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Thursday 28 November 2013

Jeudi 28 novembre 2013

Speaker
Honourable Dave Levac

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Dave Levac

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
OF ONTARIO

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ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE
DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 28 novembre 2013

The House met at 0900.

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

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

PROTECTION OF PUBLIC
PARTICIPATION ACT, 2013
LOI DE 2013 SUR LA PROTECTION
DU DROIT À LA PARTICIPATION
AUX AFFAIRES PUBLIQUES

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 5, 2013, on the motion for second reading of the following bill:

Bill 83, An Act to amend the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest / *Projet de loi 83, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les tribunaux judiciaires, la Loi sur la diffamation et la Loi sur l'exercice des compétences légales afin de protéger l'expression sur les affaires d'intérêt public.*

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Further debate? Further debate? Last call for further debate. The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I'm not sure I have much to say on this bill, except that I know somebody should be saying something.

I suspect that the bill does many things. I think I'm more interested in section 25 of the bill, which amends the Libel and Slander Act, and states: "Any qualified privilege that applies in respect of an oral or written communication on a matter of public interest between two or more persons who have a direct interest in the matter applies regardless of whether the communication is witnessed or reported on by media representatives or other persons."

I'm concerned that often when you do read the media reports, it's hard to know how much of it is truthful.

With that being said, I'm not sure—I'd have to inquire of members of our caucus who, in fact, had the floor when last speaking on this. In my case, I have not prepared adequately for this morning's comments, so I might have to seek the advice of the Chair just exactly how I get out of this dilemma. I just sit down, I guess.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member always has an opportunity to take his seat, which then would stop that particular moment of time that he has to

speak; it's lost. But if he speaks to the bill, he has the floor as long as he wishes. If there's another rotation after you're seated, then we will continue the debate.

Mr. John O'Toole: I wouldn't like to lose my time. Had I known I was going to be speaking, I would have been more prepared. I thought someone else had the floor. I actually thought the NDP were supposed to have the floor. As such, I unfortunately boxed myself out. But anyway, I will—

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will ask the member, in fairness, are you seeking unanimous consent to have your time removed and started over?

Mr. John O'Toole: Yes, I seek unanimous consent to stand down my time.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member is seeking unanimous consent to move this rotation. Agreed? Agreed.

So now, further debate: the member from Bramalea-Gore-Malton.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: It's a pleasure to rise before the House to speak about the bill proposed to address strategic lawsuits against public participation. To paint a stronger picture of what's going on, I'm going to tell a couple of stories. The impact of those stories will inform why this law is so important and why we need to move forward with it.

First and foremost, I think it's important to acknowledge the fact that the leader of the NDP, Andrea Horwath, raised this issue in the House a number of years ago because she saw the importance of democracy, the importance of dissent, and the fact that strategic lawsuits were silencing dissent and silencing democracy. Andrea Horwath brought forward this bill, and I am glad to see that, years after a panel was struck to address this issue of strategic lawsuits, the Liberal government has finally listened, implemented and moved forward on Bill 83.

This is an all-too-common scenario: Members of a particular community are gathered together because there is a certain development or project that's being proposed. Members of the community are concerned; they think that this project would not fit well with the community and would in fact either damage or impact the environment, their community lives or the fabric of their societies—some issue with this project or development. What happens is that those people who take on this issue and are leaders in the community, who rise up and say, "Listen, this is not something we want in our community. We don't want to see this development occur," are then hit with a strategic lawsuit. What happens is that they receive a letter from a law firm, or from a lawyer or

barrister, and the lawsuit essentially says that, for their comments in public, they're being sued, sometimes for upwards of millions of dollars.

Imagine that you receive a letter at home and it says you are being sued for \$6 million, and it's because you got up in your community one day and were speaking with people, saying, "Listen, we need to organize together. We need to oppose this project. We don't want this to be here." You receive a letter in the mail or you receive a letter by hand, and someone indicates you're being sued for \$6 million. That immediately has a chilling effect. When you open up that letter and see the words "\$6 million," and you don't think to ever see \$6 million in your lifetime, it can have a devastating impact on you.

First and foremost, you wish you had never spoken up in the first place. Secondly, you keep on thinking, "What can I do to get rid of this?", and that's all you think about. What happens is, the entire process which had engaged that individual—it engaged you; you had spoken up because your community was being affected by something. You had had the passion to organize your community members, or just to get up and speak. That entire passion has been snuffed out, has been subdued.

That, my friends, is one of the worst things that can happen in our society. The reason I say it's one of the worst things is because the pillar of freedom, the pillar of our free society, is the ability to get up and say, "I don't like something," simply the ability to get up and say, "I don't agree with what's going on," the ability to get up and say, "As a community, we don't want this to happen in our community." If we, as a government, are not protecting those voices, we're doing a great disservice to our citizens, to the people that we represent.

