, there's still more we can and must do to help those affected by diabetes to lead healthier lives. Diabetes prevention and management are two of the most important components of diabetes care, and our government is committed to working on both those fronts to improve the health of Ontarians.

Our improvements to diabetes care align with all three pillars of our action plan for health care: We're helping people with diabetes to live healthier lives to prevent or better manage diabetes; we're making sure that those with diabetes have a primary care provider; and by funding specialized regional programs, we're making sure that people get the right care at the right time and in the right place closer to home.

During Diabetes Awareness Month, let's all be reminded of the importance of a healthy lifestyle, physical activity and the need to better manage our health if we live with diabetes so we can prevent or delay its serious consequences.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Statements by ministries? Last call for statements by ministries.

It is now time for responses.

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Mr. Michael Harris: I'm pleased to rise today in response to the Ending Coal for Cleaner Air Act. As most Ontarians know, phasing out coal-powered electricity has

been a commitment made by all three parties in this Legislature, starting with the regulation issued by our party, the PC Party, more than a decade ago to close down the Lakeview generating station.

Under the Liberals, however, progress on this file has moved quite slowly. Just consider the timing of what we're discussing here today. The Liberals first promised they would shut down all the province's coal plants by 2007—yes, 2007. But here we are: It's 2013, and the job still won't be done until the end of next year.

Our party has said from the start that all this file needs is leadership. But here we are addressing a bill that would seem to be nothing more than further Liberal green-washing.

Let me tell you why that's the case. At the government press conference with Al Gore last Thursday, the Premier said that legislation banning coal was necessary, yet she also admitted that this bill was a "symbolic move." Here's the problem: The people of Ontario do not expect their Premier to symbolize leadership; they expect their Premier to take a leadership role. That's why I found it quite peculiar that the Premier said nothing about how the province could work with industry to reduce private sector coal use. The government could easily move forward on this issue by allowing cement companies to use alternative fuels in their kilns, but we didn't hear anything about that. We just watched the Premier pat herself on the back for a bill that she said will symbolize the government's commitment to fight climate change.

Given the Premier's rhetoric last week, it would seem that the Liberals are once again testing the waters on their job-killing cap-and-trade scheme. This time they're trying to whip up support by tabling what the Premier has called symbolic legislation.

I am looking forward to reading the minister's bill to see if he actually included anything in it other than symbolism.

DIABETES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm really pleased to rise today to speak about Diabetes Awareness Month on behalf of the PC caucus. November, of course, marks Diabetes Awareness Month, and November 14 is World Diabetes Day.

In Canada there are roughly 2.6 million people living with diabetes, and it's estimated that one in every 10 people around the world will have diabetes by 2035.

Diabetes can be controlled with proper education and management, but without the proper tools, serious and costly complications of diabetes are responsible for over 80% of diabetes health care costs.

We must ensure that people living with diabetes have the tools they need, like diabetic test strips, to be able to effectively manage their health. Cuts to these tools, such as this government has done by limiting test strips, hurt patients as well as creating more long-term costs to the system.

Ultimately, if diabetes goes undiagnosed, which often happens, or is poorly managed, blood glucose levels will

remain elevated, which gradually damages organs and can cause other complications, like blindness. However, with proper management, diabetes does not have to be life-changing. Proper education, physical activity, nutrition, weight management, medication, lifestyle management and watching your blood pressure all help to reduce the risks of complications from diabetes. Organizations like the Canadian Diabetes Association help patients learn to live with and manage their disease so they can live normal lives. The association provides important information and support services that help people to navigate diabetes.

The Canadian Diabetes Association has also created an online awareness campaign called Who Are You Fighting For?, which encourages individuals to share their diabetes story or stories of individuals that inspire them in the fight against diabetes. People can visit fightingdiabetes.ca to learn more.

In conclusion, I would like to thank those who are in the gallery today representing the Canadian Diabetes Association and thank all of your members for the important work that you do in our communities each and every day.

COAL-FIRED GENERATING STATIONS

Mr. Jonah Schein: I'd like to take the opportunity this afternoon to respond to the minister's statement on ending coal for cleaner air. Today the minister has introduced a bill to ban the use of coal as a source of electricity. I would say that the people in this province expect us to be leaders when it comes to protecting our health and our environment, so it's good news that this government says they will finally stop burning dirty coal for energy, 10 years after they first promised to shut down coal-fired power plants in Ontario.

The people of this province have paid a significant cost for the government's failure to act sooner. According to the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, up to 250 deaths each year are directly related to burning coal. Our leading scientists, of course, continue to warn us that Ontario continues to fail to meet our commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

As we know, this government has mismanaged the energy file, and it's not just a cost to our health and to our environment. We've also paid a considerable financial cost for this government's poor energy choices. The decision to move the gas plants in Mississauga and Oakville—plants that were supposed to help facilitate the transition from coal to more renewable, sustainable energy sources—was a disaster, and these private power plant scandals cost the people of this province over a billion dollars. This is money that should have been invested in renewable energy, in energy conservation, in public transit and in our health care system, but instead the government used a billion dollars of public money to save five Liberal seats.

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Countless scandals and broken promises by this government have shaken the confidence of people across Ontario. So we will need to examine this rather thick bill

very carefully to make sure that this legislation is effective and will meet the needs of the people of Ontario. Today's bill aims to legislate existing policy, is my understanding. Given this government's penchant to govern in secrecy behind closed doors, New Democrats welcome the opportunity to read this bill and to debate it publicly in our Legislature and to take steps to push for strong legislation in Ontario that protects our environment.

DIABETES

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's my pleasure to add my two cents on Diabetes Awareness Month, le Mois de la sensibilisation au diabète. That's the month of November. November 14 was actually the international day for diabetes awareness, and the month of November is coming to an end.

First of all, I want to thank all of the volunteers from the Canadian Diabetes Association who are at Queen's Park today. They are doing phenomenal work at educating people like me and all the MPPs in this House as well as the people we work with as to what it means to have diabetes and how we can improve the lives of people living with diabetes.

The statistics are horrendous: 1.4 million of us, 10% of the people of Ontario, have diabetes. If you come to some of the First Nations communities where I come from, multiply this by three and five times; rather than 10%, you're talking about 30%. In some First Nations communities, 50% of the members are living with diagnosed diabetes.

We can do better. How do we do this? First of all, we'll listen to the good advice of the Canadian Diabetes Association, which just did a ton of work to release their new clinical practice guidelines. Those guidelines are worth looking at. Go on their website. Whether you are someone living with diabetes or someone helping someone living with diabetes, go to guidelinesdiabetes.ca. It is a wealth of information. It is easy to use. It will make a difference.

The government has invested quite a bit in diabetes through the diabetes network and the diabetes strategy, but most of it has been focused on treating the disease once it already develops. There is so much more we could do if we were to focus on prevention, on helping people to stay healthy, helping people in health promotion and disease prevention, because, as has been said before, if we can get people to eat healthy food, have a healthy weight and do a little bit of exercise, 90% of this 1.4 million who have type 2 diabetes would have a chance to be disease-free, because all of the horrific things we hear about diabetes, like amputations and blindness, are when the diabetes is poorly managed. We can do better. We can have interdisciplinary care. We can follow the practice guidelines from the diabetes association, and we will all do better.

Today being November 25, I have to wish my husband a happy birthday.

PETITIONS

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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

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

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

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

"Whereas sites zoned for industrial and/or commercial use are the best locations for large electricity transformer stations," perhaps at the one in Whitby;

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

"Therefore, we, the undersigned ask that the Ontario Legislature support the preservation of the Oak Ridges moraine, the greenbelt and the natural environment at this site. We also ask that the Ontario Legislature require the Clarington transformer station to be built at an alternative location zoned for an industrial facility and selected in accordance with the best planning principles" and after a full EA process.

I'm pleased to sign and support this and to present it to Maya Joy, one of the pages.

MINIMUM WAGE

Mr. Michael Prue: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that reads as follows:

"Whereas Ontario's minimum wage has been frozen at \$10.25 an hour since 2010, and some workers earn even less due to current exemptions in the Employment Standards Act; and

"Whereas full-time minimum wage workers are living at nearly 20% below the poverty line as measured by the Ontario government's low-income measure (LIM); and

"Whereas minimum wage should, as a matter of principle, bring people working 35 hours per week above the poverty line; and

"Whereas an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$14 per hour would bring workers' wages 10% above the LIM poverty line; and

"Whereas raising the minimum wage will benefit workers, local businesses and the economy by putting money in workers' pockets to spend in their local community;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately increase the minimum wage to \$14 per hour for all workers and there-

after increase it annually by no less than the cost of living.”

I'm in agreement, affix my signature thereto, and send it down with page Marina.

EDUCATION FUNDING

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

“Whereas the current enrolment of Avalon Public School in Orléans is 732 students, with 11 portables onsite;

“Whereas under current projections, by 2014, enrolment in the Avalon Public School is forecast to be in the 900 range increasing to approximately 1,359 students by 2022;

“Whereas the issue of overcrowding and lack of space threatens the OCDSB's ability to offer full-day kindergarten in Avalon under the Ministry of Education's targets;

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

“Whereas the staff of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, following an objective, evidence-based process, recommended Avalon PS II as its top priority for a new school, calling the need ‘urgent’;

“Whereas the board disregarded independent staff counsel and ranked the school from number 1 to number 7;

“We, the undersigned, call on the government of Ontario and the Ministry of Education to provide the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board with the necessary funding to build Avalon Public School II in the next round of capital projects.”

I support this petition and send it forward with Najat.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Parliament of Ontario:

“Whereas Kimm Fletcher, a mother of two diagnosed with brain cancer, has been prescribed with the drug Avastin to help prolong her life;

“Whereas the Ontario health ministry's Committee to Evaluate Drugs (CED) has indicated that the use of this drug is associated with higher, progression-free survival rates;

“Whereas this drug is not covered under OHIP—but is in other provincial jurisdictions;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ontario Parliament call on the Premier and her health minister to extend OHIP funding of the drug Avastin, so that Kimm Fletcher, and others like her, can have as much time to enjoy with her family as possible; and to tell the Wynne administration that ‘Our health care system includes Kimm Fletcher.’”

LONG-TERM CARE

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have 647 names signed onto this petition that comes from all over the Niagara-Hamilton area.

“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 Ontarians 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 training of personal support workers is unregulated and insufficient to provide them with the skills and knowledge to assist residents who are being admitted with higher physical, psychological and emotional needs. Currently, training across the province is varied, inconsistent and under-regulated;

“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);

1350

“(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 develop a process of registration, accreditation and certification for all personal support workers.”

I'm happy to ask page Sarah to bring that to the Clerk.

AIR QUALITY

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I have a petition.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario's Drive Clean Program was implemented only as a temporary measure to reduce high levels of vehicle emissions and smog; and

“Whereas vehicle emissions have declined so significantly from 1998 to 2010 that they are no longer among the major domestic contributors of smog in Ontario; and

“Whereas the overwhelming majority of reductions in vehicle emissions is the result of factors other than Drive Clean, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

“Whereas the current government has ignored advances in technology and introduced a new, computerized emissions test that is less reliable, and prone to error; and

“Whereas the Auditor General identified that Drive Clean has had little to no impact on the reduction of emissions in Ontario and that the program’s pass rate has exceeded 90% every year since 2004; and

“Whereas the Auditor General’s No. 1 recommendation is for the government to ‘formally evaluate the extent to which the Drive Clean program continues to be an effective initiative’;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program.”

I affix my name in support.

AIR QUALITY

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas diesel trains are a health hazard for people who live near them;

“Whereas more toxic fumes will be created by the 400 daily trains than the car trips they are meant to replace;

“Whereas the planned air-rail link does not serve the communities through which it passes and will be priced beyond the reach of most commuters;

“Whereas all major cities in the world with train service between their downtown core and the airport use electric trains;

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

“That the province of Ontario stop building the air-rail link for diesel and move to electrify the route immediately;

“That the air-rail link be designed, operated and priced as an affordable transportation option between all points along its route.”

I certainly agree with this. I’ll sign it, along with the thousands of others, and give it to page Sarah to be delivered to the table.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Jim Wilson: “Whereas Kimm Fletcher, a mother of two diagnosed with brain cancer, has been prescribed with the drug Avastin to help prolong her life;

“Whereas the Ontario health ministry’s Committee to Evaluate Drugs (CED) has indicated that the use of this drug is associated with higher, progression-free survival rates;

“Whereas this drug is not covered under OHIP—but is in other provincial jurisdictions;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

“That the Ontario Parliament call on the Premier and her health minister to extend OHIP funding of the drug Avastin, so that Kimm Fletcher, and others like her, can have as much time to enjoy with her family as possible; and to tell the Wynne administration that ‘Our health care system includes Kimm Fletcher.’”

I certainly agree with this petition. I will sign it.

MINIMUM WAGE

Ms. Cindy Forster: “Petition to raise the minimum wage:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario’s minimum wage has been frozen at \$10.25 an hour since 2010, and some workers earn even less due to current exemptions in the Employment Standards Act; and

“Whereas full-time minimum wage workers are living at nearly 20% below the poverty line as measured by the Ontario government’s low-income measure (LIM); and

“Whereas minimum wage should, as a matter of principle, bring people working 35 hours per week above the poverty line; and

“Whereas an immediate increase in the minimum wage to \$14 per hour would bring workers’ wages 10% above the LIM poverty line; and

“Whereas raising the minimum wage will benefit workers, local businesses and the economy by putting money in workers’ pockets to spend in their local community;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately increase the minimum wage to \$14 per hour for all workers and thereafter increase it annually by no less than the cost of living.”

I support this petition and will sign it and give it to page Arvind to bring to the table.

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Toby Barrett: I have a number of signatures on a petition titled “Stop the Gravy Train—Call an Election.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current Liberal government has wasted \$1.1 billion of taxpayers’—”

Interjections.

Mr. Toby Barrett: You don’t want to hear what people write on these petitions, by the way. I’d be glad to read it out.

“Whereas the current—”

Interjection: I think you should report that.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, it says here—this is from a constituent: “Let’s get rid of the corrupt McGuinty/Wynne impostors.” He should’ve put a—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I ask the member to withdraw the unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I withdraw on behalf of my constituent.

“Whereas the current Liberal government has wasted \$1.1 billion of taxpayers’ dollars on cancelled gas plants; and

“Whereas the people in Ontario have lost confidence in the McGuinty/Wynne government;

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

“Request the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario to call an election immediately.”

I agree with the sentiments in this petition.

REPLACEMENT WORKERS

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from northeastern Ontario:

“Whereas strikes and lockouts are rare: on average, 97% of collective agreements are negotiated without work disruption; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers laws have existed in Quebec since 1978; in British Columbia since 1993; and successive governments in those two provinces have never repealed those laws; and

“Whereas anti-temporary replacement workers legislation has reduced the length and divisiveness of labour disputes; and

“Whereas the use of temporary replacement workers during a strike or lockout is damaging to the social fabric of a community in the short and the long term as well as the well-being of its residents;

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

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

POWER PLANTS

Mr. Jim McDonell: I have a petition, and it’s labelled: “Stop the Gravy Train—Call an Election.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the current Liberal government has wasted \$1.1 billion of taxpayers’ dollars on cancelled gas plants; and

“Whereas the people in Ontario have lost confidence in the McGuinty/Wynne government;

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

“Request the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario to call an election immediately.”

I agree with this and will be signing—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): The member for Parkdale—High Park.

DOG OWNERSHIP

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas aggressive dogs are found among all breeds and mixed breeds; and

“Whereas breed-specific legislation has been shown to be” a cruel, “expensive and ineffective approach to dog bite prevention; and

“Whereas problem dog owners are best dealt with through education, training and legislation encouraging responsible behaviour;

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

“To repeal the breed-specific sections of the Dog Owners’ Liability Act (2005) and any related acts, and to instead implement legislation that encourages responsible ownership of all dog breeds and types.”

On behalf of the over 1,000 dogs that have been euthanized because of the way they look, I’m going to sign this and give it to Arvind to be delivered to the table.

MARKDALE HOSPITAL

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

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

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

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

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

I support it, will sign it and pass it to page Julia.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition that comes from all over the northeast:

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

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

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

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

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

OPPOSITION DAY

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Tim Hudak: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario calls upon the government to recognize that Niagara Health System supervisor, Dr. Kevin Smith, recommended that consolidating existing hospitals in Niagara into a new Niagara south hospital will provide better services for patients and families by simplifying

physician and staff coverage to enhance response times and reduce wait times; attracting and retaining specialists because of increased workload; and investing in state-of-the-art equipment by eliminating the costs of duplicate machines at multiple facilities;

1400

To recognize that the Wynne Liberal government received Dr. Smith's final report to build a south Niagara hospital in September 2012 and for 14 months have dragged their feet on implementing his recommendations that would save taxpayers \$285 million in capital costs and \$10 million annually in operating costs—money that can be used to attract and hire more nurses and specialists;

To recognize that Dr. Smith stated on November 15th, 2013, that “it doesn't make financial or medical sense to build a new south Niagara hospital and keep the existing sites open”;

Therefore, it is the opinion of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that a new Niagara South hospital should be built at the Lyons Creek location in Niagara Falls, along with two additional urgent care facilities, to replace the Douglas Memorial Hospital, Greater Niagara General Hospital, Port Colborne Hospital and the Welland Hospital.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Mr. Hudak has moved opposition day motion number 4. I recognize the Leader of the Opposition.

Mr. Tim Hudak: As someone who knows the Niagara region quite well—it's where I was born and raised, in the border town of Fort Erie; where I make my home, in Wellandport, today; where my family lives; where I went to high school in Welland at Notre Dame—I want to say that I'm very excited about the opportunity here. I'm very excited about the potential and the vision of building a new, state-of-the-art hospital in south Niagara that will tend to the needs of the people as well as act as a beacon to attract the best specialists to make their home in south Niagara. That's where I come from. My parents live in the town of Fort Erie and, God bless them, they're still regularly at the Y, playing tennis and playing golf. They're in good shape, but they're going to need that additional health care down the road. That's just the way nature is.