If we play out that scenario: You receive that letter. It has that chilling effect. You're immediately panicked and you have to go out and seek legal counsel, because most of us, with some notable exceptions, aren't familiar with the law system, aren't familiar with courts and, in fact, think of courts as a scary place that you don't want to go to. You may want to visit to see another case, but you certainly don't want to go there for your own case. And when it's you facing that threat of millions of dollars of lawsuits, you then have to seek out other legal counsel. It can be costly, and it can be long and drawn out and very frustrating.

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Now, after a lengthy court battle, and after having to put up some money to defend yourself, it may turn out that you are then exonerated. Often, it did turn out that people were exonerated. But the length of the matter, the threat of this potential settlement or potential action against you for millions of dollars, the initial upfront cost—all these factors—had such a chilling effect that that individual, first and foremost, wasn't continuing to engage in the civic process, the democratic process, and certainly in the future would be very reluctant or hesitant to do it again. That would be the scenario, but for some intervention on the part of the government.

So a number of great activists and strong community voices came forward and said that to stop this from happening, to stop this type of practice from occurring, we needed to implement some laws that would streamline the judge's ability to assess whether or not a particular lawsuit was simply a strategic lawsuit to silence someone or whether it was a genuine lawsuit. That was the problem; and the solution was, what can we do to make sure that there's a distinction between these vexatious and frivolous actions versus genuine actions? What can we do to ensure that actions that are frivolous, that don't have substance, that are simply meant to silence someone, are dealt with clearly, quickly and in a manner that protects the participant of public discourse, the activist or the community member who wants to raise their concerns or raise their voice? How do we protect those individuals and distinguish their cases from the cases that are truly genuine?

There was a committee struck, and it was an advisory panel that released a report in 2010. This was the Attorney General's Anti-SLAPP Advisory Panel. Now, the panel was made up of a number of very well respected members of both the bar, in terms of plaintiff and defendant side litigators, as well as members of the judiciary. They had enacted a number of recommendations; that was in 2010. So it's taken three years for this bill to finally make its way into the House and now we're starting to see some action.

One of the key components of this bill is an early dismissal mechanism. There have been a number of jurisprudences where judges basically saw a case come in and they thought, "This case is simply a tactic to silence this individual. There's actually absolutely no merit in this case and this case should never have made it this far." To answer those judges who kept on raising these concerns in decisions where they saw that this is clearly an issue, and because of the great work of a number of community groups—whether they are community advocates, environmental advocates, civic advocates, there are a number of groups who have put great work and effort into making sure this bill came forward. The number one criterion or one of the biggest concerns they wanted to see is they wanted to see that a judge would be able to look at a case and be able to dismiss it forthright or quickly, if it turned out to be one of those cases which was vexatious or frivolous or didn't have any substance.

On top of being able to dismiss a case quickly, the second concern was, how could we send a message to create a disincentive so that future plaintiffs, knowing the current framework, wouldn't bring forward a lawsuit, that if it wasn't based on some sort of substance, it would be not only dismissed but there would be a greater disincentive? There would be something, some message saying, "Don't do this again." The legislation proposed has a cost provision so that if it turns out to be something that's SLAPPed or something that the SLAPP legislation applies to and there is a quick dismissal of the case, the case is dismissed and thrown out, there's also a cost provision so that the party that was subject to this, the person

who got sued, if it turns out the lawsuit was meaningless, that person can then bring an application or that person can then receive costs for what they had to pay out of pocket for their legal defence. That's a strong disincentive.

I want to read out a number of quotes and examples of people who have been a subject to this: what they felt like, what were their feelings when they received that letter, when they received that hand-delivered lawsuit, when they received these threats to basically litigate. What did they feel like? What were their concerns? How did they take that threat or that feeling of pressure, knowing that there might be a lawsuit against them? I'm just going to read out some quotes from individuals who responded to and who were exposed to lawsuits. These are some of the concerns that were raised.

One quote was: "I feel threatened, harassed, and intimidated by Geranium's legal claims, and fear exposure to lawsuits and the costs associated with defending them."

Another quotation I have here is: "I do not write letters to the town, county, province or local papers in fear of repercussion from the Big Bay Point developers, Kimvar Enterprises Inc., and Mr. Earl Rumm."

Another quote was: "From fear of being implicated in a lawsuit myself, I would not write a letter or voice my personal opinions about the project in any way whatsoever."

Another quote was: "I do not have the funds or means to defend myself in a lawsuit, which increases my fear of publicly speaking out as an individual."

Another quotation that addressed the feelings that an individual felt was: "I would not testify at an OMB hearing with the lawsuits pending and the threat of new legal actions. I would not be able to defend myself financially from such a wealthy developer."

So the concern is that, while a person might be able to defend themselves—and it may not even be the case that the person feels that the lawsuit against them has any merit; they're not actually concerned, many of the times, that they thought they did something wrong and that maybe this lawsuit would actually generate a victory for the other side and they would end up having to pay the money. It was just the thought of having to defend it. The thought of having to spend that time in court to clear your name to defend against the allegation was so onerous and they were so fearful of that experience that that in and of itself was enough to silence them and to discourage them from participating.

In fact, one of the concerns that was raised was, how many people actually end up in one of these vexatious lawsuits? How many people actually end up getting sued for really no substance, just to silence them? In answer to that: It's not only the number of people who were actually sued and it was a lawsuit that was brought forward; it's actually the number of people who received letters. Because a letter from a wealthy developer or from someone with deep pockets threatening legal action in and of itself is so strong that the individual, the corporation, the de-

veloper or the larger player didn't need to take it to the next step. Simply putting forward that letter was enough to silence the public participation.

We can't track the number of letters that people received. We can't track the number of letters that went out to people threatening legal action that didn't end up resulting in a lawsuit, but they certainly ended up silencing the voices of the public. So it's certainly a big concern; it's certainly an area where we can do some work.

I mentioned Big Bay Point. Just to give you a scenario of the magnitude of lawsuits against individuals in Big Bay Point, there were nine separate lawsuits levelled against opponents for over \$100 million in damages. Just the number of the complainants that came forward—I can tell you that there were significant costs that had to be paid out of pocket for community members who just raised their concerns. They often would fight the case and no costs were given, so that even though they won—the community members who fought against this won—they still had to pay out of pocket to defend themselves; no costs were awarded.

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So what's happening in our society is something we really need to be aware of. In principle, the society we live in is supposed to be based on an idea that each individual has an equal vote and their voices are supposed to be respected in an equal manner. My personal status, my bank account and where I live in the community shouldn't impact my voice and my power to raise the concerns that I feel are appropriate. But what's happening is that your bank account and where you live and your personal background are impacting your ability to participate.

One of the ways your bank account impacts the way you can participate is in these strategic lawsuits. If you have deep pockets, as an individual, and you know that you can defend yourself against any lawsuit, you're going to be less fearful, less concerned about a lawsuit that's being levelled against you. But if you're someone who doesn't have those means, doesn't have those resources, then just receiving that threat has a devastating and chilling effect.

We want to ensure that, in whatever part we can as government, we bolster the individual's opportunity and ability to raise concerns so that we can bolster the community's ability to advocate for themselves or speak up on issues that matter. That's why it's so important that we level the playing field. When we have large developers, multinational corporations, levelling the lawsuits and we have individuals in the community who are struggling to make ends meet, the power imbalance is vast and the result is that because of that vast power imbalance, the voice of the individual is being silenced, is being quieted, is being subdued, is being oppressed. That's something we certainly can't condone, and we have to do whatever it takes to make sure we support the voice of the community, the individual.

There are a number of community members who have faced SLAPPs, and I want to talk about a couple of other

ones that have occurred. We think of SLAPPs as strictly being lawsuits from developers or corporations. There have actually also been health-related industries that have levelled lawsuits against individuals who have complained about issues. I know that our member from Timiskaming–Cochrane spoke about some of the folks who were affected in his riding, simply for speaking out on a health-related matter, on health concerns. You'd think that would be something that would be safe to talk about, that the delivery of health care services would be something you could get up and speak about. But members who spoke about that issue were met with lawsuits and were threatened with legal action, and it had a chilling effect and silenced a number of individuals in that respect.

Again, when we talk about these strategic lawsuits, it's not limited to just developers and corporations. There are, like we said, the health services. There are also members—we heard most recently about the individuals and trainers from Marineland. There was a series of articles that came out, talking about abuse of the animals at Marineland. They were investigated, and there was public outcry. Many members of the public cried out that this was improper; this was unfair. Whistle-blowers from Marineland who actually had first-hand testimony stood up and raised their concerns and said, "Yes, there are these concerns, there are these issues." Those trainers who raised concerns, hoping to add, to participate in public debate, talking about the mistreatment of animals—which you would think would be something that would be absolutely fair and acceptable—were then hit with lawsuits as well. The lawsuits, again, had the effect of silencing their input and silencing their public discourse, and it's certainly something we cannot condone.

Interjection.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: That's right. My colleague from Windsor–Tecumseh speaks about mayoral offices that employed similar tactics of threatening legal action to silence public participation. It's certainly something we don't condone and certainly something we don't like to see.

I want to give you another story, just to contrast what we're proposing to do. While I wholeheartedly support the idea of protecting public participation—and our leader, Andrea Horwath from the Ontario NDP, brought forward a bill years ago addressing this issue, so it's certainly something that we've advocated for, and we're happy that finally the government is moving on this. But we also have to be cognizant of a particular concern: that when dealing with this issue—and this analogy has been used a number of times, and I really like the analogy, because it's very appropriate—we need to make sure we're not using a sledgehammer to address a problem that can be dealt with by a scalpel.