I think of the neighbours I grew up with; I think of my own family; I think of friends, and I think of people I talk to every day in that part of the province. They want to see that new state-of-the-art south Niagara hospital built. They want to see shovels in the ground today.

I'm confident of that. I hear that all the time. I want to be optimistic. I want to think positively about this, because leadership is about dreaming big and talking about a better tomorrow and the path to get there. We've laid out that plan for a strong economy, with more people back to work, to eliminate the waste, duplication and scandalous, selfish decisions. The Liberal government has spent \$1 billion on gas plants that could have gone into building the south Niagara hospital, for example.

I want to think positively and optimistically about what can be: the kind of state-of-the-art facility to give

the residents in Niagara and those who work at those sites, the modern, sophisticated, future hospital that they deserve today. But, as I stated in my motion, it has been 14 long months that the Premier has left the health care of south Niagara residents in limbo.

In fact, it has been 18 months since Dr. Smith's preliminary report saying to consolidate the four sites into one new state-of-the-art site in south Niagara. The government, for whatever reason, has continued to ignore the recommendations of their own health expert, Dr. Kevin Smith, who's a very respected health care authority and has engaged the community, I think, in unprecedented consultation to come up with this idea and look forward to it.

I want to be absolutely clear about this: My party has supported Dr. Smith's conclusions from the outset, from square one, from the get-go. That's the right thing to do. That's where I come from and that's what I believe in: that the building of a modern and new hospital in Niagara Falls, along with two urgent care facilities, would save taxpayers \$285 million in capital costs. From rehabilitating and repairing the existing four sites to building a new hospital, that's \$285 million in savings.

Secondly, it saves you \$10 million in operating costs. Instead of operating four sites with the administration and overhead, it saves you \$10 million annually. That means you'd actually have more money to pay more nurses, who are currently run off their feet in the existing sites, to attract new specialists and to do more procedures and surgeries.

It makes sense from a health care perspective. It saves the taxpayers money. So what's not to like about it? Let's get going and make this a reality for the residents of south Niagara.

But the government continues to avoid doing what is right. They're ignoring the recommendations of their own appointed expert in the field. We've seen this happen, sadly, over and over again, where it's almost like the McGuinty-Wynne Liberals think Ontario ends at the Burlington bridge. They think you run into customs and you enter, I guess, New York state. They seem to have written off Niagara. I don't see why else they would stall this project for almost 18 months since its initial recommendation and leave it on the shelf, but we're not going to let them get away with it. We're going to keep the pressure on. We're going to fight for what's right.

This is close to where I grew up, and I think I understand the region's need. I've used all these four hospitals in the past—hard-working people. We have a lot of people working there, and they're highly skilled. As I said, they're run off their feet. They're very dedicated to their jobs, but they have older and aging sites that are limiting what can be a better tomorrow with a new state-of-the-art hospital.

So job number one—I've called on the minister in the House; she has dodged it today—to help her be successful today, is to actually fund the planning grant to get this project going, to give it the green light, and I hope we'll hear a positive answer—

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's a no-brainer. That's a no-brainer. Let's go.

Mr. Tim Hudak: As my colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke says, that's a no-brainer. So let's get on with it, and hopefully we'll hear that news from the Minister of Health later today.

I know with the heckling across the way, they're trying to say that this is something to use in the by-election, and if it is successful in the by-election, you'll hopefully have a candidate some time relatively soon. Maybe that way, we can finally force her arm so you'll go ahead with that, because I know the member from St. Catharines is supportive of a south Niagara hospital. I think he would be lobbying for that behind the scenes.

But I want to pre-empt that angle by the Liberals to say that we've been there from square one. The report came out. We got behind it. We said it's the right thing; we're going to fight for it. We pushed for it here in the House in question period.

I want to give credit, too, where credit is due, to my colleague Bart Maves from Niagara Falls. Bart Maves is a regional councillor. He will be our PC candidate in the by-election. I know that the Liberals are against this, but Bart Maves, back in 2007—six years ago—had this vision. He said it was the right thing to do. He's been fighting for six years and I hope he joins us here to actually make it a reality.

Hopefully, I'm convincing my colleagues in both the New Democrat and Liberal causes why they should support the motion today. I'll give you three good reasons:

(1) Good health care means you have to have great health care professionals. The challenge is, if you're running around four or five different sites for a specialist, that makes the job a lot harder. That means a lot more early mornings and a lot more late nights. Quite frankly, one of the challenges we've had in attracting new specialists to south Niagara is if you're on call one out of every two days or one out of every three days, that's a lot of pressure. I sat down with doctors last week who told me they're at recruitment sessions to recruit new doctors, new specialists to Niagara, and the new doctors want to know, "Well, is that new hospital going to be built or not?" Because that will help make that decision. New graduates in obstetrics, in surgeries, for example, want to know that they will actually have the kinds of conditions where they can focus on the work, maybe one in nine as opposed to one in two, one in three. I think the minister knows this—and Dr. Smith pointed it out—that our only chance, our best and only chance of getting obstetrics back into south Niagara is to build this new site and consolidate the birth services there. It's a growing part of Niagara. So why don't we actually return obstetrics in a brand new south Niagara hospital? It's our only chance of doing that.

(2) Critical mass means better outcomes. Whether it's through cath labs, strokes, obstetrics, as I mentioned, for south Niagara, if you do something more often, you get good at it. You become highly efficient. You can actually then produce more outcomes at a better patient care level.

That's pretty basic sense when it comes to health care, but it's a lot harder to do if you're doing it in four different sites as opposed to doing so in just one.

A master carpenter doesn't simply make one cabinet a year. They specialize in that area. They get the best health outcomes. You're not going to attract specialists and you won't have that critical mass unless you move to one state-of-the-art hospital in south Niagara as opposed to running around between four.

The third and final point is, if you have too many sites, it is hard to operate. This simply means that you're going to have higher overhead and higher administration costs. You're putting more and more money into care and maintenance of aging facilities than you put into patient care. Really, you face two choices: Do you keep the four existing sites open and put all that money, almost \$1 billion, I think, into maintaining the old sites? Or you can put it towards a new hospital and improving patient care. Sometimes leaders have to make decisions. Sometimes you come to a crossroads. Sometimes you come to a point of inflection where you have to make a choice: Do you keep the existing sites and put money into maintenance and overhead, or do you actually surge ahead and make the right call?

1410

I know what path we're on, Speaker. To make the call for a brand new state-of-the-art hospital seems pretty basic. The problem I have is that when the NDP come to a cross in the roads and Andrea Horwath chooses between A and B, she says, "I choose both." That's not leadership; that's not realistic. A vote for the NDP—really, you can kiss that new hospital goodbye. That's what it comes down to, because nobody believes that's any kind of plan.

So what's going to happen in the time ahead? I know my colleagues want to speak on this issue. I have outlined why I think this makes medical sense, why it makes financial sense and why I recognize there's a real need where I come from, and in many senses why it's personal, considering where I'm from and the people I know and talk to each and every day.

We get the Liberal game here, right? There are many advantages to having been elected and representing the great people of Niagara and parts of Hamilton now for 18 years. One of the things, Speaker, after 18 years in this assembly, is that you've seen pretty well every trick in the book, and you call it out. So we know that the Liberal card trick they're going to play here is they will get some candidate, and that candidate will be so convincing that they'll convince the Minister of Health to go ahead with this.

Applause.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The minister applauds, because he's been here longer and he knows the card tricks better than I do, so he knows what's coming. I guess there's a preview. But I'll ask you this: If they ignored this for 18 months, they left it on the shelf for 18 months, do you really think the Liberals are behind it, or are they simply playing card tricks and games to try to skate by? It's pretty obvious, Mr. Speaker.

I'm going to save most of my remaining time, then, for the leader of the third party and the NDP card trick on this. They just seem to be so out of touch when it comes to what's right and what's affordable. They're spinning—you'll hear the spin later today—this fallacy that you can have your cake and eat it too. First the NDP—they were clear, at least. First they said they wanted to build a new hospital, but they wanted to do it in Welland. At least they were clear about that. Then they said, "Well, there's a by-election so, okay, we want to build a Niagara hospital too." So they said they're going to build it in Welland and they're going to build it in Niagara. Then they said, "While we're promising everything under the sun, let's just keep all the hospitals open." The NDP approach is unrealistic, it's old-school politics and it's going to cost us that new hospital at the end of the day.

We don't want to go back, Speaker; we actually want to see us move ahead to a better tomorrow when it comes to health care services in the Niagara Peninsula. I think the NDP approach of being all things to everybody and building new sites and keeping the old open is going to put the entire project in jeopardy. I think it's going to be awfully hard to pitch to a new obstetrician who has graduated recently—I'll say she graduated from Western; that's where my health critic and I are from—and who wants to come to Niagara. You're going to tell her she has to run around to five different sites? I worry, then, we'll never attract that obstetrician; we'll never attract that specialist. She will simply choose to go somewhere else. That's the problem I have with the NDP policy: It's going to cost us the big hospital and it will mean we won't attract the specialists that we need in south Niagara because they're not going to run around to four or five sites. I think in their hearts they know this, I think in their guts they know this, but they're playing this old-school "have your cake and eat it too" politics that I worry is going to jeopardize what could be a once-in-a-generation opportunity for all of us who love Niagara and call it home.

Even Dr. Smith recognized the NDP game here. He called it "political theatre"—his words, Mr. Speaker, an exact quote—and this government and the third party were playing the old-school political game that voters now recognize at the drop of a hat. In the same breath, Dr. Smith also said this—and I noted it in my motion at the beginning, as I will now note again. He said that "it doesn't make financial or medical sense to build a new south Niagara hospital and keep the existing sites open." So said Dr. Smith, the medical expert. The savings, as I said, are \$285 million a year in capital and \$10 million in operating that we can actually put into better patient care and attracting more specialists. To me, when you look at the medical evidence, when you look at the need to move forward and not get locked into the past, when you look at the case to attract more specialists to south Niagara so we don't fall further and further behind, it's a slam-dunk; the case is clear. This should be exciting news. It should be something to be optimistic and thrilled about for

everybody who cares about this issue in Niagara and beyond. It should be a slam-dunk in this House, but I worry that it will not be. When it comes to an issue that makes a lot of sense both financially and medically, this House cannot get its act together, not even for one of the most valuable principles within this province's soul: the health care of the people that we're sent here to represent on a daily basis.

Let me conclude, Speaker, by saying this: I ask today for this House to join me and join the Ontario PC Party in upholding that valuable principle and obligation. A vote with us is endorsing my motion. It's the right time to do the right thing. It's time to show leadership. It's time to choose either A or B. I choose the new hospital and to move forward. It's not a time to choose all options on the table, because that's unrealistic.

So what is the vote here today? A vote is yes for a new south Niagara hospital. A vote is yes for more specialists and raising the quality of care. A vote is yes for the planning grant to give the green light to get this project moving. Speaker, I hope all members of the assembly will stand with me and say yes to a new south Niagara hospital and move that community forward for the quality of health care they deserve.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I was very interested in the Toryisms coming from the leader of the Progressive Conservative Party. They talk a lot about efficiencies, a lot about experts and systems, a lot about relieving administrative burden. But, Speaker, in typical Tory form, they barely talk at all about health care. They barely talk at all about patients and meeting the needs of actual people in south Niagara. It's unfortunate that that's the direction that this party has shown year after year after year when it comes to the health care of Ontarians.

I'm very pleased to join this debate, but I'm saddened to see that rather than it being a debate focusing on getting a hospital built in Niagara, it is yet another Conservative motion that has everything to do with politics and nothing to do with getting things done. This motion is designed to play a game of divide and conquer across the Niagara region, pitting one community against another and leaving Niagara residents falling further and further behind.

Let's talk about how we got here, Speaker. The last time the Conservatives formed a government in Ontario, they decided to close a heck of a lot of hospitals. In fact, at the last count, 29 hospitals were closed by the Conservatives. They never said they were closing hospitals, though, Speaker; they always used words like "amalgamation" or "merger." But the facts remain that community after community lost hospitals when Mr. Hudak sat at the cabinet table in the province of Ontario, not to mention that 6,000 nurses lost their jobs when Mr. Hudak sat at the cabinet table, not to mention opening the door to private services like private MRIs, private CT scans and private hospitals. The biggest merger of all—surprise, surprise, Speaker—was in Niagara, the region that he

boasts that he is from; he has done them well over the years, Speaker—where several hospitals were amalgamated into the Niagara Health System.

Over the years, the controversy has continued at the Niagara Health System, and patients are the ones that paid the price, Speaker. They lost an emergency department in Fort Erie and another emergency department in Port Colborne. A deadly *C. difficile* outbreak at the NHS's three largest hospitals raised serious questions, Speaker. A damning report by Ontario's Ombudsman pointed to a culture of secrecy throughout the Niagara region when it came to health care.

Last September, the Niagara Health System recommended the building of a new hospital in south Niagara. But it also recommended the closure of sites in Niagara Falls, Welland, Port Colborne, Fort Erie and Niagara-on-the-Lake. Not surprisingly, communities that stand to lose health care services are concerned about the impact of having to travel for care and the inability to access any of the many services that are currently available to them.

Some might want to pretend that shutting down health care services in four of Niagara's communities would have no impact whatsoever. But residents have heard this song before, Speaker, and they know that it simply is not true. Not only would an emergency department and two extended-hours urgent care centres be closed, but also numerous other health care services would be gone. These include in-patient and day surgery, dialysis stations, physiotherapy, recreational and occupational therapy, diagnostic imaging—such as mammograms, ultrasounds and colorectal screening—palliative care services, laboratory services, diabetes programs and others. The impact of forcing people to travel for this kind of care cannot be underestimated either in cost or in terms of the personal impact on patients, their families, their quality of life and, of course, the quality of service they actually are receiving.

1420

And who are the people who should know this the most? The people who should know this the most are the party that actually moved this motion. Not too long ago, Tim Hudak railed in this very House about the impact of cutting health services in the very communities that he wants to cut services in today. I wish that this guy would make up his mind. Note that today they do not support hospital services in any of these communities. They'll change their position regardless of the impact on local communities.

I quote from January 29, 2008: "Fort Erie is a robust, vibrant town of 30,000 people, and now Dalton McGuinty is closing down their hospital. Premier, you cannot leave the decision up to an unaccountable, unelected and largely anonymous LHIN board. Show some leadership. Show some courage." That was Mr. Hudak who was making those comments back in January 2008, but that's not all.

From October 29: "Under the McGuinty government's new LHIN scheme, emergency services and surgery will be eliminated from Douglas Memorial Hospital in Fort

Erie and Port Colborne General Hospital. Other hospital services, like maternity, will be taken out of Niagara Falls General. Just a year ago, neither your predecessor, the Premier nor your local Liberal candidates breathed a single word about these dramatic hospital service reductions." That would have been Mr. Hudak, at that time defending services in these community hospitals.

I think we can see a track record quite clearly here. This is a party that will say anything and do anything to win a by-election, but we know their track record very clearly. They shout from the sidelines, they play politics, but they never deliver any results for the people of Ontario.

Now, I have said clearly that I support a new Niagara Falls hospital, but I don't support playing divisive politics and pitting communities against one another. That's the playing ground of the Progressive Conservative Party in Ontario, not something that New Democrats like to do. New Democrats have always fought to protect the health care services of the people of this province, and we will continue to fight to protect your health care services in south Niagara. That's a job that we're proud of doing, and that we're going to continue to do.

We are going to push this government to build a new hospital to replace the aging hospital in Niagara Falls, but unlike what the Liberal government and Tim Hudak would have you believe, the price of a Niagara Falls hospital doesn't need to be the closure of every other hospital in the entire Niagara region. No one wants or needs their local hospital to close. There are other options to ensure that the people of Niagara continue to have access to local, high-quality public health care.

You know what? The government's appointed expert, who has been mentioned already today, and Mr. Hudak say that a new 400-bed Niagara Falls hospital will cost \$850 million, yet only five years ago in Peterborough they managed to build a hospital with 494 beds—almost a hundred beds more than what is being planned for Niagara—in a publicly funded model, for less than \$300 million: \$293 million for 494 beds, as opposed to \$850 million for 400 beds in Niagara Falls.

Now, I have to ask you, why would a similar-sized Niagara hospital cost almost three times more to build, and therefore mean the closure of every other public hospital in the region? Because the Liberal government's privatization plan to build hospitals drives the costs sky-high. You don't have to take my word for it; the Tory plan that the Liberals are now using has been criticized roundly by the Auditor General of this province, because it drives up costs and it does not deliver the kind of quality that we need to see and the keeping of taxpayers' dollars at the forefront when it comes to these kinds of projects.

I have to say that the New Democrats are very clear on what we want to see. We want to see public dollars pay for vital public health care for you, for your family, for the people of Niagara Falls and for the people of south Niagara.

We have been pretty crystal clear on our priorities. Our priority is not the privatization of health care in this

province. Our priority is the public delivery of health care in this province, and we think that precious public health care dollars should go to front-line care, not line the pockets of private companies or, for that matter, line the pockets of CEOs who have six-figure salaries in the public sector.

We are committed to finding savings by eliminating enormous government waste like we've witnessed in eHealth and Ornge and, of course, the gas plant cancellations. There are ways of doing things differently.

Liberals and Conservatives prefer to see their friends making out very well at the public trough. We believe that public hospitals are the way to go. We know that the Auditor General is on our side in that argument and that, in fact, the waste of public dollars is happening time and time again in the models that are being promoted by the Liberals and the Conservatives.

Most importantly, we need to move away from Liberal private partnership models of building hospitals in order to keep costs down, because it does exactly the opposite. It drives up costs, and as a result, it forces communities to have to choose to close and lose their hospital services. That is not what New Democrats support.