I want to give you one story that I had the privilege and the opportunity to hear first-hand from one of the participants on the legal side. It was the Hill v. Scientology lawsuit. The Hill v. Scientology case, which I want to tell you a little bit about, actually has a lot of insight. It

can provide us with a lot of insight into an area where we need to be a little bit careful with the way we implement this bill, so that we take into consideration the other side, and that we don't create an atmosphere or a climate where there is absolutely no way to defend your good name and where people can say truly libelous and defamatory comments against an individual—level them against or accuse someone of them—and not have justice on those matters.

I'll tell you the story of Hill v. Scientology. It's a lengthy story. It's one of the hallmark court decisions on defamation law in Canada, but I'll give you the Coles Notes version that I received—actually, probably even more reduced than I heard it. But what happened in Hill v. Scientology was that there was a crown prosecutor by the name of Mr. Hill, and the prosecutor was involved with a particular search warrant scenario. He was known for being a young and quite skilled advocate, and he went on to become a Superior Court judge, who I had the pleasure of appearing in front of a number of times as a criminal defence lawyer, and I have the utmost respect for His Honour.

As a young prosecutor, this individual was well known for being an expert in search warrants and, though being young, he had garnered a great deal of respect and a great reputation for being a search warrant expert in the office. There had been a case and a scenario where there were certain activities that were going on at the Church of Scientology that required some investigation. Search warrants were executed, and documents were seized.

On the other side, there were certain concessions made. Basically, the Church of Scientology was able to negotiate and to work out an agreement that certain documents would not be released. Consequently, there was some confusion in terms of the law that was applied, but more importantly, there was confusion in terms of what information was to be sealed and what information was not to be sealed.

So, Mr. Hill acted in a professional manner and acted appropriately, but there was some grey area with respect to which documents were sealed and unsealed, and some documents were released and were put into public. The Church of Scientology took the approach that it was Mr. Hill's fault, and they hired some of the best advocates at the time, some of the best lawyers at the time, and they commenced a lawsuit against Mr. Hill.

What happened was that a young prosecutor who was trying to do his job to protect his community, to represent the interests of the public, to represent the interests of the residents of Ontario, saw himself facing, again, a multi-million-dollar lawsuit. The lawsuit didn't only say that he had perhaps released sealed documents, but it had gone in to attack his reputation. It attacked him for being someone who was not of high moral standards. It attacked all sorts of areas of his character and, in fact, left at its own, would have basically ended his career.

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He was a young prosecutor with a young family and young children, and this lawsuit against him was level-

ling such accusations that, as a public crown prosecutor, his entire career would have ended there. It was basically a defamation, a libel, that was brought against him. He was able to defend himself because he was able to assert that what he had done by speaking out, because he was a public—if we apply the current laws in this circumstance, the current SLAPP legislation, the Church of Scientology, by stating that he was a person of low moral character or someone who had lied, someone who had misrepresented, someone who had not acted in good faith as a lawyer—one can see some of the problems.

They were entitled to raise concerns about someone who is a public figure, who is a public prosecutor, the crown prosecutor, that would make sense. They would be able to raise concerns about him because that would be in the public interest. Then, what would happen currently, something that's quite novel, is that Mr. Hill would then have to prove that none of that was true, instead of the normal way in which these things continue: that the person alleging the misconduct would have to prove that there was misconduct, would have to show that, yes, Mr. Hill had done this wrong or that wrong. The current law would actually have Mr. Hill have to prove to the court that he hadn't done anything wrong.

I give this example because we need to make sure that people in public positions, who individuals in the community might very well have the right to raise concerns about, who very well might have the right to criticize, who very well might have the right to say there's something they don't like about what's going on with that individual—they would satisfy that public participation requirement: There is a public interest in raising a concern. But we don't want to make it the case that there could be open season on public officials or anyone who is involved with the public.

So we need to be cognizant of that issue, because the Hill v. Scientology story turned out that at the end, Mr. Hill was able to win his case and was able to receive a settlement and went on to continue his career and clear his name, but it still had a devastating impact. If you think about it, a young lawyer facing allegations of misconduct, of not participating in good faith—there's all sorts of character assassination, and if your job is to represent individuals in a court setting as a lawyer, it could have devastating impacts.

We want to make sure that the power imbalance that we're seeking to address doesn't actually impede people from rightful and proper litigation. If we look at the test—and I think the test has a lot of merit, because it's based on the Anti-SLAPP Advisory Panel. One of the key parts of the test that was set out is to look at—there's a standard, there's a law of libel and defamation that has a long history, 300 years of jurisprudence from the United Kingdom and into Canada, so it has long-established principles. The starting point for libel is that there are comments made in public; those comments have a defamatory impact on your character, on your reputation, and they're untrue. If you can show that someone made an untrue comment about you in public that certainly im-

pacts your character, you could bring a defamation action. That's how developers and large corporations were bringing libel. An individual was basically bringing forward a concern, and they were basically attacking that individual because he was attacking the reputation of the company. So they were attacking their reputation, and it was untrue.

The problem is when developers like Big Bay Point brought forward these concerns, what they were doing was they were not basing it on any actual attack on their reputation. Their purpose was simply and only to silence that participation.

Now, what the SLAPP legislation is proposing is that, at its core, the principle that's going to govern the anti-SLAPP legislation, that's going to govern or that's going to inform the judiciary, the judges who are involved with dealing with these type of lawsuits, that principle is going to be, what is, first of all, the concept of the public interest and the concept of public participation? So that principle that we want to engage people in civic participation, that principle that we want to make sure that the public is participating in our democracy, is going to be a governing principle. So the framework for any decision about whether to dismiss a lawsuit or to allow a lawsuit will begin with that founding principle, that we want to foster public discourse and public participation; that's going to be the foundation. If we can build on that, the decision will flow from whether or not, first of all, it supports this starting point, this founding principle: Is it in the public interest? Is it promoting public participation?

One area of analysis which, I think, can be tweaked some more but has a lot of merit and has some foundation in principles is, how do you distinguish between a meritorious libel suit or defamation claim and one that has no merit whatsoever? One of the principles or one of the ways to assess that is, does the public expression in question, whether it's a comment that someone makes out loud in public or something that's written or something that's picked up on the radio—if that expression satisfies the criteria of actually being based on some merit and being based on the standard principles of libel, there's an analysis about the actual impact to the individual, whether it's a corporation or an individual. And there's a cost analysis: Can the individual—the plaintiff, the one who's bringing forward the action—show that there has been a loss? Can they show that there's been a financial—some objective loss? And if there can be a loss shown, then the action can continue.

If we just sit back and think about this for a second, in one respect, if we apply this, perhaps, to a developer, there's a weighing here now. So if I can get up in public and get up in the community and say that I am opposed to a particular project—“I don't like this project developing. It doesn't make sense. I'm opposed to it. I think that it's going to harm our community because it's going to”—let's say the development is a shopping mall in a small community that has a quaint downtown, and the location of that development is going to basically impact the heritage or the beauty or the accessibility of that Main

Street in that small community. And members of the community get up and say, “Listen, we don’t want the shopping mall here in this particular location. It’s going to impact the heritage of our historic downtown. It’s going to impede the access to this area. We want to make sure that it’s kept alive and vibrant. This particular shopping mall is not going to work here.”

Now, if community members gather together and start complaining about this and make sure that their voices are heard and say, “This is not something we want here in our community. It’s going to have a devastating impact on our main street. It’s going to impact the culture and heritage of our community,” the first step of the analysis would be, is this in the public interest? Certainly it’s in the public interest because the community is talking about something that matters to them. Certainly it’s in the public interest, so then we would engage the anti-SLAPP legislation.

The developer would have to show, balancing the concerns that they actually had, that they were suffering a loss, that there was a financial loss to them. It’s in this area that we need to be somewhat careful—and I thank the ministry staff for briefing me on this particular issue—because of the analysis with respect to looking at the costs, and if the costs can be shown, would that be enough then to allow the case to continue?

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There’s a weighing now. They weigh the value of the public participation against the cost to the company, the developer or whatever the entity is. In weighing the cost and the benefit, the jurisprudence so far—or the way that the law is crafted; my apologies—suggests that because public participation is valued at such a high degree, the public participation would outweigh the cost to the company in this regard, because this is one of the basic scenarios that would happen.

My only concern is, how do we make sure that in cases like this, which are clearly something that would cry out for anti-SLAPP legislation, would cry out for strategic-lawsuit-against-public-participation protection—because we have exactly what we envisioned: community members trying to organize and advocate for something that means something to them and, on the flip side, the developer actually has an argument that there might be a cost. They might not be able to build their shopping mall, and they might have a significant cost.

So that’s one area where, at the end of the day, in that analysis, that type of public participation is something we should protect and encourage. Community members should be able to rally around that. They should have a say in where things are built in their communities. People should have a say in if a particular development proceeds or not. That is appropriate. If that doesn’t occur and if those individuals are silenced, then that’s something we really need to take a hard look at.

On the flip side, though—and I just bring this scenario up because I want to encourage some thought. I want to encourage some consideration of this, and I’ve learned from a number of people far wiser than I am, far more

experienced than I am, that a truly measured and thoughtful approach is to really balance both sides of the equation, to really look at the flip side, the inverse side. One of the best ways to look at the flip side or the other argument is to put yourself in their shoes. I think that’s one of the easiest ways to do it, because then you can start to feel what it would be like.