I am very, very pleased to be able to engage in this debate because New Democrats are doing so from a commitment to public services and to public health care for all Ontarians.

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

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm delighted to be able to participate in this debate. It's a divide-and-conquer resolution. I read the resolution, first of all, and what you have to do when you read these resolutions—remember, I've been in opposition and government. You have to see, is there a hostage in it? Is there something that will make both of the other parties vote against a new hospital for Niagara Falls? And yes, there is. There's a negative reference to the present administration so that if you vote for it, you have to vote for that negative reference. That's called a hostage.

What the member really wants, what the Conservative Party really wants, is for both of the other two parties to vote against this resolution—the NDP because they say they want to keep everything existing open and to build a new hospital, and the government because they made a negative reference to the government. So it's an old trick that has been used—not for the first time; I have to admit that—to try to divide and conquer. Really, in their heart of hearts, the members of the Conservative caucus would love to see both other parties vote against the resolution and they could be the knights in shining armour there to save a hospital after closing it.

There's one more in this case. I thought it was 28 hospitals that the Conservative government of Mike Harris had closed. I was corrected by the leader of the New Democratic Party, who said that it was in fact 29 hospitals that they had closed in the province.

I remember a debate where Mike Harris said at that time to, I guess, Robert Fisher, "It is not my intention to

close hospitals." Well, with the best of intentions they closed—and I know the person sitting in the chair would be opposed to this—some 29 hospitals in the province of Ontario.

What we have here—I'm thinking of this road to Damascus. It's a biblical allusion now. That road to Damascus is full of converts, those who have been converted, who changed on the road to Damascus. One group that has changed is the members of the Conservative Party. Before there was a by-election on the horizon in Niagara Falls—maybe I could be wrong—I can't recall much discussion on the part of the leader or the official opposition about a new hospital for Niagara Falls. I could be wrong, but only since the by-election have I heard questions about that and the Fort Erie Race Track and a number of other situations that have arisen. This is natural when a by-election is held, because there's a focus of attention. Again, I'm above the fray in that; I fully understand that's the case.

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I know that in St. Catharines we have a new hospital with all the amenities, a \$759-million hospital and a 30-year contract to operate the physical plant, which probably brings the total investment to about \$1.5 billion. That is substantial whenever you are establishing a hospital and a contract to operate the physical plant of that hospital. It is serving people exceedingly well. We appreciate that it is there.

I didn't see the party opposite campaigning for a new hospital in St. Catharines. In fact, there was much discussion for years and years. The Leader of the Opposition said, "Well, this is taking too long." I can remember that until this government got elected, there was no process or procedure in the direction of a new hospital in St. Catharines. I'm not blaming them. I'll tell you why I'm not blaming them. It takes time. It goes on a step-by-step basis, just as we're going through with the present observations and recommendations made by Dr. Smith.

I think of the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital, and I want to give the Leader of the Opposition credit in this regard. A lot of people don't like doing that for the leader of another party, but I want to give him credit. There was a budget that came up, and one of the hospitals that were not proceeding for funding was the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital, in the riding of the leader of the Conservative Party. He said at that time that he recognized why. He didn't exploit that. He said words to the effect that if we truly want to get that hospital built, we actually need to get the economy moving again so more people are paying taxes and creating jobs. In other words, he could have said, on a partisan basis, "Well, isn't it awful? They're not fighting for the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital." Of course, being from there, he would be supportive of it and is likely supportive of it. But because the whole philosophy of the Conservative government is not to spend money, is not to invest money on these kinds of services, he recognized that and said, "I understand why this is the case."

Meanwhile, there were hospital projects proceeding in Burlington and Cambridge—both, by the way, in Con-

servative ridings. I think there's one in Fergus as well—all in Conservative ridings. I heard my local radio station. The Conservatives said, "Well, you know, it's all partisan decisions." I can't remember the last time the Liberals won Burlington. For years, it was under the esteemed Cam Jackson, who was the member there for a number of years. Cambridge—I can't remember a Liberal being there for years, and Fergus, of course, has been the fiefdom of the man in the chair and his predecessor. I just wanted to indicate there was not partisanship there.

I'll tell you where I'd be worried.

Mr. Steve Clark: Where would you be worried, Jim? Tell us.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'd be worried for the Conservative members who represent rural ridings that have hospitals in them, because, as the leader of the New Democratic Party said, just a few years back, the leader of the Conservative Party was, in fact, saying how we should be saving all these individual hospitals. Apparently he's changed, and I understand that.

Listen, I understand how hard the decision is. The New Democratic Party in Saskatchewan closed 52 rural hospitals when they were in power. Did they do it to be mean to people? No, they didn't. They did it because they felt it would best serve the people of that province, and they were in difficult economic circumstances. I've never blamed the New Democratic Party for that. I have mentioned it in the House, but I have not blamed the New Democratic Party for doing that.

I was in conversation with one of the individuals who was prominent in raising funds for the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital. He said his greatest concern was, "Well, of course you people are now going to support, as the number one priority down here, the Niagara south hospital, and there goes West Lincoln, pushed further into the background." There may be something to that. I indicated my support for West Lincoln at the time. It's a project that I would like to see proceed, as I know the leader of the Conservative Party would, but we all face those realities.

So what has changed? Well, what has changed is that there's a by-election. There's a by-election upcoming in the riding of Niagara Falls. So now we get people standing up in the House—

Mr. John Yakabuski: When?

Hon. James J. Bradley:—asking questions day after day—

Mr. John Yakabuski: When are you calling it?

Hon. James J. Bradley:—even the member from Barry's Bay, who is out of his seat and heckling, I say to the Speaker. They have suddenly decided that Niagara Falls and a hospital in Niagara Falls are important. That is only because there's a by-election. Again, I understand that. Please, I'm not a person who condemns him for that.

But let the public know that we heard little about the Niagara Falls hospital until there was an impending by-election. Another rural member is coming forward into the House now from the Conservative Party. I want to warn him that his leader has now said that you can close

a number of the rural hospitals and consolidate into a new hospital. I know that happens, and I know the Conservative leader used to fight against that. Now he has decided that he's not going to fight against that because there's a by-election in Niagara Falls. If I were cynical, I would think that; I'm not a cynical person.

I met with officials of the Niagara Health System earlier this year. We talked about this hospital and the need for a planning grant, and that's exactly how we will proceed in this regard. It will go to the local health integration network, which deliberates over these matters. They will make the recommendation, and you proceed with a grant which is for planning purposes. Those are the steps you take. Just as it took years and years in St. Catharines for the previous Conservative government to move in any direction, when a new government came in, we didn't do it immediately. We had the planning grant and took the steps. We have a new hospital in the area at the present time. So I met with them; I said that it's a good suggestion and I would bring it to the Minister of Health. She certainly was very accepting of that particular suggestion by the Niagara Health System. There's nothing in this resolution that is new at all, that isn't already happening.

I mentioned the hostage in the resolution, and I won't go into that again. But if you want to get the two other parties to vote against it, you put a hostage in. So there's a hostage in, criticizing our government. You know something? That just is like water falling off the back of a duck. I don't care about that part of it. I care about the main thrust of it. I know it was meant as well to divide yourselves from the New Democratic Party because, as the member from Welland—who is here—would know, she has people in her community, both in Welland and in Port Colborne—

Ms. Cindy Forster: And in Wainfleet.

Hon. James J. Bradley:—and in Wainfleet. We're all interested in that area of the province. I don't think people should be critical of any individual standing up for a community, and they have tried to be critical of her in that regard. I don't do that because I think we all have to rally to our own communities.

This is an interesting resolution. I want to say, by the way, because people would be wondering, has there been an increase in funding over the years in Niagara since this government got in power? There has. Funding is up by over \$172 million, or 62%, since 2003 in Niagara. We've invested \$24 million to reduce surgical wait times in Niagara, and the investments are having their effect. There have been substantial investments.

I like the idea of a modern new hospital in Niagara south, just as we have a modern new hospital in Niagara north. I think that what has to be sorted out is, what are the consequences for other sites? How can the other sites be still serving the people in their community while a new hospital is being built? I know of the strong support for this of many of my friends in Niagara Falls and the close area of Niagara Falls.

It's great to see the Conservative Party converted on the road to Damascus to this particular resolution. There

were many smiles on faces as their leader was up there because I think they knew in their heart of hearts that this had more to do with the by-election than to do with health care in the Niagara region. Nevertheless, we are ones who want to move forward. The Minister of Health would tell you—

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I think she was in Burlington, in fact, today at Joe Brant Hospital, and she was probably wondering—and I'm going to put this on the table and say that this is unfair before I even say it, okay? She was wondering why the Conservative members for Cambridge and Burlington and, dare I say, Fergus—my good friend from Fergus—would have voted against the last budget, which, in fact, provided for new hospitals in those areas. But that's unfair.

Interjections.

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Hon. James J. Bradley: No, that's unfair; I understand that, because there are other considerations. You know me: I'm next to non-partisan when it comes to these matters.

Anyway, Mr. Speaker, I'm glad to be able to offer a few observations. I'm going to be delighted to see a brand-spanking-new hospital being constructed in Niagara Falls, and I know that our government is well on the way to making those kinds of decisions in the step-by-step process that every government follows in this regard.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Thank you very much. Before I ask for further debate, I'm pleased to recognize and welcome to the Ontario Legislature the MPP for Niagara Falls from the 36th and 37th Parliaments, Mr. Bart Maves. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature.

Further debate.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It is a pleasure to speak today to our PC opposition day motion that calls upon the government to recognize that Niagara Health System supervisor Dr. Kevin Smith recommended that consolidating existing hospitals in Niagara into a new Niagara south hospital will provide better services for patients and families. Certainly, we in the Ontario PC caucus believe that adopting Dr. Smith's recommendations will simplify physician and staff coverage to enhance response times, reduce wait times, attract and retain specialists and enhance the ability to invest in state-of-the-art equipment.

Last week, along with our leader, Tim Hudak, and our candidate from Niagara Falls, Bart Maves—who is here joining us today in the gallery, demonstrating his commitment to this proposal—we visited the Niagara Falls mayor, Mr. Jim Diodati, to discuss the health care needs of people in the south Niagara region. Mayor Diodati agreed that south Niagara needed a new hospital and that Dr. Smith's recommendation of the Lyons Creek location made the best financial as well as medical sense. Not only does the mayor of Niagara Falls agree with Dr. Smith's recommendation, but all six mayors of the southern region initially agreed with the proposal that a

new hospital would better serve the region in the long term, 10 to 15 years.

Two locations were identified, but Dr. Smith ultimately recommended the Lyons Creek property as the best choice geographically. Dr. Smith also recommended the closure of Douglas Memorial Hospital, Greater Niagara General Hospital, Port Colborne Hospital and the Welland Hospital. It's important to note, though, that in addition to the new Niagara south hospital, Dr. Smith also recommended that two urgent care centres be opened to serve the needs of the more distant communities. This new hospital would save approximately \$285 million in capital costs that would otherwise be spent in refurbishing the existing four locations and would also save another \$10 million annually in operating costs. That is a lot of money that could be put into hiring more specialists, more nurses and dealing with a host of other health care needs in the Niagara region. The new south Niagara hospital would also become a centre of excellence for women and children, with state-of-the-art facilities that would allow the Niagara area to attract the best.

The leader of the third party, as we heard earlier, recommends that we both build a new hospital and keep all four existing hospitals open. Quite simply, Mr. Speaker, that option makes absolutely no sense, and Dr. Smith himself said as much last week. Dr. Smith's report outlines the impracticality of continuing to operate four hospitals in addition to one new hospital. Let's go through his reasons why we cannot do that: (1) A lack of critical mass to provide expertise and procedures in clinical practice. (2) It would be a major increase in costs to duplicate equipment and infrastructure. (3) There would be an inability to recruit expertise with low-volume workloads in some of the locations. (4) The cost to maintain coverage when clinical volumes do not support physician income.

Instead, these funds should be used to provide direct patient care, not to supplement volumes. Dr. Smith also noted that the Niagara hospital system currently spends roughly \$2.2 million to provide on-call coverage when the volume of patients does not provide expected physician income. In other words, we're wasting money here, Mr. Speaker. We need to make sure that we use each health care dollar to the best possible advantage.

Dr. Smith's report also noted that business as usual is not even remotely an option. He then went on to say, "While projections into the future are by nature speculative, it can be expected that consolidation of services in the southern tier will be very cost-effective from both a capital and operating perspective. While health care costs will certainly continue to rise, the relative savings are undeniable."

Now, in his report to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on the restructuring of the Niagara Health System, Dr. Smith noted that budgets for hospitals in Ontario remain at a 0% increase and that health care costs are on the rise. The Niagara Health System cannot afford the operational costs of four hospitals that could be replaced by one. Dr. Smith noted that the forecasted

deficit for 2012-13 is \$13.7 million. For 2013-14, the deficit is expected to rise to \$21.7 million, and for 2014-15, the projected deficit is \$29.2 million. Clearly, urgent action needs to be taken to deal with this deteriorating financial situation.

I would say it's not just a deteriorating financial situation; it's a deteriorating situation from the perspective of patient care as well. In Ontario, we've recently seen cuts to physiotherapy services, a reduction in the availability of diabetes test strips, a reduction in cataract surgeries, and the list goes on and on. Ensuring that we make the best decision in Niagara will help to ensure that we don't see more cuts in services to the region. So it's clear that the construction of the new south Niagara hospital at the Lyons Creek location, along with the two urgent care centres, makes the best sense from a business as well as a patient care perspective.

We already know what the third party's view of the situation is: They don't think Dr. Smith knows what he's talking about and that the suggestion of the Lyons Creek location is "preposterous." To that, I would say that Dr. Smith is a well-recognized expert in this area and that his report has certainly been very well researched and obviously very well written—not to be taken for granted or taken lightly.

More interesting is the response of the Wynne Liberals and the Minister of Health. They've had Dr. Smith's report for 14 months and up till now silence, nothing—until today. The cynic in me would have to say this has something to do with the fact that Tim Hudak, Bart Maves and I were in Niagara Falls last week speaking about this. We met with the mayor, who obviously supports Dr. Smith's recommendations as well. But today, interestingly—how coincidental—the Minister of Health came out with a response indicating that Dr. Smith's recommendations were very well researched and that there is growing support for the concept of a new south Niagara hospital. Today, they announce that they're going to give a grant for planning so that the project can move forward—how coincidental. Yet we keep hearing from the other two parties that this is all political, that this is all about the fact that there is going to be a by-election at some point in Niagara Falls. Well, yes, we all know that, Mr. Speaker, and nobody is pure in this situation; let me say that.

But what we have in our favour is Dr. Smith's recommendations. Dr. Smith has written a clear, completely objective report which outlines what the best is for the people of south Niagara from both a financial perspective and a patient care perspective. We choose to follow that. It's good public policy, and it makes sense financially. For once, I would like to see this government make a decision on the basis of good public policy. I'm glad to see you're going ahead with the planning grant. Let's get this thing done.

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

Ms. Cindy Forster: It is a big honour for me to stand up and speak about this issue today because this affects

my community and all of Niagara. You need to know that I've been involved with the Niagara Health System or its former sites for 40 years. A registered nurse, I worked at the Welland hospital, the Welland County hospital, the Port Colborne General Hospital and the Greater Niagara hospital. I've worked at just about all of them over the years, and I've represented nurses for the last 20 years in all of those sites.

It's interesting that Tim Hudak is taking the position that he's taking because he has a huge history of jumping on issues for political purposes, in this case a by-election in Niagara Falls. But I've got a number of quotes that I want to read to you about what Tim had to say. This was probably in 2011: "I've always said that Dalton McGuinty's decision to close the ER in Port Colborne was short-sighted and would reduce care for families and seniors in this community." "I've spoken with health experts, community leaders and local families and seniors. They've all told me that bringing these important health services back to the community is the right thing to do." But he talked to some more consultants, specialists and experts, and now he has changed his mind, just a year and a half later.

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I met a constituent of mine yesterday—I was in Tim Hortons getting a coffee—Terry Rogers, a Stelco retiree. He remembers when Tim Hudak stood in front of the Port Colborne hospital in 2011 and said, "I promise to keep this hospital open, and I promise to reopen the emergency department, and I don't really care about the other hospitals, whether or not they stay open." A week or two later he was in Fort Erie, giving the same message at the Fort Erie hospital. In the past, Tim has had a very negative view about the LHINs in Ontario. Why is he now coming out in full support of Kevin Smith's recommendation? Because there's a by-election.

Here are some quotes from Tim on the LHINs: "A question to the Acting Premier—I want to first welcome the Yellow Shirt Brigade"—this was a group of citizens that actually brought 5,000 people out to Fort Erie and 2,500 people out to Port Colborne to support keeping their hospitals open. He says, "I want to first welcome the Yellow Shirt Brigade to the Legislature here today, tireless advocates for health care in Fort Erie and Port Colborne.

"Sadly, the Yellow Shirt Brigade has witnessed the closure of the 24-hour ER in Fort Erie under Dalton McGuinty. Then Dalton McGuinty hid behind the veils of his LHIN to justify this cut in health care. To add insult to injury, André Marin, the Ombudsman, did an investigation of LHIN decision-making in Hamilton and Niagara, and you've buried that in this circus of a show that you put the Ombudsman through these last number of months.

"I ask the Acting Premier: Will you do the right thing? Will you reopen the ... ER in Fort Erie? If you don't, a PC government will."

"LHINs—these creatures are a mess."

"You have designated Fort Erie as a growth community. It's a robust, vibrant town of 30,000 people, and

now Dalton McGuinty is closing down their hospital. Premier, you cannot leave the decision up to an unaccountable, unelected and largely anonymous LHIN board. Show some leadership; show some courage. Will you step in and set this decision aside and keep that hospital open?" That was Tim Hudak. We weren't hearing that today, were we?

"In the McGuinty government's new LHIN scheme, emergency services and surgery will be eliminated from Douglas Memorial Hospital in Fort Erie and Port Colborne.... Will you stay true to your campaign promises, set aside this tainted process and preserve these vital hospital services in these communities?" We didn't hear that today from Tim Hudak either.

You know, I'm really concerned that people can actually flip and change their mind overnight because there's a by-election. Health care shouldn't be about by-elections. It should be about what's good for the community. It should be about community interests.

Hudak said the LHINs weren't progress: "We need to build on what works." LHINs "have failed to integrate care and build off existing infrastructure...." Today, he stood here and he said exactly the opposite.

I sent out a survey in 2011, when Kevin Smith was just starting to formulate his recommendations. He did a survey at the time as well. My survey went out to 49,000 homes in Niagara. It strongly recommended that people wanted to preserve their health care services in their communities while improving current services.

The Pollara study that Kevin Smith commissioned said the same thing. People basically said, "Yes, a new south Niagara hospital would be nice, but not at the expense of closing hospitals and health services across the rest of the communities."

I don't think that the government or the Tories are listening to the people who live in Niagara. The health minister, only a week or two ago in question period, when asked by the leader of the official opposition about whether or not she was going to give the planning grant to make sure that this new south Niagara hospital moves forward—Ms. Matthews indicated that there still wasn't community buy-in. "We're taking our time. There's no consolidated consensus."

Today, she jumps in with her new news release here and says, "There is growing local support for his proposal. Our government is listening closely to the community's views on what the future of health care should look like in Niagara." Well, why is that? Why did this come out today? Because it's "oppo" day, there's a by-election, and of course we want to keep that Liberal seat that has been held for nine or 10 years in Niagara.

But, you know, it seems to me that the Liberal government is prepared to go ahead with this plan, claiming they're listening closely to the community's views, but I don't think they've spoken to the mayor of Welland, Barry Sharpe, or the mayor of Port Colborne, Vance Badawey, or the mayor of Wainfleet, April Jeffs, or their councils.

Barry Sharpe, of Welland, wishes he had never taken part in the process to discuss a new south Niagara hospi-

tal. Mayor Vance Badawey, from Port Colborne, feels betrayed, because the unanimous consent for choosing either of the sites was based on retaining the services in Port Colborne and Fort Erie. He has also stated that Port Colborne prefers the central Welland site, should there be a new south Niagara hospital.

So I don't think the minister is actually concerned that there are mayors of two large cities and one smaller town who want to preserve their services in Niagara.

There was a study done in the United Kingdom, and that report came out in October 2012. That report basically says that mergers and amalgamations don't work. In the study—it was the Bristol Institute of Public Affairs—they found that mergers were not helpful to public systems; they were the enemy.

Starting in 1997, they underwent their own restructuring, merging 112 of 223 acute care hospitals, and the merged hospitals fared the worst. Financial performance declines; labour productivity does not change; wait times for patients rise; and there's no indication of an increase in clinical quality. Why is that? You know what? It's very simple: less sites, less beds, less patients, less nurses.

Nobody is even considering the impact that amalgamation actually has on jobs. We talk here every day—the Tories particularly talk every day about their jobs plan. At the same time, they're wanting to force amalgamation and create more job losses in an area of this province that can ill afford to lose any more jobs.

Interjection: Those jobs don't count.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Those jobs don't count, because they're good-paying jobs. They pay more than 10 bucks an hour.

The United Kingdom has already done the study.

I think that the Ministry of Health and the Liberal government have failed miserably. This restructuring has been going on since the Harris days, 20 years ago, and no one has ever done any final study to determine what the effects of all these mergers and amalgamations have been on patient outcomes. Yes, they're driving wait times—wait times for surgeries, wait times for knee replacements and hip replacements—but neither the Tories nor the Liberals have ever done a study to determine what outcomes there have been for patients.

Well, I can tell you, as a nurse—I can tell you, as someone who represented nurses for the last 20 years—what the outcomes have been. The outcomes have been things like, at the Niagara Falls hospital, the Welland hospital, the St. Catharines hospital, C. difficile outbreaks, MRSA outbreaks, because of overcapacity, because of 100 people a day waiting in admit-no-beds in the emergency departments because there wasn't a bed to put them in. That was the result of mergers and amalgamations in the NHS.

The amalgamation of the NHS back in 2000, I think it was, was a mess from the get-go. It was the largest merger that has ever taken place in this province, and they were underfunded to boot, up until fairly recently.

We always hear, "Well, it's going to save all this money." Well, in fact, the London Free Press has an

article, I think, from 2012 for London, Ontario. The cost of that merger was \$1.3 billion in London, Ontario. That's what it cost. That \$1.3 billion would have better served for front-line patient care.

I can tell you, in the Niagara Health System to date, there have been millions and millions of dollars paid out in severance pay. I would hazard a guess that there isn't one VP or one director any longer who is even from the Niagara Peninsula. They've all been parachuted in from Hamilton, from Mississauga, from Toronto, you name it. There is nobody who lives in Niagara, who knows Niagara, who is left there. All of that money that went to severance packages should have actually gone to service patient care.

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I'm very concerned about the proposal that's coming forward. I don't think it's going to meet the needs of the patients or the people who live in my community, in an area where we have a high number of seniors and it's growing.

Now, we talk about petitions. I've already submitted 20,000 petitions from the residents of Niagara, and here's a whole pile more to be submitted with respect to the proposal that Tim Hudak is putting forward today.

Nobody takes into account geography or travel or the lack of public transportation in Niagara. It could take somebody on our public transportation system—which is still only a trial, I believe; Mr. Maves would know that. It's still a trial, the regional public transportation system. It could take somebody as long as five hours to get from Fort Erie to a new hospital if they had to take public transportation, just because of the way the routes run.

Back to the local opinions: Barry Sharpe and Vance Badawey have both come out against the PC plan. Sharpe states that with the projected population growth in east Fonthill, west Port Robinson and north Welland, the population can support its own hospital. Does Niagara Falls need a new hospital? Absolutely. The Niagara Falls hospital was old when I was young, which I am no longer, and they needed a new hospital then. Do we support a new Niagara Falls hospital? Absolutely, we do. Niagara Falls needs a new hospital, but so do the communities in south Niagara, which need a hospital to support our population and our seniors.

Certainly, the Welland city council and their health care committee are behind keeping the local hospital open. The Port Colborne mayor, Vance Badawey, once again, said that his support was contingent upon his site and the Fort Erie site remaining open. Badawey said he was glad that Horwath recognized the services at the two locations, and Barry Sharpe said that Horwath was on the right track.

Speaker, I think that Mr. Hudak and the Tories need to come down to Niagara and have a look at what we have there and what we're concerned about.

While I've still got a few minutes here, I just want to talk about—Tim Hudak talked about this being his hometown of Fort Erie. Now he lives in Grimsby and he's got friends and family who live in Fort Erie. Well, I

can tell you that when the Vertis plant closed in Stevensville, you didn't see Tim Hudak on the picket line. He didn't even return the calls of those workers in that community. If you call that supporting people who live in Fort Erie, in Stevensville, in his riding, I don't.

When the board and the CEO of the West Lincoln Memorial Hospital came forward when their redevelopment plan got trashed in the 2012 budget by the Liberals, Tim Hudak was nowhere to be seen. He wasn't interested in moving forward in that redevelopment project until the money situation, the fiscal situation, was cleared up here in the province. But now—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I try not to interrupt the debate, but on a number of occasions you referred to the member for Niagara West—Glanbrook by his personal name. It would serve to remind all members of the House that that's not the way we do things. If it's a minister, you refer to them by their ministry title. If it's a member of the Legislature, you refer to them by their riding. I think you know the name of the riding that we're talking about. I would ask the member to do that in future, in the remainder of her remarks.

Ms. Cindy Forster: Speaker, I apologize for that.

In closing, I'm going to continue to fight for the constituents in my riding and across south Niagara in preserving the very important hospital and health services in my riding and in Niagara South, and so should Tim Hudak and the Tories—

Interjection.

Ms. Cindy Forster: —and so should the leader of the official opposition, and so should the Minister of Health.

P3s: Andrea talked a bit about—or the leader of the third party, I guess, my leader, talked a little bit about P3s and the cost of actually paying your friends instead of using that money to provide front-line health care. The Minister of the Environment spoke about that. He talked about the \$800-million hospital in St. Catharines, but in fact, at the end of the day, it's about a \$1.5-billion investment. There's another \$700 million that could be going to front-line health care instead of paying your friends.

We in the NDP are committed to public services. We're committed to public health care. I'm going to continue to fight for the constituents in my riding.

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

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate. I feel like I'm at an all-candidates meeting for a by-election that is yet to be called. Certainly that's shaping up here.

What I'm hearing, obviously, is two parties putting forward a very, very different approach to the health care needs of constituents in the Niagara area, and I think there's a good reason for that. I think any public opinion poll you see over the years—and this goes back, certainly since I've been in politics—will bring you back information that tells you that one of the things the constituents in almost any jurisdiction are concerned about, more than anything else, is their health care: their hospital services,

doctors, prescriptions and pharmaceuticals. Obviously, it's an issue that's near and dear to the hearts of them and their families.

I went through this myself when I was first elected in 2003. There really was no plan for a new hospital in Oakville. There was talk about the need for a new hospital. Certainly the hospital, an excellent hospital, was operating under circumstances that simply needed to be changed. The site of Oakville-Trafalgar Memorial Hospital was quite limited. The building had been added to by previous governments over the years and there was simply nowhere else to go. There were more people moving to Oakville.

There was a process undertaken. Starting from 2003, instead of talking about building a new hospital, we decided we were going to build one. We decided we were going to build the right hospital in the right location. The way we did that was that we went out and we engaged the community. We involved the community. We listened to the people in the hospital and health care field around the region, and we listened to people like Dr. Kevin Smith, who has brought forward a report with some very strong recommendations saying that if you're going to look after the health care needs to the best of your ability in the Niagara region, you should follow these recommendations, and that this would be a good way of doing it.

I should point out at this point in time that these are just recommendations. They're very well thought out recommendations, in my opinion. I think that obviously an awful lot of expert work has gone in to getting them to this point, and they are in the hands of the government and a decision will be made in the very near future. The LHIN has been involved in these discussions. The community has been involved in these discussions. During the period of time that we were going through the planning for the Oakville hospital, certainly, there was a variety of opinions as to where that hospital site should go. The council was engaged. The councillors were engaged; the neighbourhoods were engaged; the doctors were engaged. At the end of the process, we arrived at a site that I thought was a very, very good site.

I'm pleased to report that the hospital is under construction right now. It is, I would think, about 50% built. It's on budget, it's on time, and the people of Oakville now are looking forward to something that is realistic, that is a building that is tangible, whereas in the past the process of the previous government was to talk about hospitals, but if they were famous for anything, it was for closing hospitals, not for opening hospitals.

Since we came to power in 2003, I can look at a list right here that has got 17 hospitals that have been completed: William Osler in Brampton; Royal Ottawa; West Parry Sound; Peterborough Regional; Thunder Bay Regional; Mattawa; Runnymede Healthcare Centre; Bloorview kids rehab, which we all know; Sudbury Regional; Pembroke Regional; Sioux Lookout; Sault Area Hospital; North Bay Regional Health Centre; Woodstock General Hospital; Sarnia's Bluewater Health; Niagara Health System; and Bridgepoint Health.

Under construction, we've got my hospital; Halton Healthcare Services; St. Joseph's Health Care in London; St. Joseph's Healthcare in Hamilton; Cornwall Community Hospital; Humber River Regional Hospital; Women's College Hospital.

You can go to Joe Brant; we're putting an addition on Joe Brant right now. Milton is going to get a fantastic renovation, in Ted Chudleigh's riding. But these are all hospitals that have been planned, that have been planned the right way. The expertise has been listened to and now they've turned into projects that are actually bricks and mortar, doctors and nurses and all the expertise that goes along with a proper health care system.

1510

I'm standing here today saying that I will support this motion because, in my estimation, what it's saying is we should do what this government said it was going to do all along, that this is the right way to plan for a hospital. I realize that everyone's anticipating a by-election and that people are looking forward to having a debate on this, I would imagine, in the future. And there's a differing view. You had the third party just express the view that somehow you can keep all these hospitals open and you can build a big regional one.

The opposition is coming forward with a motion that I think is probably the way to go and the one I'll be supporting, and that is to listen to the expertise and to move ahead the way that we would have moved ahead in any event. If it needs to be said again, that's fine. I think you'll find support—

Interjection: Already being done.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Yes. You'll find support from this side of the House. We're supporting it. That's why we appointed Dr. Kevin Smith to do this work in the first place, so that he would come forward with the recommendations that he's come forward with.

It seems to me that what we're saying today is we're going to reconfirm the procedure or the process to build a new hospital that was put in place by this government. It's worked in the past. It's worked in all of the other places that I read out—17 completed and another six under construction: Joe Brant, Milton is under construction, Georgetown is under construction, the emergency room there that was needed so badly—part of Halton Healthcare Services—and now Fergus, Speaker.

There's a variety of needs that drive the growth of hospitals. In the case of Milton and Oakville, and Burlington to some extent, it was population growth. There was just a lot of people moving into those communities at the same time, and a plan was put in place to make sure that the health care needs were there to accommodate those people.

So if we look past the rhetoric of the day, I think you've got two parties across the room that are trying to position themselves as best they can on an issue that is obviously of importance to the people of Niagara region. I think if they look at the track record of this government as far as building hospitals, they'll find a list that runs off the page. They'll also find a government and a party that

are committed to a process that leads to the completion of those hospitals.

If you want to talk about hospitals, there's a number of ways you can talk about them. If you want to build them, and you want to build them efficiently and effectively, I think there's a process you have to undertake—that should be undertaken. That's what we're purporting to do today.

I'm getting a hospital in my community, Speaker, that is triple the size of the existing one. I'm getting a hospital in my community as the result of the process that was undertaken. It's got an oncology centre. People in Oakville in the past did not have access to cancer care; now they will as a result of this. It's a \$2.7-billion investment—a huge investment, the largest investment that any government, local, regional, or federal, has ever made in the town of Oakville. It's one that is met, I think, with the approval and satisfaction of people from all political parties. They know it's the right thing to do.

The right thing to do in the Niagara region is to follow the process that's been outlined.

I'll be supporting the motion today. I'd urge all members of the House to come together and support it.

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

Mr. Steve Clark: It's a pleasure for me to join in the debate. I have to tell you first, Speaker, through you to the member for Oakville, that I really appreciated his address and the fact that he is going to be voting in favour of this motion. When the Minister of the Environment spoke, I wasn't so sure, because he talked about some of the paragraphs—one particular paragraph in this motion that he didn't like. I just want to say that we have these opposition day resolutions. I wasn't particularly fond of a passage in the New Democrat opposition day last week and still I voted in favour of it as well because we need to send a message when some things need to move forward.

I know everyone has their own little relationships. I know the Minister of the Environment and the member for Welland obviously have a vested interest in this report and in the Niagara Health System. So does my leader, Tim Hudak, the member for Niagara West–Glanbrook, and the member for Niagara Falls who was here for a number of years, up until just recently.

The thing that I researched—and I read the report. I got the report printed out. I looked at it; I reviewed it. I was very interested in the dynamics of the report, how it happened.

I look at my own riding of Leeds–Grenville. When I was in municipal politics a number of years ago, there was a discussion in the local community of Brockville about the two hospitals, the Brockville General Hospital and the St. Vincent de Paul Hospital. There was a woman, Jean Macintosh, who led the process of discussion which ultimately ended up in the general merging of those two hospitals, and operating one now as the Garden Street site as well as the main site.

I know we have discussions about how health care is provided locally. I meet with front-line health care pro-

professionals all the time, whether they be at the Brockville General or at the Kemptville District Hospital or just outside my riding. The member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington has a hospital in Smiths Falls that was just recently renovated that serves the top end of my riding.

Given the proximity of Leeds–Grenville, obviously, we have folks who get service in Ottawa at some of the Ottawa hospitals, in Kingston at some of the Kingston hospitals, and I appreciate that. I know that the Minister of Community Safety is here, and she knows I don't run into Ottawa and make derogatory comments about the government, because I recognize that in my riding, health care is provided in a number of facilities, both inside and outside of Leeds–Grenville. That's just the way it is. That's just the way that having a rural riding is, in terms of health care.

I looked to the Leader of the Opposition, my leader, Tim Hudak, and I talked to him about this report. I was surprised at some of the comments that were being made. I did some research and looked at his comments supporting this process, back to May 2012, months before this final report was tabled in September 2012. I know that he has spoken to Kevin Smith numerous times, since his appointment, about this report and about the services that would be provided in the local communities. He met with the NHS leadership about three weeks ago on that famous planning grant that was talked about earlier, the one that I think folks in that riding wanted some answers on, and I'm glad the minister gave the answer. I'm not going to comment about the timing of the answer.

I know there was some concern in the riding. I know that the member had an event, a round table, in his riding about this. I know a number of doctors approached Tim about whether the government was going to be doing this. There was some concern, so I'm glad that the member for Oakville and perhaps others speak in favour of this.

But anyone who reads this report, Speaker, knows the amount of detail Mr. Smith has put into its recommendations. I was surprised, after they chose the Niagara Falls and the Welland site through that consultation process that included the local mayors, that was chaired by the regional chair, that involved speaking to a number of individuals and groups—when you start looking at the details, there was an unbelievable amount of consultation done in the areas affected.

But to determine the final site location between Welland and Niagara Falls—I was surprised to understand the level of detail that Mr. Smith went to, to get into that recommendation. He brought together various Niagara region urban planners who looked at issues like traffic patterns, road access, road closures and growth projections to figure out what site would be the best option. He also took all that data to an expert geographer from McMaster, who then said the Niagara Falls site was an appropriate, good location. Then he also took that same information to a geospatial geographer, who also agreed. I was so surprised at that, that that level of detail

would be done by Mr. Smith, as the supervisor, to get to this point with the recommendation. It was very, very impressive.