I can appreciate this to some degree. I think all of us in this House can appreciate this potential scenario to some degree: If we have elected officials who are active in their communities, are fighting for the rights of their communities, are raising concerns and taking on tackling hard issues, what if people like that are then challenging a particular institution? Let’s say they are taking on someone like, say, a particular industry. Someone gets up and says, “I’m going to take on the payday loan providers. The payday loan providers, in my estimate, in my esteem, are doing some sort of—the practices that they engage in are completely unethical and improper.” Let’s say one of us gets up and advocates on behalf of the people, and takes on this issue. Now, if someone who had an interest in payday loans were to then launch a series of letters or a public outcry against the member, and were to say, “Listen, this person doesn’t know their facts. They are a liar, or they are being persuaded in an unethical manner to raise this issue”—they could say that they are someone who is corrupt, and attack the character of one of us, of a public official, whether it’s an MPP, a city councillor or a federal MP.

The public participation element is there. The public interest is there, because every member of the community has a public interest in actually speaking up about whether they like the work or don’t like the work of their elected official. They should be able to say that, but what if all the allegations are false? What if all the allegations alleging that the person is corrupt, that they are unethical and all these other things are simply untrue? It’s an attack on the character of a public official.

In terms of the SLAPP legislation, it would be in the public interest, and I wouldn’t disagree with that. It is in the public interest. But what if it’s just fundamentally untrue? They’re just lies. If the person bringing forward this allegation was saying that the public official is a fraudster and they were convicted of fraud, well, that would be very easy to deal with. You could pull up your criminal record and show that you had no fraud on your record ever. Then you would be able to bring forward the lawsuit and say, “Listen, I’ve proven that I’ve never been charged with fraud. Indicating that I’ve been convicted of fraud is clearly libel, clearly defaming my character,” and you can attack that.

But what if it’s something a bit more subtle, that this person is corrupt, not suggesting that you’ve been charged with an offence, but just saying that this is a corrupt official? What would you do as a public official to say, “No, I’m not corrupt”? How could you prove that you’re not corrupt? You could get up and say, “I’m not,” but what would you be able to do?

This scenario was raised to me, and I only bring it up because I like to look at both sides of the issue. In this

particular area, I do see the concern that some people might be able to—I think a lot of us have thick skin, and that's fine and it's a part of the job. But I think there are a lot of talented people that want to get involved in politics, a lot of amazing, vibrant, potential new leaders who want to get involved in politics and get involved in representing their communities, who might be deterred from the thought that any sort of complaint, any sort of allegation, could be levelled against them because they're in the public, because they're a public official, that any sort of allegation can be brought against them and they wouldn't really have much of a remedy. They wouldn't really have much of a way to challenge that in court.

The reason why I bring that up is because I think that there is already a lot of mudslinging that goes on, and there are already a lot of attacks on character, as opposed to attacks on policies and principles. I have, in my small way, tried as much as possible to encourage that, and I know that the Speaker has always tried to do that as well: that we want to make sure that when we attack a particular idea, we attack the idea, we attack the principle, the policies, and we try to leave the person out of it. The reason why I think that's so important is because many people who are talented may have some things in their past they don't want necessarily to be confronted with and have to deal with. If politics becomes about attacking someone's history, attacking someone's character, not attacking their policies—and there's more than enough ammunition to attack people's policies, more than not. I think that's the type of discourse that we should be supporting.

The reason why I bring this up is because the way this law is crafted, there is this opening that would allow for attacks on anyone who is in the public interest. I could see that being applied with the argument that was brought to me, that it could be applied to public officials in a very easy manner. So that's something to consider. It doesn't change my wholehearted support of this law, but what I really want to encourage is that we need to look at all the factors when crafting legislation, particularly legislation that is going to be one of the most progressive pieces of legislation in the world.

There's only one other jurisdiction in the world that has anti-SLAPP legislation, and that's Quebec. Quebec is a civil law society. They're not common law like Canada and America and the UK and Australia. Their civil law system is more similar to Europe, France and countries of that nature. They're the first civil law jurisdiction to bring forward anti-SLAPP legislation, which is one of the first of its kind as well. So Ontario is actually on the cusp of being an innovator, being one of the first to implement something that would be very, very progressive, and I'm pretty proud that we're actually bringing it forward.