1520

Again, anyone, any of the members who look at this report, will see some of the recommendations. I know that our critic, Ms. Elliott, quoted from page 39 earlier about the fact that, “While some would prefer a full-service hospital in every community, we now know that is not feasible in today’s environment for the following reasons:

“—lack of critical mass to provide expertise in procedures and clinical practice;

“—major increase in costs to duplicate equipment and infrastructure (buildings);

“—inability to recruit expertise with low-volume workload;

“—costs to maintain coverage when clinical volumes do not support physician income.” I’ll use the last point of point four: “These funds should be used to provide direct patient care, not to supplement volumes.” So when we talk about patient care, I think Kevin Smith looked at every aspect that needed to be done.

It’s a tough decision. I want to go back to the budget. The budget rescoped my hospital expansion at Brockville General. I remember sitting in this chamber listening to the budget. I rushed upstairs. The first phone call I made was to the then CEO of Brockville General. I asked if he wanted me to rail against the government, and they said no. They accepted the government’s decision to rescope their hospital project as part of the budget process, and they decided they were going to work with the LHIN and the local community to get it done. I accepted what the CEO, on behalf of the staff and board chair, said. Does it mean I’m still not going to meet with front-line staff? I’m still going to meet with them. I’m still going to meet with anyone involved in the delivery of health care in my riding, and I’m going to come and speak on their behalf every time I can.

But when you look at this report and look at the savings—I was surprised not just at the \$879-million cost savings that option one would provide, but also the \$9.5 million savings annually on the cost. So this report, Speaker, for any member that has not read it, is a very interesting read, not just what’s in the document but also the level of consultation that Kevin Smith had done.

I wanted to get these comments on the record in support of my leader and my other caucus members. I want to thank you, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to put some comments on the record this afternoon.

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

M^{me} France Gélinas: I will use the few minutes that are left on the clock for the NDP to talk a little bit about some of the recommendations that Dr. Kevin Smith had made and that form the basis for the motion that the Progressive Conservative Party has brought forward in this House today.

The first thing I want everybody to understand is that I come from northeastern Ontario. I represent people who

get most of their care in small, rural hospitals. There are close to 50 of them throughout Ontario. Since I have been here, since the Liberal government has been in power, not once have we talked about: How do we make small and rural hospitals good hospitals? How do we make sure that the care they provide is as good as one can get, for all of those Ontarians in northern and rural communities that depend on those small hospitals? Because, make no mistake, what Dr. Kevin Smith is proposing is the closing of many small hospitals, like we have seen. When they were in power, they came through with the hospital restructuring commission and closed hospitals in every part of this province. And now we’re seeing something similar again—not to be outdone by the Liberals, though. They brought forward a bill called the Excellent Care for All Act. That sounds good, eh? They got an A+ for the title. But when you start to look at what’s in excellent care for all, what it says sort of makes sense.

If you build centres of excellence and you make sure that people get really, really good at doing hundreds and thousands of the same things, if you do 1,000 knee surgeries every year, you will be very good at doing that knee surgery. You will do it with the best practices and the best time, with the cheapest—and it will be very good, and good for those people who live next to that centre of excellence. But for the people I represent and for everybody who lives in northern and rural Ontario, what does that mean? That means that services are not available in our communities anymore because the small and rural hospitals—nobody looks at them. We say, “To do a knee surgery in a rural hospital costs way too much money. We can do this way cheaper in a big central hospital, in a centre of excellence that does really, really good work.” But it always comes at a cost. And this cost is always borne by the same people. This cost is borne by the people who live in northern and rural Ontario, who depend on their small hospital. We are now on a path where—I call it this: Our small hospitals will self-implode. So you tell them that you can’t do hips and knees anymore because, you know, go down to the big centres and they can do them way cheaper and with good outcomes. I don’t disagree with that. But for some people, going to that big centre means they’re not going to get that care. It is just too hard to miss work, to go out there. You have no family; you know nobody, and it’s just—it becomes a barrier to access.

Then you tell the small little hospital, “You can’t do births and deliveries anymore, because if you don’t do 50 of them a year you are a risk to society. You should never do them if you don’t do at least 50 a year.” So not only do they lose their orthopedic department, where you get your hips and knees done—because the big hospitals do them way cheaper—they also lose their obstetrics. Because you know, if you don’t deliver 50 babies, apparently you cannot deliver any. Nobody looked at how we make sure the people who work there keep their skills up so that they can continue to deliver care in small and rural hospitals. No, no, no; nobody looks at that. Nobody looks at how we make a small hospital a good hospital.

You say, “You don’t do enough deliveries in a year, therefore you won’t be allowed,” and you back this up with quality care: “You’re not meeting the quality care standard”—it was decided that 50 was the magic number, and if you did not have this, too bad for you. All of these women now have to go to a big centre of excellence, away from where they live, to deliver their baby. Forget about close to home; forget about being surrounded by the people you love. You deliver in a community you don’t know, hopefully with your partner by your side, and days later the rest of the family will get to meet their brother or sister, the newborn baby.

What does that mean for the small hospital? It means that now they have lost their orthopedic surgeon, because without doing hips or knees, he or she could not make a practice in your community anymore. It means that you’re losing your obstetricians, because if you’re not going to do 50 deliveries, you’re not going to be allowed to do them at all. And then the small and rural hospitals start to self-implode. You don’t have enough work to keep an anesthetist busy—those are the people who put you to sleep. If you’re not doing obstetrics anymore and you’re not doing orthopedics anymore, there’s not much work for your anesthetist, who decides to leave. Once your anesthetist leaves, how do you keep your emergency room open if you don’t have an anesthetist on staff? Then the recruitment and retention issue becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Once you have enough services out of the small and rural hospital, they have such a hard time recruiting and retaining a stable workforce that they will automatically lose other services, because if you don’t have an anesthetist on staff, forget it; you’re not having an emergency room, because how do you do surgery if you cannot put people to sleep? We don’t do that kind of thing without an anesthetist, and it starts to go downhill from now on.

So when we hear things like, “It will help recruit and it will help keep staff”—how does it go? It “will provide better services for patients and families by simplifying physician and staff coverage to enhance response times and reduce wait times; attracting and retaining specialists because of increased workload; and investing”—etc. I have nothing against that; it’s all good. Centres of excellence are good. But we have to realize when we make those decisions that they come with a cost, and this cost is that you’ve just put barriers to access for a whole bunch of people who don’t live next to that centre of excellence.

1530

What I would like to see and what the NDP would like to see: You’ve seen some of that work before, in the budget last year. In the 2012-13 budget, we said that in order for us to support the budget, we needed to see at least \$20 million invested in our small and rural hospitals. Why did we put that in? Well, because we think that every Ontarian should have equitable access to health care. What does equitable access mean? Well, I can guarantee you that Foleyet and Gogama will never do brain surgery, and that the little hospital in Espanola will

never do complicated surgery either. I don’t say “equal”; I say “equitable access.”

The first line of primary care, the first line of acute care services, can easily be provided in rural hospitals. It happens all over the world. If you go to any industrialized country, whether you go to Australia or you go to the UK, if you go anywhere where people live in rural areas, you will see thriving small and rural hospitals that provide top-notch care within health quality guidelines. We don’t have any of that in Ontario.

In Ontario, all we see is that we will build you this P3 hospital as a centre of excellence, and all the programs and services will all be there and it will be so good. All of that is true—it will be so good—but it will come at a cost. It will come at a cost of access to all of the good people who don’t happen to live next to the centre of excellence. To me, this is a huge step back.

To pretend that if you go to a hospital that has all of the new, high-tech technology, that people will be healthier, is a myth that none of us in here should be repeating. It is not high-tech medicine that keeps people healthy; it is the determinants of health. Access to care is just a very small part of this, but we keep repeating and repeating this myth, that if we have all the high-tech stuff in one big, shiny new hospital, everybody will get healthier. That couldn’t be further from the truth, Mr. Speaker. That couldn’t be further from the truth.

What does the NDP want to do? They want to bring balance; they want to bring equity of access to health care to every Ontarian, no matter where they live. They don’t believe in the Liberal way of centres of excellence where, if you don’t live next to it, you don’t get care. And they don’t believe in the PC way either, where you can merge and merge and merge hospitals and make great big ones, and to hell with you if you don’t live close to one of those, I suppose. I’m sure they don’t say this, but the end result is the same.

The end result is the same: You have people with good access and people without. To bring an equity lens through those decisions, we would make different decisions. If we took as a basis that everyone matters, that everyone should have equitable access, then the decisions we put forward will look very different than some of the decisions we have in front of us.

Do some of the hospitals need to be updated? Absolutely. Do people deserve to have access to high technology when it’s needed? Absolutely. But people also need access in their own community, where their loved ones come and visit them and where they’re on the journey of getting better closer to home.

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

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you very much, Speaker, for recognizing me to speak about this motion. I speak a little bit personally about this particular issue and how it impacts around Niagara Falls. I think many of the members know that when my family and I moved to Canada almost 25 years ago—it will be 25 years on December 26 this year—we moved to Niagara Falls.

That's where we first started our home in Canada, and I'm very proud to have attended Westlane Secondary School, where I graduated before going to university.

Obviously, there is a very soft spot in my heart for Niagara Falls and the people of Niagara Falls, as it was my first hometown when I came to Canada. It was the great people of Niagara Falls who welcomed my family and me and got us engaged in the community—I remember getting involved in the local community and local politics. Vince Kerrio, the MPP at that time, served that community very well for many, many years and was a minister in Mr. Peterson's government as well.

But I also have a very soft spot for the Niagara Health System and the care they provide for the people of Niagara Falls and the region, because my parents were involved in a very serious car accident in the early 1990s—about 1990 or 1991—at the intersection of the Niagara Veterans Memorial Highway and Stanley Avenue, which is not that far, a stone's throw away, from the Niagara Falls general hospital.

My parents were, as I said, involved in a very serious car accident, and they were in the hospital for quite a few days—I think a couple of weeks. It was the great doctors, nurses and other health care providers who took care of my parents who made a huge difference on the road to recovery, and I thank them. I think this is my first opportunity publicly to be able to speak in this House and thank all those good people many, many years ago for saving my parents' lives and giving the opportunity for them to continue to grow and build a very healthy and strong life here in Canada.

Niagara Falls is a very vibrant community. It's got a big heart. It's a great economy, and as the community continues to grow, of course, it's important that there remain modern health services available in Niagara Falls. That's why I was very happy when our government, our Minister of Health, appointed Dr. Kevin Smith to the Niagara Health System to bring services back into shape and put them in a strong position. Dr. Smith has done a great job as our government put him into that position, ensuring that we continue to deliver high-quality health care to the people of Niagara Falls and the surrounding area.

Obviously, as we know, and as has been discussed in this House, Dr. Smith has been working and putting together a case for a new hospital in south Niagara, because it is needed, and there is, as we know, growing local support for that. Our government is listening very closely to communities' concerns, looking at the viability of a south Niagara hospital, as has been recommended by Dr. Smith.

As we have done in every instance—I can speak to my experience in Ottawa, in my community of Ottawa Centre, where the Ottawa heart institute is going through a development—there is a process that takes place. The Ministry of Health works very closely with the local health integration network. There are many stages in the process one goes through in order for a project to come into place. It's not something that is done overnight. I

would say there is obviously a lot of science involved in making a project like that happen.

The LHIN and the Niagara Health System are engaged in their work, and they are doing that quite diligently. Of course, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, under the leadership of our Minister of Health, Deb Matthews, has been doing that, and will continue to do that work with the Niagara community.

1540

Like I said, there are many steps that must be taken in order to get a hospital built, and it's very good to see that the official opposition now actually supports building a new hospital in the Niagara community. I recall, Speaker, that when the official opposition was in government, they closed 18 hospitals. They closed hospitals in my community of Ottawa Centre. Grace general, which it seems like half of Ottawa was born at, no longer exists, unfortunately, whereas our government has made sure that every hospital in Ottawa continues to grow.

It was the official opposition which was going to close the only French teaching hospital in all of Ontario, the Montfort—

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Shame.

Hon. Yasir Naqvi: —which was shameful, because it was going to disenfranchise this whole French-speaking community. Our Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services, the MPP for Ottawa-Vanier, Madeleine Meilleur, fought tooth and nail, along with our government of former Premier McGuinty, to make sure that Montfort did not close. I'm very proud that Montfort did not close. In fact, it has doubled in size. It is one of the best teaching hospitals in Canada. But the short-sighted decisions that the official opposition and the leader of the official opposition, who was part of that cabinet, would have made would have been devastating to my community in Ottawa.

I can go on in terms of investments we have made in the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario; the investments we have made in the Ottawa Hospital, both at Civic, which is in my riding, and the general hospital; and the investments we continue to make at the Queensway Carleton Hospital in the west end. Like I said, we're now making a \$200-million investment in expanding the Ottawa heart institute, which is one of the best cardiology institutions in North America, as ranked. All this to say, Speaker, that our government is the government that over the last 10 years has now built, I think, roughly 20 new hospitals across this province. We have a solid track record.

There's a process that must be followed. That process is being pursued in Niagara. The work that Dr. Kevin Smith, who was appointed by our government to make sure that there's strong health care service being provided to the Niagara community, is continuing on. The LHIN and Niagara health services are working closely to make sure that all steps are followed and that there is a new hospital in south Niagara.

I'm happy to see a conversion take place in the official opposition. I think they're starting to see, albeit for by-

election purposes or not, that health care is necessary. I hope that their election platform will not include cuts to hospitals, will not include cuts to doctors, will not include cuts to nurses and other great health professionals who make sure that our communities remain healthy, just like my parents got great health care in Niagara.

My community in Ottawa continues to get good care because of the investments that we're making in our local hospitals.

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

Mr. Bill Walker: It's a pleasure today to follow my colleagues Steve Clark, from Leeds–Grenville; Christine Elliott, from Whitby–Oshawa; and of course our leader, Tim Hudak, from Niagara West–Glanbrook. I want to make sure I put on the board here that our leader, Tim Hudak, was the first on the record to support this.

All of my colleagues spoke very eloquently about the detail of the research that has been done. Just now, Mr. Naqvi talked about the appointment of Kevin Smith by their government, and I'm hoping, Mr. Speaker, that this won't be another case like the Don Drummond report, where, again, they wanted to bring in their expert and then didn't listen to a word he said and just pushed it off to the side.

The NDP, in some of their acknowledgements, have talked about what they think, and it's just not reality. They think they can build a brand new one plus keep all the other ones. It's myopia that we hear from this party every day; they think everything can just keep going. Have they looked at all at the debt and the deficit that we have in our province, that they supported with their budget votes? They continue to think, "We'll just go back to the taxpayer and keep lending and borrowing and asking for more tax money." This is one more example of how out of touch they are with the average people of Ontario, that they think they can have everything. It's myopia by the NDP. We have been there once before, Speaker. For the sake of the people sitting in front of you, I hope we never go there again.

We're debating today the triplication versus optimization of health services in the Niagara region. Again I go back—they think you can just keep everything. Just triple everything. Don't worry about who is going to pay for it. Don't worry that we've put those young people in debt for the next 50 years of their life.

According to published reports and studies, the way to move forward and optimize services for the residents of Niagara region, the patients that will actually receive the services, is to consolidate existing hospitals in Niagara into a new Niagara south hospital, as this will provide better services for patients, families and visitors to that region.

More importantly, according to the report to Minister Matthews from Dr. Kevin Smith, who heard "the wise and thoughtful advice" of thousands of individuals, it doesn't make financial or medical sense to build a new south Niagara hospital and try to keep the existing sites open. We just do not have the ability to be all things to

all people. Sometimes you have to come in and make strategic decisions. You have to actually think this through and make decisions that are going to benefit the most with the resources that we have today. This seems to be the direction we're going in. I hope the Liberals will be able to support this and that the NDP actually can step back and look at reality and say, "You know what? This makes sense."

A new Niagara south hospital should be built at the Lyons Creek location in Niagara Falls—that's what the study said—along with two additional urgent care facilities, to replace the Douglas Memorial Hospital, the Greater Niagara General Hospital, the Port Colborne General Hospital and the Welland Hospital.

This move is expected to save an estimated somewhere around \$800 million. That's almost a billion dollars. If we add the wasted Oakville and Mississauga gas plants, that would be \$2 billion that would get us back on track to our financial—

Mr. Todd Smith: Three hospitals.

Mr. Bill Walker: Three hospitals. Perhaps the Markdale hospital, which I'm going to talk about in a few minutes—much cheaper.

The other thing is, these things could be used to bring more specialists and nurses, the front-line care, the people that actually provide the care, to those people out there listening who are paying the freight.

More importantly, Dr. Smith also warned us that the status quo was unquestionably unsustainable. So if the status quo is unquestionably unsustainable, from their expert, how can the NDP ever support that we build a new one plus keep all of those remaining sites? That just shows how out to lunch they are.

To the Liberal and NDP members, I ask you, why are you delaying? Why can't we move forward and get this thing built to benefit the people who are paying the freight? This government has for the last 14 months sat on, elbowed aside or ripped up Dr. Smith's recommendations. It's no friend of the health care system when you sit there idly doing nothing. Somebody has to make some decisions and move forward. They've dragged their feet.

I applaud again our leader, Tim Hudak, for pushing the Libs to take some action on this file. In my riding, the great riding of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, I'm hearing very similar things. Just like they're neglecting the Niagara region, they have neglected the small community of Markdale in my riding for 10 long years. Back in 2003, after they were elected to govern, the Liberals promised the residents in Markdale and area they would get a new build to replace their dilapidated hospital. They challenged the community to raise \$13 million. In a small, rural area, the people there stepped up and answered that call within a year. That money has been sitting in the bank doing nothing but earning some interest for 13 years. It's reprehensible that they would even be talking about this and not coming forward with their commitment. As of today, that site remains a vacant lot. Can you imagine? You've challenged someone, they came up, they've acknowledged the site needs to have

something done to it, and yet it sits there as a vacant lot. The community funds are still in the bank; the community is frustrated. The community needs to see some action on this file. Enough platitudes of, “We’re talking,” and “We’re revisiting,” and “We’re going to think of new models.” They need to come forward.

How times have changed. In days gone by, Liberal members, such as the esteemed member from St. Catharines—he used to rail against governments who ignored good advice. He called it negligence, if my memory serves me, from Hansard. I’d like to quote him from a speech he gave back in 1998, when he demagogued the Harris government for not listening to thousands of residents: “Their view should be respected because their advice was good.”

I’m just going to waylay a little bit here, but doesn’t this sound a little bit similar to the Green Energy Act? There are people from across this province saying, “Do not put more industrial wind turbines in my backyard. We don’t want them. We don’t need the power. Listen to us at the local level,” and what do they do? They steam-roll and they take more hot air and hot wind. Again, it’s reprehensible how this government treats the people of Ontario.

Let’s look at what’s happening today. This government is not respecting the good advice they’ve received from Niagara Health System supervisor Dr. Kevin Smith and the local leaders. They appointed, they hand-picked, again, just like Don Drummond, their specific person to lead this file. They hand-picked him and said, “We need you to go out and do a comprehensive study and report.” That report has been finished. It has concluded what they should be doing as a government, and yet they say, “Forget that. We don’t want to listen to you.”

It pains me to say that when it comes to rural Ontario, this government holds a dreadful record on hospital infrastructure.

1550

As I said earlier, this government stands behind a decade worth of promises. At the close of this year, 2013, we’re no closer to the build date in Markdale than we were 10 years ago. Empty promises do not provide health care. I ask the Liberal government, will you not honour your commitments? It’s true that they may not have the money to build any more hospitals, and part of that is because their own finance minister, Charles Sousa, in his own constituency, lobbied for the closure of gas plants, wasting over \$1 billion, Mr. Speaker—\$1 billion. How many hospitals, how many cancer surgeries could we do, how many cataracts could we replace with \$1 billion, just on that scandal?

I want to ask here in front of the people of Ontario, and particularly the Liberals, and the NDP who prop them up at every opportunity, will you assure the people of Markdale and the Niagara region that their hospital projects are more important than seat-saver programs?

Interjections.

Mr. Bill Walker: You can’t sit idly by and heckle me without taking acknowledgement that in the first budget

you sat on your hands and propped them up; the second time you stood up and said, “Go for more.” You are hypocrites. You are hypocritical in your talk.

Mr. Speaker, I want—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I apologize for the delay. I ask the member to withdraw his unparliamentary remark.

Mr. Bill Walker: Withdraw, Speaker.

I ask this government and the NDP to stand and speak to the people of Markdale. Will you commit to building the Markdale hospital and will you commit to building the new south Niagara hospital?

Mr. Speaker, we need to ensure that this government is standing up for the people. They want to talk all they want about health care. Do the action; show the people. Instead of wasting money and doing all the the scandals you have, do the right thing: Build that hospital, build the Markdale hospital and make sure the people of Ontario get the health care that they pay for and they deserve.

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

Mr. Steven Del Duca: As I always like to begin with, it’s a pleasure, a privilege, for me to stand in my place today and to have the opportunity to speak to opposition day motion number 4. After that last theatrical performance, Mr. Speaker, I’m not quite sure exactly where to begin. Perhaps I should start off where my colleague the member from Ottawa Centre, the Minister of Labour, ended.

I think it’s really important to state right up front on the record that our government has made significant investments in the Niagara Health System since we took office in 2003. It’s important to note that funding for the Niagara Health System is up over \$127 million. That’s 62% since 2003. We’ve also invested in a state-of-the-art hospital that provides tremendous service for that region and replaced the existing St. Catharines General site and Ontario Street site. This 375-bed facility offers acute and critical in-patient services, among a host of other services.

I can point out some other facts: that hip replacement wait times are down by 205 days in this region; knee replacement wait times are down by 193 days; and CT wait times are down by 77 days, or 80%. This is as a result of the determined efforts on the part of people on this side of the House, on the part of this government since 2003, because of the exceptional advocacy of individuals like the member from St. Catharines, who has served so ably in this Legislature for quite some time, and the former member from Niagara Falls, who, on a daily, a weekly, a monthly basis, since arriving here, advocated so incredibly well for his particular community.

I can spend an awful lot of time talking about the outstanding record that our government has when it comes to investing in crucial health care infrastructure in the province of Ontario. But I’m witnessing something over these last number of days, and it’s kind of curious for me to watch, as someone who still is a relative new-

comer to this place. I'm witnessing today that we have one opposition leader putting forward a motion dealing with an issue that he claims is of relevance—and admittedly, health care is of great relevance in the community of Niagara Falls. Last week, we had another opposition day motion put forward by the leader of the third party which also referenced stuff that's taking place in the same part of the world. That one referenced Fort Erie. When I listened to the questions that are asked by members of both parties, both leaders in particular, over the last number of weeks, it's interesting that they keep on, as a recurring theme, referencing stuff happening in Niagara Falls, happening in St. Catharines, happening in Fort Erie. Over the last 14 or so months that I've been here, I have not heard the leaders or the caucuses on the other side of this House reference this outstanding part of our province so many times, and so it does kind of beg the question as to whether or not their motives are pure or whether their motives are perhaps political, perhaps fanned by those flames because there is, as we know, an impending by-election in this community, Speaker.

Interjection: That's not leadership.

Mr. Steven Del Duca: Exactly. That isn't leadership.

A second ago, I referenced the incredible track record that this government has investing in health care, not just around the province but in the Niagara region specifically, and that does stand in stark contrast to what's taken place when the other two parties—not only when the other two parties were in power but also over these last 10 years.

I think it's really important for the people who are watching at home, particularly those who live in Niagara Falls, who live in Fort Erie, who live in the Niagara region, to remember that while the Ontario Liberal government has been consistently committed to excellence in health care in Niagara Falls and in the Niagara region, the same can't be said, frankly, for the leader of the official opposition. What we are witnessing today is a remarkable change of attitude, a change of stance which I think, from my perspective, can only be explained because of the by-election posturing that we've seen. It was not that long ago that Mr. Hudak himself said that he would not support a new hospital in this area at this particular time.

Again, when I talked earlier, I mentioned that as a government we have increased funding in the Niagara Health System by 62%, and that's the work that we continue to do, we will continue to do, and we are committed to remaining consistent.

But when it comes to the larger issue that's at play here today, when I heard members from both parties standing up and talking about the importance of investing in local communities, investing in their communities—even though the motion deals with Niagara Falls, I heard them up talking about areas like Markdale, a lovely community that I've had the chance to visit, in fact, and a number of the other communities across this province. What's also important to note is that while the people on this side of the House, as was mentioned by the Minister of Labour, people leading on the health care file, like our

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care, like Premier Kathleen Wynne and her predecessor, Premier McGuinty—while there has been consistency on this side of the House for the last nine or 10 years about the importance of investing in crucial, modern health care infrastructure that provides for communities right across the province, notwithstanding where the opposition stands today and what we've heard from them on the record today, I want to make sure that the record is very clear.

Over the last number of months, over the last couple of years, there have been many, many opportunities for members on that side of the House to support investments in local health care in their communities. So for those folks from Niagara Falls who are watching at home and thinking to themselves, “Wow, these folks on that side, be it PCs or be it NDPers, actually have our best interests at heart,” it's important to make sure they understand that there are a number of important hospital projects that were being considered, that are now under construction or completed in a number of ridings across the province. I think it's important to read into the record what members on that side of the House, particularly PC members, did when they had the opportunity to stand up not just for investments and infrastructure broadly, but investments in infrastructure and health care infrastructure in their own ridings, in their own communities.

Speaker, when we think of the Royal Victoria Hospital expansion in the wonderful community of Barrie, the member from Barrie voted against. When I think of the Cambridge hospital redevelopment project in that wonderful community of Cambridge, the member from Cambridge voted against—and the list goes on.

The Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital expansion in the beautiful Ontario community of Burlington: The member from Burlington voted against it. I think of the wonderful community of Halton, not that far away from where we are today. The Milton District Hospital redevelopment: The PC member from Halton voted against it. This list goes on.

Earlier today, in the course of this very debate, the member from Leeds–Grenville stood up to talk about the importance of investing in local community hospitals and local community health care. The member from Leeds–Grenville, with reference to the Brockville Mental Health Centre expansion—he voted against it. This list goes on.

The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke had the opportunity to demonstrate, the opportunity to walk the walk as well as talk the talk. The Renfrew Victoria Hospital dialysis unit expansion, the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke voted against it. In Wellington–Halton Hills, the member voted against the Groves Memorial Community Hospital expansion. Speaker, this list goes on. I've actually edited the list. I've cut it down; the list goes on.

Folks from Niagara Falls are watching at home, and they're hoping, and they're pleading. They understand, because of the advocacy of members like the member from St. Catharines and the former member from Niagara Falls, that they are represented by a government here in

this place that has spent nine going on 10 years investing in modern infrastructure, including building dozens of new hospitals around the province of Ontario. They know; they have confidence in this government, the Ontario Liberal government, to keep proceeding, to keep providing for the Niagara Health System.

What they should be really careful about—it's a notion of "buyer beware." What they really need to be careful about is the words on the other side of this House, from both opposition parties—though most of my quotes today were only from members from the PC caucus because the motion is coming from their leader. But what they really need to be careful about is that that is a group over there that likes to talk the talk on every issue, from health care to so many others, but refuses to walk the walk. The evidence is clear. Over the last 10 years, virtually every time, at every opportunity for members in the Ontario PC caucus, including their leader, to stand up for the importance of investing in crucial, local health care infrastructure, they have taken the easy way out. They've refused to do it, and time after time, they voted against expanding health care in their own communities. People watching at home from Niagara and across the rest of the province need to understand: That's their record. This is an exercise in making sure that they—

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

Mr. Hudak has moved opposition day number 4. Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? I heard a no.

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Excuse me. The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke will not do that again.

All those opposed to the motion, please say "nay."

I believe the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1602 to 1612.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Would the members take their seats, please? All members, take your seats, please. The Sergeant-at-Arms was going to chase them.

Mr. Hudak has moved opposition day number 4. All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura	Fraser, John	Miller, Norm
Arnott, Ted	Hardeman, Ernie	Milligan, Rob E.
Bailey, Robert	Harris, Michael	Milloy, John
Balkissoon, Bas	Holyday, Douglas C.	Munro, Julia
Barrett, Toby	Hoskins, Eric	Naqvi, Yasir
Bartolucci, Rick	Hudak, Tim	Nicholls, Rick
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Hunter, Mitzie	O'Toole, John
Bradley, James J.	Jaczek, Helena	Ouellette, Jerry J.
Cansfield, Donna H.	Jeffrey, Linda	Pettapiece, Randy
Chiarelli, Bob	Jones, Sylvia	Piruzza, Teresa
Chudleigh, Ted	Klees, Frank	Qaadri, Shafiq
Clark, Steve	Kwinter, Monte	Sandals, Liz
Colle, Mike	Leone, Rob	Scott, Laurie
Coteau, Michael	MacCharles, Tracy	Sergio, Mario
Crack, Grant	MacLaren, Jack	Shurman, Peter
Damerla, Dipika	MacLeod, Lisa	Smith, Todd

Del Duca, Steven	Mangat, Amrit	Thompson, Lisa M.
Delaney, Bob	Mauro, Bill	Walker, Bill
Dhillon, Vic	McDonell, Jim	Wilson, Jim
Duguid, Brad	McKenna, Jane	Wong, Soo
Dunlop, Garfield	McMeekin, Ted	Yakabuski, John
Elliott, Christine	McNaughton, Monte	Yurek, Jeff
Fedeli, Victor	McNeely, Phil	Zimmer, David
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine	

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

Nays

Armstrong, Teresa J.	Forster, Cindy	Prue, Michael
Bisson, Gilles	Gélinas, France	Sattler, Peggy
Campbell, Sarah	Mantha, Michael	Schein, Jonah
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Singh, Jagmeet
Fife, Catherine	Natyshak, Taras	Taylor, Monique

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 71; the nays are 15.

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

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made in the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business, such that Mr. Chudleigh assumes ballot item number 72 and Mr. Hudak assumes ballot item number 74.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SCHOOL BOARDS COLLECTIVE BARGAINING ACT, 2013 LOI DE 2013 SUR LA NÉGOCIATION COLLECTIVE DANS LES CONSEILS SCOLAIRES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 19, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 122, An Act respecting collective bargaining in Ontario's school system / Projet de loi 122, Loi concernant la négociation collective dans le système scolaire de l'Ontario.

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

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to be in the House today to speak on Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act. I understand we have spent nine hours and 47 minutes on this. However, I'd like to point out that I've talked to our critic, the member from Cambridge, and got his thoughts on this, and we certainly have some strong concerns on what's actually happening in our education system today.

Mr. Speaker, I know there has been a lot of discussion on this particular bill, but I think what is important is what we as MPPs are hearing about education and what we're hearing from the general public on some of this legislation. Really and truly, the thought of the govern-

ment actually being at the table with all of the money that is spent on education and all the collective bargaining units—I think it’s likely considered to be a fairly decent idea. I know that’s the intent of this. I guess the government would come to the table and it would be—whether or not the school boards would prefer that method or not, I haven’t gotten that particular feedback from my riding.

However, I wanted to point out that what we want to see on this side of the House is what we’re hearing from the public and what we’re hearing in our constituency offices, and that certainly goes back to regulation 274. I don’t know if there’s a member in this House who doesn’t hear continually now about all the young teachers we see graduating from their universities and teachers’ colleges. They’re moving towards their teaching career, and absolutely—I’m not sure how that works as far as the way they’re funded. However, there’s just a tremendous number of young teachers who are not getting an opportunity even to get their foot in the door, even for like one hour of time to supply teach. That’s what I hear on a regular basis.

Actually, what I’m hearing now, Mr. Speaker, is parents are writing me letters. They’re coming to my office; I’m meeting them at functions, even on the weekend. It actually happened a couple of times at parades on the weekend over the Christmas season. I can tell you, I heard clearly that they were kind of upset that they ever sent their kids in to teachers’ college, because some of them now have been there for two and a half, three years and have had almost no opportunity to teach at all. So that has been a real problem.

1620

We, on this side of the House—I think I can say that on behalf of our critic, and some of the other folks may have mentioned this as well—would like to see regulation 274 changed so that we can actually make sure that a lot of people get more of an opportunity in this, and that the best teachers are there teaching.

Certainly we get a lot of complaints. I hear it all the time from people, saying, “These people retired, and now they get 50 days of teaching a year. That’s taking away the opportunity for young teachers. In a way, it’s kind of like double-dipping.” We hear that continually. I would be interested, on some of the comments coming back, if anybody is not hearing that, because it’s actually growing in my riding. The more we talk about education, the more it brings to light the fact that some of these young men and women can’t get any chance at all. Some of them have left the profession. They’ve gone back to community colleges. They’ve moved overseas. Some of them have gone to Korea. They’re maybe teaching some English courses or something like that in some foreign countries, but they really don’t want to be there. They’d rather be in their home province. I think that is something we have to zero in on.

I do want to say, while I’ve got an opportunity, Mr. Speaker—and I hope I’m not too far off the topic here, but in my role as critic for skilled trades and apprenticeship reform I’ve had a lot of really, really good com-

munications with a lot of school boards around the province: some directors of education, people who are really interested in how we’re working with young people as far as working them into the trades as well. Almost everyone thinks that when we’re changing legislation and we’re here debating it—I’m getting a lot of feedback that we should be changing how the curriculum deals with getting young people into skilled trades and making sure that they get an opportunity to be educated early on that.

Last year, I had an opportunity in Regent Park Public School in Orillia. They asked me to go to a career day, and they asked me to go as an MPP to talk to the kids. It was a whole afternoon. For every hour, you were able to talk to a separate group of kids from grades 5 to 8 for up to an hour, and you would circulate with a different class every hour. I told them, of course, about politics, what it was like to be down here at Queen’s Park and how the system worked. There were some kids interested in that, of course, the same as how there are these young people who are pages here in the Legislature today interested in that. However, when I told them about my background in the trades—I’d been a plumbing contractor and worked in the mechanical trades—I actually made a special attempt to talk about that because I wanted to make sure that the young people knew that there were real opportunities beyond high school if they made sure they went into the skilled trades and took training in that area.

Many other jurisdictions in the world do that—some of the European jurisdictions—where they actually try to pinpoint some of the abilities that young men and women may have in very early years in education. I think we’ve got to do that, Mr. Speaker. I’m hearing it over and over again. I hear it from my stakeholders that work with me in apprenticeship reform. I think if there’s one area that any government can make a major improvement on, it’s making sure that we actually start to funnel kids to a certain area if they show that expertise in the early years.

What that costs, I don’t know. I know we’ve taken most of the shops out of most of the schools, but so many people are so—they’re not academically inclined, but they’re inclined to work with their hands and they really get it, as far as the trades; they’re able to work in all the different trades. I think it’s a real opportunity for government, no matter who’s in power, to actually take those steps to make sure that we can do more in that area.

One small step—but it has already proved to be quite positive—is the fact that we have the double-credit system in some of our community colleges with certain high schools. Kids who are in high school or secondary school actually get a chance to take courses at a community college. They have already proven with that that a lot of those kids will go on and take technical programs or different skilled trades areas at some of the applied arts colleges, and I think it’s really important that we do that.