I want to go back and talk about, again, some of the underlying importance of this bill, why this bill is so important and why we really need to move forward on it. When I think about how I got involved in politics in the first place, it was a group of community activists that had worked on a number of issues, that I had the great privi-

lege and honour of working with, whether it was groups that were working on reduction of poverty—more so the eradication of poverty—whether it was groups that were working on rights of immigrants and new Canadians, student groups who were working on tuition fee reductions and peace groups that were working on movements to discourage war across the world and encourage peace instead, or groups that were working on human rights initiatives, whether human rights initiatives were about the human rights abuses in countries around the world, including, but definitely not limited to, human rights abuses in India against a number of community members involving Christian, Muslim and Sikh faiths, whether it was in China and the human rights abuses of Tibetans, or whether it was in Sri Lanka and the abuses that were suffered by the Tamils in Sri Lanka by the government.

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These community activists were, on a daily basis, participating in democracy, raising concerns and challenging some significant players. They were raising their voices against some very powerful people. The thought that, throughout it all, they could have been charged, in some cases, through unfair laws that didn't allow for public protests—but that's another issue and we'll deal with that on another day when we talk more about some of the violations that occurred under G20. But the thought that these activists, these community workers, could have been served lawsuits, or could have been sued or threatened, for their actions is discouraging. They were doing some great work, and they were participating in democracy in a very vibrant way.

It was actually those activists, those community workers and those advocates that encouraged me in the first place—I say “encouraged.” I use the word very loosely. They encouraged me to get into politics, and I think of how we can protect future activists, or future community advocates. We talk about the term “activist.” Sometimes it's as simple as someone in the community who has never in their life ever written a letter to the newspaper, has never spoken at a protest, has never championed a cause, someone who's never spoken on a microphone in their life, but there is an issue that comes up in the community, and they feel like they have to stand up and do something about it.

For those people, the thought that there are so many people like them who have been concerned and who wanted to raise an issue and were silenced because they received a letter in the mail, were silenced because they were brought to court, offends me and it troubles me. It shouldn't be the case. It shouldn't be the case that someone with deeper pockets than someone else can just write a letter and silence the other person. That's just fundamentally flawed and unfair. That's what I think is one of the starting points of why it's so important.

I've said this a number of times, and I'm hoping the government is listening to this, because a number of times in this session—when we came back in September, I questioned the government's priorities, because we were discussing laws like Bill 55, which was a law which I

acknowledge is something the community wanted. They wanted wireless agreement protection. It was a consumer services bill. It was something important. But there was already a wireless code that was implemented federally—there's a federal wireless code that goes above and beyond what the provincial code does: It protects us when it comes to our wireless agreements.

I know many people—I'm sure you'll nod when you hear this—have problems with their cellphone contracts. Their bills are too high: the roaming charges, the data charges. It's unfair; it's unclear. They can't cancel the contracts. That's all true. But when we had a wireless code that was implemented federally, and the government chose to bring forward this bill again provincially when there was already a federal bill, I got up and said that, yes, we want wireless protection, but we already have something federally.

What we don't have: We don't have anti-SLAPP law protection federally. Let's bring forward Bill 83. Let's bring forward the anti-SLAPP legislation. If you're serious about implementing this bill, if you're serious about protecting public participation, then bring forward this bill.

I challenged the government to do it a number of times. Any time I got up for questions and comments I said, "That's fine. We're talking about wireless agreements. We're talking about this other bill. We're talking about that bill." But when it came to this bill, Bill 83, a bill where there was no other federal legislation—it's a no-cost bill. It's not going to cost the government anything. It's not going to cost the taxpayer dollars in any way. It's not going to cost the treasury. But what it would do is fundamentally protect public participation. It would fundamentally protect our foundation of democracy, which is the ability to dissent, the ability to get up and say, "No, I don't agree with this; no, I don't want this to be here."

That's such an important right. I can't speak enough about how important that right is, that at a starting foundation, at a basic level for any free society, people should be able to get up and talk about what's going on with the communities. It shouldn't even be a question. It shouldn't be something that we even need to think about. It should be natural, it should be unquestionable that people should be able to get up and say, "Hey, I don't like this," "I do like this," "I want this. I don't want that," in their communities, in their province, in their country. They should be able to do that. That should not be a question. The fact that it was a question, the fact that it was even possible that you could silence someone for participating in democracy, for raising a question, for getting up and voicing their concern—the fact that that was even subject to lawsuits is just so troubling and so disconcerting.

So I implore the government: Let's move on this, then. It's such an important principle, such an important thing. Why aren't we doing anything about this? Even to date, I think this bill has only been called two times, and maybe this is the third time. And how long ago was this bill introduced? The government is not serious about this bill.

How many times have we had the opportunity to debate this bill? How many times has the bill been brought forward? I'm imploring you all—I know some of you are listening. This is a serious bill. This is something that's important. This is something that will help our democracy. This would be a hallmark for our province. This would set us up as innovators, someone who's leading instead of someone who's falling behind. This is a bill that we could look up to and say, "We protected democracy. We protected those members in our community who wanted to raise their concerns. We protected people who were participating in democracy. We're encouraging public participation."