We’re looking at the whole education system today, looking at how many people need jobs who are qualified to be, say, in the teaching profession, and yet we’ve got

thousands of job opportunities coming down the road in the skilled trades area in the province of Ontario. I'm not sure what the College of Trades is doing on that; I don't think they're doing anything as far as lobbying the school boards or the Ministry of Education on how you better educate people to look at a future in the trades, but I think that's one area.

I know I'm right off topic as far as Bill 122, but the reality is that in this bill we're talking about what we can do best for our young people and what we're hearing out there. So I wanted to bring that to the House today and basically say that, in my tours around the province, what I'm hearing is not a lot about collective agreements. I'm hearing a lot about young men and women getting an opportunity to work in a classroom, and what are we doing for young people in our education system that's getting them more involved in the skilled trades?

With that, I'd like to say that one school in particular, under the Simcoe County District School Board—I think it's the Bear Creek school, on the west end of Barrie—has done some phenomenal work out there. It's just a matter of getting the right teachers and the right principal in the right frame of mind to do a lot of really interesting projects. After touring that school, I know that some of the schools, in fact, really want to be directed toward the trades and want to basically make that classroom open to everybody and look at all the different options for the future.

My time is up, Mr. Speaker, but I do appreciate the opportunity to say a few words, and I look forward to further debate.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: It's a pleasure to respond to some of the comments that were made by the member from Simcoe North. I'm glad he mentioned that he was way off topic, because for the most part he didn't talk about Bill 122 at all. But he did mention some very important issues around skilled trades and the need to accelerate experiential learning opportunities in education in the province of Ontario. We are probably very closely in agreement on those issues.

Bill 122, though, essentially brings some clarity to collective bargaining—much-needed clarity on the roles of school boards, the roles of the employer and the roles of the ministry. Of course, the reason we need that clarity is because Bill 115 was imposed on the education sector—not just teachers; people often talk about teachers, but there were educational assistants and support staff. Everyone who worked in education, last fall, was blindsided by this government's heavy-handed approach to collective bargaining. Of course, they were joined quite nicely by the PC caucus at the time, hand in hand, trying to impose a zero and zero contract on teachers even when zero and zero was actually on the table.

We actually do support the fact that clarity is needed, because in the absence of trust, which the Liberals have instilled within the education sector—and actually the

absence of trust that the Liberals have within their own party—I think it makes a lot of sense. Not common sense—I wouldn't go to the Common Sense Revolution perspective—but I do think laying some ground rules so that school boards, who are the employers, actually have a valid role, so that they can bring the voices of their students and their communities to the table.

So we, of course, will be supporting this, and we look forward to it getting to committee so that we can address some of the gaps that exist right now in the legislation as it's presented.

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

Mr. Mike Colle: Just commenting on my colleague from Simcoe North, who, I guess, talked about something he believes strongly in—that is, the need for more of our students to look at skilled trades as a possible career option—I know there isn't enough emphasis on that, because there are amazing careers in all our skilled trades that our young people should consider.

The tragedy, though, is that if you look at popular television and popular media, they never portray people working in the skilled trades. Every time you turn on the TV, it's someone—I don't know—sitting around in a bar talking. That's what they do for a living? I don't know; I see these shows. They should show real-life situations where people in skilled trades do amazing work and build this province.

1630

I'm glad he made those comments about that, but getting back to the real topic, Bill 122, we've been here debating this for quite a long time. I think what we need to do is get this before a committee to hear from the experts and to hear the people out there in Ontario who want to give their input on this bill. I just hope that we get on with listening to the people because I think that people across this province know how complex education is, given that there are so many thousands—tens of thousands—of teachers who have to work through these complex collective bargaining agreements. This is an attempt at bringing some rationality there. It is not an easy thing to do, and that's why we have to get this to committee and make this bill work the best we can. None of this is easy. It is extremely challenging, but at least this is a step toward bringing some kind of rationality to collective bargaining across this great province.

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

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I want to thank the member from Simcoe North, my esteemed colleague Garfield Dunlop, for the outstanding work that he has done with regard to the trades and the College of Trades and what kind of damage that's going to do to the province of Ontario in that particular area of job creation.

As has been mentioned here today, we are certainly baffled by this government at certain times. They've brought forward this piece of legislation, which is a retroactive piece, given the fact that they brought in Bill 115 last fall, which actually circumvented the school

boards' ability to negotiate collective bargaining with the teachers' federations. This is nothing more than to mend those bridges that the Liberal Party has burnt in the hopes that, in the next coming election, they are going to gain the financial benefits of befriending the teachers' federations once again.

Although I think it's very good—and that's what government does; we put in place certain frameworks that we can work with, with our public sectors, in teaching and health care and so on. This falls very short, I feel, of what actually needs to be addressed.

I go to the comments made by my esteemed colleague Mr. Dunlop when it comes to actually addressing key issues in the education system like regulation 274, which I'll talk about a little later on when I address Bill 122.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Questions and comments? The member for—help me.

Mr. Michael Prue: Beaches—East York.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Beaches—East York. Thank you very much.

Mr. Michael Prue: It is a privilege and a pleasure to stand up and comment on the speech made by my colleague the member from Simcoe North. I listened, as I always do, in rapt attention, trying to figure out whether or not he was actually talking to the bill. He did make a number of very good points about the trades and about apprenticeships and about how schools should be teaching them. But then again, I had to wonder because this bill has very little or nothing to do with that. This bill has everything to do with how collective bargains are going to be negotiated in the future.

As I sat there and listened and listened as the 10 minutes went, I figured that maybe this was a windup to maybe having a few bells rung. But I was surprised—and pleasantly surprised—when that did not happen today, because it happened the last time for about five hours. So I guess there really was some desire on his part to say something about education.

I think, though, we need to hear a little bit more about the collective bargaining process, and I am heartened that his colleague, who is going to speak, I guess, next or pretty soon to next, is more in tune with what the Conservatives have to say about the collective bargaining process and whether in fact this bill will help or hinder that process. We do know that the two were joined at the hip around Bill 115 there for a while, both thinking that this was the way collective bargaining should take place in the education sector, but there seems to be a slight parting of the ways: the Liberals, obviously having learned the lesson, and the Conservatives, about not to learn the lesson—and tell us how they're going to proceed. But I thank the member from Simcoe North for his edification.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): That concludes the time for questions and comments. I return to the member for Simcoe North for his response.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I want to thank the member for Kitchener—Waterloo and the members from Eglinton—Lawrence, Northumberland—Quite West and Beaches—East York for their responses.

What I was trying to get at—I know we've talked about the bill for close to 10 hours. However, what I was trying to do in my 10 minutes, Mr. Speaker—and I appreciate the time you give me—is, I don't hear a lot about the collective bargaining unit in my riding. That's what I was trying to get across. I was trying to get across to the House what I hear in the riding when I'm at different events. Very few people ask me about how collective bargaining units are done by the Ontario government and the school boards. I understand that it goes back to Bill 115 and they're trying to clean up some of what they consider to be the mistakes of Bill 115.

However, I just want to point out again, what I hear is that young teachers are not getting an opportunity to teach. I hear that all the time. Many have gone. After teachers' college, after two or three years, they've not even taken the time to find anything, so they've gone off to other provinces or other countries or they've just found some other kind of job. I think that's what I hear, and I wanted to point that out.

Of course I hear, over and over again, about our students, which is the priority. Our students are the number one priority. What are we doing for those students to make sure that they're best trained for the 21st century?

What I'm hearing is that—you know what?—there is not nearly enough emphasis put on skilled trades in our elementary and secondary systems. I think there's an opportunity there for the Minister of Education—she's here today—and she must have people saying this to her all the time, this particular issue, because I can tell you that I hear it, in the few stops that I've made, that people want to know why there's not more emphasis put on directing people or funnelling some young people into areas where they might be best suited to help the workforce more. That's in the skilled trades area. We all know the demographics.

Although my time is up, I do appreciate the opportunity.

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

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: It's always a pleasure to rise in this hallowed chamber and debate, in a democratic fashion, many of the bills that are brought forward. Today in particular, we have Bill 122, the School Boards Collective Bargaining Act.

Mr. Speaker, you have to ask yourself why—as a government or as opposition or third party—we bring forward legislation. Usually, it is to address legislation that's outdated or we upgrade legislation that has been passed previously that doesn't necessarily address the concerns presently today.

This is one of the problems with Bill 122. It was created out of the fact that this Liberal government, over a year ago, brought forward Bill 115. We are all well aware of what Bill 115 did here in the Legislature and out in the general public in our education field. It brought much tension and much disagreement. One of the things that I resoundingly heard from a good number of trustees and board members was the fact that this Liberal

government circumvented the negotiation process and went strictly to dealing with the unions themselves—the federations.

This piece of legislation that has been brought forward does put a framework in place that I think there is a chance that we could probably support. We would, however, like to see some adjustments to the bill brought in. Of course, we've proposed a sunset clause that would actually revisit this bill a year or so after negotiations have been brought forward, just to make sure that we get it right, because it's a waste of taxpayers' money if we keep bringing forward legislation that is actually going to have a detrimental impact on not only our education sector, but health care sector as well.

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What we have here is a government that, as I said, circumvented the negotiation process. We have also seen this pattern develop with the Green Energy Act and the fact that this government has said that they would like to negotiate or sit down and listen and discuss with municipalities about implementing further green energy projects. However, we haven't seen much of this of late. The government says one thing and turns around and does another. So I ask you, Mr. Speaker, through you to the Liberal government, why should we trust you when you bring forward pieces of legislation that you insist are going to be beneficial to the province of Ontario?

We've seen in the last week hundreds of jobs lost here in the province of Ontario because of ill-advised policies brought forward by this government. I would like to point out, Mr. Speaker, as I alluded to in my two-minute hit to the member from Simcoe North, that I am also hearing from many parents and graduates of the bachelor of education program in my riding—their sons and daughters who are now straddled with a lot of accumulated debt. You're looking at at least four years of post-secondary education to get a degree to go into the field of education.

One of the things that I found disturbing is that this Liberal government's solution to a lot of problems that they face is they kick the can down the road. You may have heard that saying before. They don't want to make the tough decisions or ruffle any feathers. Well, sometimes you have to ruffle feathers to get things done. You have to be someone who is willing to stand up and put into action the words that you say. We don't see that. What they've done with the students coming out of the bachelor of education program is they've said, "Well, we'll extend it another year." So they'll make it, instead of a one-year program, a two-year program.

Let's ask ourselves: What does that actually do? Is that actually going to find my son or my daughter or many of my constituents a job in the education field? Not necessarily. In fact, I would argue that all that's going to do is straddle my child with even more debt. Another year of paying tuition, your housing accommodations, your travel expenses. Right now, we're hearing from the universities and the colleges, from the students there, how burdensome these financial woes are for them right

now. So this Liberal government wants to implement yet another year of education so that you can graduate with, instead of a \$35,000 debt, a \$45,000 debt or a \$60,000 debt, and you still can't find employment in the education system.

In fact, this government has said that they are going to address the issue of regulation 274. What have they done? What they've done is they've implemented and they've brought forward Bill 122, which tries to mend the bridges with the federations in the hopes that they can regain the financial support of the federations should there be an election called within the next year or so. This is nothing more than the Liberal Party trying to gain financial favour and befriending the federations once again. It does nothing to help employment here in the province of Ontario. It does nothing to create jobs here in the province of Ontario.

When I speak to and listen to principals regarding regulation 274—what this government has essentially done is taken the principals' hands and tied them behind their backs. They are no longer able to hire teachers who are best suited for their school, their school community, teachers who they feel are going to be best suited for implementing curriculum in the schools. What we have here, I would suggest, is a failure to communicate, and that's too bad. It saddens me.

But Bill 122 also brings forward some elements that they want to address, and we'll have to, again, see how that works.

There are other pressing issues in the field of education that I would like to see addressed as well. I think that Lisa MacLeod, our former education critic, and now Dr. Leone, our current education critic, have done a fantastic job of outlining what exactly we would like to see done in the field of education. Would it fall under the canopy or the framework of Bill 122? I think there's room for that. I think that we should have frameworks in place that actually define the roles of teachers, the roles of boards and the roles of what we can do, moving forward collectively, so that we ensure that we have the best-taught students, not just in Canada but in the world. We haven't seen that in the last decade. The reason I'm here today is because of the Liberal policies that have been brought down in the last 10 years.

As Dr. Leone, my esteemed colleague from Cambridge, has pointed out, in the last six years, Ontario students have been falling further and further behind. Mr. Leone, the member from Cambridge, brought this up: How could that possibly be, when the Liberal government insists that our EQAO standards are doing fine? "They're fantastic. The students in Ontario should be proud of their great successes and advancements in the field of education. We're training our young people to be the best, that are going to be the best."

Mr. Speaker, that is not the truth, and I can tell you that first-hand. My wife can tell you that first-hand. My colleagues back home can tell you that first-hand. And it's not because the front-line teachers don't care about students; they do. But I have to say, it's this government

and the policies that they've implemented that have tied the hands of the front-line teachers, that have them frustrated, and our education system is suffering for it. Bill 122 needs some work.

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

Ms. Teresa J. Armstrong: It's my pleasure and privilege today to stand and have some comments for the member for Northumberland–Quinte West.

He talked about post-secondary education and how expensive it is, and how students are graduating straddled with debt—I think those were the words that he used. It's absolutely true. I am the critic for post-secondary education, and what I hear a lot about is the cost of post-secondary education.

But the bill we're talking about today is Bill 122, and that's the foundation that we want to create in our education system for students so that when they get to post-secondary education, they are prepared. In that part of it as well, Speaker, we need to make sure that we have the teachers happy with the work that they do, and that the students are receiving the best quality of education, which we know they are. There are such good teachers out there, and they're doing great work. I know they're in it because they love the profession, and they want to make sure that they relay all their education and all their knowledge to our students and feed them the best education they can have, so that when they do go to post-secondary education, they are prepared.

That's why it's important to get this Bill 122 right. We don't want to see division amongst teachers and school boards. The government has proposed that there's going to be a local table where you have the employer and the employees, which is the school board and the teachers, at the table. Hopefully, when they come together, they can work things out. That's where bargaining should be done: at the table, not in the Legislature, like Bill 115.

1650

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

Mr. Bill Mauro: From our side of the House, we've now had 10 hours of debate on Bill 122. Forty-five members have spoken to the bill, and all three parties, as we understand it, are in support of the bill. As the member has said, he's got some amendments that he'd like to see to Bill 122. We would suggest allowing that to happen. Let's get second reading done, move it to committee and then work on some of the suggestions the member may have.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the member from Northumberland–Quinte West. I think the important issues he has raised are ones that require the additional time that has been mentioned, because of the fact that we're probably looking at, if not the most important, certainly a very close second in terms of the manner in which the future of Ontario lies on a go-forward basis.

It's always in the next generation, and so it behooves us that whatever steps we are taking, or whatever ideas we're putting forward, do have the full benefit of our comments, because the future hangs on how we go forward. I think this bill sets a precedent and is therefore something we need to have thorough time on.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: Just for the record, I want to point out that the government has extended this debate, and yet they keep getting up and saying, "That's enough debate." So it feels very much like games. Actually, that's really what it felt like for the front-line people in education in September 2012, when a little house of cards was going on here at Queen's Park, and all of a sudden the Liberals were these tough people against unions and brought in Bill 115 and held hands with the PC caucus and imposed a two-year contract of zero and zero, even though zero and zero was already on the table.

I just want to point out that New Democrats are happy to see this piece of legislation go to committee, because there are some big issues with it, even though we acknowledge that clarity for school boards, employees and the ministry is necessary.

One of the things we will be addressing in committee is the provision that allows the employer bargaining agency to be substituted in if, in the minister's opinion, the employer bargaining agency is unable or unwilling to perform its duties. It's basically an opt-out clause if the minister doesn't like the way negotiations are going. They put some language into this piece of legislation that would allow them to bring in a substitute. In my mind, I call this the Laurel Broten clause, because she didn't really like the way things were going last time, and when they went really bad, they went really bad.

Also, there's this other part about good faith with the crown: The employer should co-operate in good faith with the crown. I think that when you have language like that in legislation, "good faith" might mean different things to different people. So we have some concerns with that very subjective language.

We're going to get this to committee, though, regardless of the extended debate. It will get there, and we will work to make it a stronger piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): We now go back to the member for Northumberland–Quinte West for his reply.

Mr. Rob E. Milligan: I just want to thank the members from London–Fanshawe, Thunder Bay–Atikokan, of course my esteemed colleague from York Simcoe, and Kitchener–Waterloo for their comments.

I can appreciate how some might be a little frustrated that this bill hasn't been sent to committee already. But, at the same time, I felt passionately enough that I would like to address this bill, and I hadn't had the opportunity yet. I think it's the democratic process, and it's our right to do so. I appreciate what the member from Thunder Bay–Atikokan pointed out, but I also appreciate that he loves the fact that we live in a democracy, and we're allowed to have that opportunity.

There are definitely going to be amendments made to this bill when it goes to committee, and that's going to be great. We're going to hear from various stakeholders who are also going to bring forward their ideas as to what and how we can make this bill much, much better.

As I mentioned, Mr. Speaker, we are going to be putting forward the sunset clause that would allow government to revisit the framework that's being proposed and brought back into place, just to make sure that we do get it right. I can't emphasize this enough, because many times I've seen bills move forward and go to committee and come out of committee that have been passed that I think because—the member from Kitchener–Waterloo pays attention to language and words, and the language and wording in those bills are inadequate, and we know that we're going to have to revisit this at a further date.

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

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have a few minutes in which to discuss some of the implications around Bill 122.

First of all, the basis of this is formalizing a provincial role in the bargaining process. Historically, unions would have negotiations going on with their corresponding board, and if the negotiations reached a certain impasse or a certain point in time, then the federation was always in the position to call for a vote, which meant that the provincial negotiators actually came in and took part directly with the negotiations between them and a particular board.

In essence, the unions have had provincial bargaining for many, many years. They just did it on an individual basis. Of course, this allowed for negotiations to include certain benefits in one part of the province that were not in another part of the province, and very often, as time passed, those particular benefits would then find their way over in later bargaining between a different board and its teachers. So, in fact, for some time the provincial oversight by the negotiators for the unions has always been there. The board is not in the same position, and so now we have the province in that role where it is now sitting at the table. I think it's important to understand sort of the way in which this has morphed from local communities with local leadership making decisions for the locality.

This is a process bill. It deals with this particular process and modernizing—I think most people would agree—the process. But I think that, for many of us, we would like more. We want more than a process bill. This is a ministry that has a \$21-billion cost, \$21 billion per year for the Ministry of Education. It's interesting to note that, since 2003, there has been an increase of that budget by \$8 billion more, with 250,000 fewer students. So if people are expecting a results bill, this is not the right one to be looking at.

It's a bit disconcerting, again, because if you look at international test results, they indicate that in fact Ontario is in a decline in student achievement when compared to other jurisdictions. When I listen to the Minister of Eco-

nomics Development and the Minister of Finance talking about the innovation that's just around the corner, it makes me a little nervous because I think that's dependent on having those kinds of test scores that place us in that international league.

1700

In fact, the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario has recognized that there's a gap between the expectations of those leaving secondary school and their arrival in post-secondary education. That's a huge issue. Universities have commented on students not being well prepared for post-secondary admission. So there's a lot of work to do in following up on that.

As I say, it's a process bill, not a results bill, and I think that when you look at things like regulation 274, it's really unfortunate that what we are looking at here is something that should be the power of the principal. In fact, I think hiring should be the principal's prerogative. In my experience, people purposely looked for a variety of qualified staff. They looked for a variety—a panoply, if you like—of talent, of interest, of experiences, of teaching style, of age or ethnicity. I think that it's designed in a way that they can expose students to the fullest possible range.

Why? Because teachers are role models. They are mentors. Different students learn differently. Different teachers have different teaching styles. These are all things that should be taken into account. The notion that it should be based on one criterion, that of seniority, simply flies in the face of the whole idea of a principal being able to put a staff together that will reflect the best interests of his students.

It's also something that allows him to have what I refer to as the mild eccentricities of individuals. I think of one particular case where I know that that's how some people would have described this particular teacher. One of the things that struck me was that she inspired kids who would never have stayed in school without her, and it's those kinds of opportunities that I feel are overlooked by taking such a narrow approach in this regulation.

I think back on the kids who would have been influenced by this particular teacher. Then there were the kids who were influenced by a phys ed teacher, and they would stay in school for the football season, but then they got hooked a bit and they would stay for the rest of the year. Those are the kinds of people we want teaching our children. Those are the kinds of people we want representing us, and age has nothing to do with that—and I guess I mean that seniority has nothing to do with that.

I recall a colleague of mine who was a World War II veteran, and the stories that she could tell students and the experience that she brought to the teaching experience—she probably would have her job on the basis of seniority, but that's not the point. The point is what she had to offer to students. I think that in every school, everyone should be able to see themselves as being part of that puzzle, of fitting into that jigsaw puzzle to make the complete picture, in order to be able to inspire young people to take whatever direction in their own personal

lives they can find so that they can move forward and be successful.

Teachers have a unique opportunity, and to be able to provide that kind of leadership in the community is the ultimate of the principal—as I say, a principal’s prerogative. He’s the one who should be putting those pieces together in such a way that his students’ needs will be best addressed. There are many examples of teachers who have provided that kind of leadership, but it’s always on the basis that some people are going to thrive on one person’s teaching style or leadership and other kids are going to learn better from someone else. You can’t make it regulated on the issue of seniority. Ontario students deserve better. If we want that innovation and those scores, we have to do the very best, and the very best is hiring the most suitable. Thank you.

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

Mr. Michael Prue: It’s a pleasure to comment on my colleague the member from York–Simcoe’s speech, and I listened to it again. It’s not so much that she was talking about the bill; she was talking about the influence of teachers. I think very often we are forgetting, even within the confines of this bill, which is the collective bargaining principle and how the teachers collectively bargain so that they can get proper wages and working conditions and health benefits and all the things that come from that—you still have to remember—I listened to the member from York–Simcoe talking. You still have to remember that these teachers are often very incredible people. She talked about teachers who have sometimes influenced the students simply because of their love of football, sometimes because of their love of learning and sometimes because of turning a kid around who is thinking that school is not for him or her. Those are the teachers that we need to have in the system, but part of the way that we keep them in the system is by a whole system of collective bargaining. They have to feel secure within the job. They have to feel secure that their seniority matters. They have to feel secure in the job, that the amount of money they’re being paid is commensurate with the work that they do and with the education and the qualifications that they have.

The collective bargaining process is that sort of great leveller, where the teachers come together once every couple of years and sit down on an equal footing with their bosses, whether those bosses be here in the Legislature or the school boards across Ontario, and say what is a fair process for them, for the students that they teach, for the education system and indeed for the government of Ontario. So I thank the member from York–Simcoe for her contribution.

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

Hon. Liz Sandals: I’m very pleased to respond to the comments from the member from—I have to find it.

Mrs. Julia Munro: York–Simcoe.

Hon. Liz Sandals: York–Simcoe; thank you.

There were a number of comments about various educational issues, but I think somebody made the

comment earlier that they hadn’t heard people in their constituency talking about collective bargaining. I would like to say thank you. That’s a bit of a compliment. The reason they’re not talking about collective bargaining is because at the moment we’re not doing it and life is calm. But there is some urgency here because all the collective agreements in the province will expire in August 2014. I think, if we want to keep constituents not talking about collective bargaining, we need to find a better way to do it than what unfolded last time. We admit that.

What we’re proposing here is a way of doing collective bargaining a bit differently that has general agreement between the people who are going to be doing the collective bargaining. The point being here, we need to get on with passing this legislation so we can do collective bargaining differently. What that means is that we need to get this bill to second reading vote. We’ve had over 10 hours of debate. Yes, the government did ask to have the debate carry on when we reached six and a half hours, but I need to explain to the viewers that that’s because we did not have all-party agreement on actually having that second reading vote. So if everybody would agree on having the second reading vote, we would be delighted to stop debate instantly. But as long as people keep getting up and saying, “Well, we want to talk some more,” more talking will happen. I would encourage us all to agree on having the second reading vote and get on with it.

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

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, I want to get up and talk some more. I hope that’s okay. I don’t think I’m breaking any guidelines or rules here. That’s why we’re here.

1710

I very much enjoy the presentations from the PC member for York–Simcoe. The member is also a member of OSSTF. Her presentation followed the presentation by the PC member from Northumberland–Quinte West, who is a former member of OSSTF. I’m a PC member; I’m a former member of OSSTF. I’m sure there are lots of former high school teachers on the other side as well.

I think I can speak for these two members, as former high school teachers: We take education very seriously. I say that in the context that I certainly found teaching high school was a lot of fun. I really enjoyed it. I really enjoyed the kids; I enjoyed the students. I taught grade 9 through to grade 12—large classes. I was in the tech wing. I taught agriculture and environmental science.

It’s too bad, when we stand up to speak, that we don’t talk more about the students and the kids. I know the Minister of Education just stood up to speak. I don’t know whether she mentioned “student” or “pupil” at all. I know that someone did a count. I think she mentioned students maybe four times in her opening speech, and I emphasize only—only four times.

That’s the nature of this legislation, and it seems to be the nature of the school system we have now. It was a profession when I taught. It seems to be dominated by

organized labour, and when we talk about education in this House, we seem to spend all our time talking about labour relations and collective agreements and collective bargaining. I think that's a little sad.

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

Ms. Catherine Fife: I certainly don't mind getting up and talking about public education, but I do think, though, it is incumbent on us to actually talk to the legislation that's before us. For the most part, people have been talking about regulation 274, which has to do with seniority and has to do with hiring and has to do with principals. What's before us right now is a piece of legislation that is trying to provide some clarity around the rules of collective bargaining and negotiations, around employers and around the role of the ministry and the role of employees—the employee bargaining agents. That's what we're supposed to be talking about, and yet here we are extending this debate and criticizing aspects of the education system, which in some instances actually should be criticized. I mean, education needs our constant attention. We should be working more collaboratively together to address the emerging needs of the 21st century learning skills that are needed. Yet we are talking about a piece of legislation before us right now that is a response to a time of crisis in the province of Ontario.

What the PC caucus doesn't seem to understand is that collective bargaining does matter. It does matter, because peace and stability in education does matter, and this Bill 122 is essentially a response to a time of crisis: a manufactured crisis, a crisis that was brought upon the people who work in the education system and the students—yes, the students. When you talk about classes, when you talk about education, when you talk about the conditions by which students are learning in our schools and the levels of tension and crisis that were brought about by Bill 115, you are talking about students.

What needs to happen—if people aren't going to continue to talk about actually bringing clarity to the collective bargaining process—is that this piece of legislation needs to get passed so we can fix it when it gets to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I return now to the member for York–Simcoe, who has two minutes to reply.

Mrs. Julia Munro: I appreciate the comments made by the members for Beaches–East York, Haldimand–Norfolk and Kitchener–Waterloo, and the Minister of Education.

In my remarks, I did refer to the bill, and I certainly thought that giving a historical framework made it clearer that, obviously, this is moving forward and modernizing a process. However, the issues that pop up around it are ones, I think, of equal concern. When several speakers referred to collective bargaining, this is the only opportunity that has been provided to be able to raise issues around regulation 274 and the question of seniority. As I understand it, this is in terms of recognizing

priority over hiring. It still recognizes the value of the collective bargaining process.

To those who look at the question of the timing of this debate, I think that, as many have said, there is an opportunity. This is our opportunity to make comments, and it's our prerogative to continue to make them. Democracy is not necessarily the most efficient method, but one that provides people with the freedom and opportunity to make these comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Before I ask for further debate, I would remind members that, when we're debating this bill, members should ensure that their remarks come back to the bill. I realize that it's an education debate and there are other issues that members want to bring forward, but really, the remarks need to come back to the subject that is raised in the bill. I would just remind members of that before I ask for further debate.

Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: In that vein, I will try to speak directly to the debate, as the member from Kitchener–Waterloo indicated that we should, and, of course, taking your guidance as well. It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 122 today. There has been quite a lot of discussion on this particular act, and I'm glad that I had the opportunity to hear the positions of all the members of the Legislature.

We have spent a considerable amount of time on this bill this afternoon. The government has prioritized technical issues to do with the education sector in regard to bargaining rights, but if by working our way through this bill we can expect to get to the government's plan to grow the economy and create private sector jobs for Ontario workers a little sooner, then I'm all for it.

Bill 122 applies to all school boards in the province. It implements a two-tier process: local bargaining and central bargaining. The crown will be legislated as a party at the negotiating table, along with school boards and the teachers' unions. The crown will only participate in central bargaining, but not local bargaining.

Bargaining cycles will be established on a two-, three- or four-year basis, and the same cycle will apply to all contracts, which would ensure that all teachers negotiate at the same time. They would legislate a five-day notification period by either party before a strike or lockout action.

These are all very targeted and specific measures, designed to correct a number of complaints that the school boards themselves and teachers' unions voiced with the last negotiations in the province. It's quite obvious that this Liberal government is eager to mend its relationship with the different unions of Ontario.

Rather than listening to the official opposition and working towards achieving an across-the-board wage freeze for all public sector employees, regrettably, this government's actions appear to target Ontario teachers specifically. The parties at the table obviously had a comfort zone, and they chose to go along with the ministry at that time. The school boards were upset, the unions were upset, and eventually, because of a loss of school activ-

ities, parents and teachers were also upset. Of course, we all know what happened since then. Bill 122 is the latest “*mea culpa*” from the new Premier to the teachers.

When we hear about education from our constituents, it’s often coming from parents who have certain concerns about what’s happening in their schools. They want to know that schools are a safe, nurturing place for their children, and they also want to know what their children are learning and if it will prepare them for their lives ahead. While this bill has nothing to do with the actual education agenda, it’s certainly worthy of our discussion, because we’re all aware of the turmoil that happens from a disruption in the regular operation of our education system.

Bill 122 looks to clarify exactly what the Ministry of Education’s role will be in the collective bargaining process. We know that the ministry will be responsible for setting policies and guidelines for school boards, for allocating funding to school boards, using a funding formula for the establishment of the provincial curriculum, for setting requirements for graduation for diplomas and certificates, and creating lists of approved textbooks and other resources to be used by teachers and students in the classroom. Finally, school boards themselves are responsible for deciding how to spend the funds they receive from the province, for things like hiring teachers and other staff, and building and maintenance supplies.

Last year, the government’s total investment in education was \$22 billion. After health care, our education sector represents the biggest investment. That’s why I do believe that bringing some additional structure to the process of negotiating the collective bargaining agreements for the school boards will be a good thing for the province.

I must say, however, I am disappointed with a number of the things that have taken place in the last couple of weeks in regard to the economy and in regard to the H.J. Heinz closure, the announcement in my riding of Imperial Oil, and a number of other things that we think we should get moving on this agenda; move it forward.

Mr. Speaker, I must say that I’m very disappointed with the actions of this government—inactions, actually, of this government—and I must move adjournment of the debate at this time.

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

I heard a no.

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

All those opposed will please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

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

The division bells rang from 1721 to 1751.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): I’d ask the members to take their seats.

Mr. Bailey has moved the adjournment of the debate. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing to be counted by the table staff.

All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing so as to be counted by the table staff.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 0; the nays are 31.

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

The member for Sarnia–Lambton still has the floor. I recognize the member for Sarnia–Lambton.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Well, before I was so—I was going to say rudely interrupted, but I guess interrupted by myself, I would like to go back to where I left off.

One of the key facts of this bill, Bill 122—

Interjections.

Mr. Robert Bailey: It’s hard to hear for the heckling, Mr. Speaker, but anyway—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Yes. I appreciate that. I have to hear the member for Sarnia–Lambton. He’s just right there, and I can’t hear him, so I would ask the members to come to order.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Thank you, Speaker. I know this is important—erudite comments, and I want you to be able to hear them.

Where I left off earlier today: This act applies to all the school boards in the province. It would implement a two-tier process, as I understand it: local bargaining and central bargaining. The crown will be legislated as a party at the negotiation table—now, that’s new; that’s a new part to the bill—rather than just school boards versus teachers’ unions.

The crown—

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Colle: I can’t hear the member, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, for the heckling; Mr. Speaker, they can’t hear the member.

The crown is entitled to participate in central bargaining but not local bargaining. The bargaining cycles will be established on a two-, three- or four-year basis, and this same cycle will apply to all contracts, which would ensure that all teachers negotiate at the same time. A five-day notification by either party before a strike or lockout action would be called for.

We also think that formalizing the government’s role as the employer in negotiations makes sense, because the government, representing the taxpayer, is actually footing the bill at the end of the day. This bill is mainly about setting a negotiating process, and it’s not about improving education at the end of the day. I’ve heard most of the speakers who rose to speak today, from all sides of the House, especially the third party and our party, talk about how they would like to see improvements in education. This bill wouldn’t do that.

Nobody yet knows if this will be a good process. Time will tell. It’s hard to predict whether it will even be successful. There should be, in our opinion, a sunset clause so that this legislation could be reviewed after the next round of bargaining. I think that’s something that, when the bill goes to committee, we probably will move.

This is a highly technical bill, as many people elaborated and commented on earlier. It entirely involves

labour relations. Through the process that ended in Bill 115, the government of the day destroyed their relations with the unions and the school boards. They basically ignored the school boards.

Our solution then, and it continues today, was that a broader public service sector wage freeze applying to all employee groups was a more appropriate method, but the government didn't choose to move in that way. Included amongst our priorities are amendments to regulation 274, which defines a teacher's duty to reflect what they actually do in a day, and wage restraints are not covered by this bill.

We asked the government to clear the decks so we could talk about the economy, and this is another bill that, in our opinion, does not do this.

Stakeholder relations and reaction to this bill has been to wait and see—not a no, and not a yes. Since this bill does little more than set a process for bargaining, some of those hot-button issues we would like to discuss are left out. They would either have to be negotiated or introduced in different legislation.

Mr. Speaker, some of the policies that we are creating in this Legislature—not only do we have more than two million students—our kids, at the end of the day; my grandchildren and yours—in the system, but we have more than 100,000 people who are directly employed in this sector. So it's a very big issue that we have to face in terms of the growing demands of our elementary and secondary schools.

In addition, the ministry obviously has a role in this system. They are also the funder of how we pay for this system. More than \$20 billion, as I have previously noted, is being spent on our education system today. That number is more than \$8.5 billion more than occurred in

2003, when this government was first elected. So spending is up significantly in this sector, and student enrolment is down.

The question we're going to talk about and explore a little bit more is whether we have in fact received a bang for our buck, whether that increased investment has led to what I think all parents want—I know we do, for my grandchildren and, I'm sure, for everyone else in this room—which is, what is improving the quality of education for our students and our kids? I think the jury's still out on that.

I know that this government likes to talk about gains in the system, but I'm going to spend some time that I have left, my remaining time, talking about some of the maybe myths about the gains that they have currently employed.

There are 72 school boards in the province of Ontario: 31 English, 29 English Catholic, four French public and eight French Catholic. There are also several school authorities that oversee schools in hospitals and treatment centres and remote regions of the province; that's something that I didn't know. There's a vast array of folks who are also involved in education today, not just the students and the teachers, but also from the employer side in our school boards.

Am I done?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Done for the day. Thank you very much.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): It being close to 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Sandals, Hon. / L'hon. Liz (LIB)	Guelph	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Sattler, Peggy (NDP)	London West / London-Ouest	
Schein, Jonah (NDP)	Davenport	
Scott, Laurie (PC)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
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Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
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Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
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Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
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