This is a good thing, but we need to make sure it's given the priority it deserves and requires. Up to date, I question the priority that this government has given this bill, and I ask you to start prioritizing it. I ask you to stop relegating it to the side and start putting it at the forefront. I ask you to stop avoiding dealing with this issue and to put it at the top of your agenda.

This is something we need to deal with immediately. We have a great opportunity to address it now. Let's get this done. Let's get this bill moving. Let's make sure it gets the time in debate that it requires, and let's also make sure that when we're talking about a bill that protects public participation, we don't suggest in any way that we want to discourage the participation of the members here to talk about this bill, because I fully believe in open discourse and debate, particularly on a bill that talks about public participation. I'm hoping that no member gets up and says, "I think you've spoken enough on this bill." Let people speak as much as they need to, but let's actually get this bill moving forward. Let's give it the time it requires, let's give it the priority—and let's be honest, because up to date, the Liberal government has not given this bill the priority it deserves, has not given it the time it needs in the House to make sure it gets passed, and I want to make sure that changes.

So I'm hoping that either before this House rises for winter break, or very soon when the House returns after the break, there can be a time when I'm sitting in committee, I'm voting on amendments to this bill and I see that this bill gets back into third reading and, in this 42nd assembly, this bill passes. Then we can all hold our heads high in that we were part of a process, we were part of bringing forward a law which was one of the first of its kind in the common law and really protected public participation.

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Just in summary of what the bill actually does, I think it's important to highlight some of the key components of the bill. When we move forward, there are areas where we're going to need to amend this bill to make sure that it's tighter, that it doesn't have some unintended consequences, and we should definitely look to some of the legal experts in this area to make sure that we get their input on it.

Some of the key components of the bill that we have to focus in on and that are some of the hallmarks of the

bill: One is that as a general principle, what we're hoping to achieve, and what Andrea Horwath, as the leader of the party, brought forward years ago with her anti-SLAPP legislation, is that we want to make sure that people are provided immunity from civil liability when they're engaging in public discourse, in legitimate speech and public participation. Basically speaking, when people speak out in public, we're going to make sure that they're not subject to any lawsuits because of that.

The second thing is, if a lawsuit is brought forward, we want to make sure there's a quick way to get that lawsuit before a judge to look at it and say, "This is one of those cases where it's a strategic lawsuit. I can tell, based on these principles. Public participation is important. There's really no cost to this corporation or this developer or the person who's bringing forward the claim. Let's dismiss this case outright." We need to have that.

We need to look at the onus-reversing principle carefully, because we want to make sure we protect or insulate against the imbalance of power. We have people with deep pockets—you know, multi-million dollar corporations or developers—versus people struggling to make ends meet. When we have this imbalance of power, we want to make sure it's easier for the public participant, for the member of the community, to actually defend themselves so that the onus is reversed in a manner that puts the burden on the person with the deeper pockets. But at the same time, we want to make sure that it doesn't preclude the ability to bring forward non-vexatious or non-frivolous, proper, good, legitimate libel or defamation lawsuits.

The disincentive—we have to be very careful as well, because I agree very strongly that a disincentive that minimizes the imbalance of power in any way possible is something we want to encourage. A financial disincentive with respect to costs could do that, could make sure that that power imbalance that exists is diminished, is reduced, and that's something that I support. We also have to make sure that that doesn't, again, impede proper and legitimate defamation suits coming forward, and that we tailor this to really narrow in on the vexatious litigations, these strategic lawsuits, the ones that are brought to silence people.

In terms of the protection, like I was talking about, in terms of being an innovator, I want to make sure it's clear: We wouldn't be innovators in all of the common law; we would be innovators in Canada. There's only one other province in Canada that has this legislation, which is Quebec. We would be the first common-law jurisdiction in Canada to have it, and the second province. There's a number of other jurisdictions in the United States that have this anti-SLAPP protection, but we would be the first common-law in Canada to have it, and one of the first countries, after the United States, to be implementing such a protection.

In closing, I just want to drive home my last point and make sure that it's heard loud and clear: Public participation and particularly dissent—the right to dissent, the right to disagree—are the hallmarks of our society, the

hallmarks of a free and democratic society, a free and democratic province and country, and we need to make sure we protect that principle. We need to make sure we protect the ability to dissent, the ability to get up and oppose and disagree with something, to complain about things. We need to make sure that we give this bill the priority it deserves. Like I said, if the government is serious about passing it, the government then has to give it the time to make sure it gets passed. To date, it has only been called two times, three times? That's not enough to make sure this bill gets passed.

Again, I implore you: Make this bill a priority. It's a no-cost bill, it's something that's important and it would be a strong step forward for Ontario. We would be leaders in this country as the first common-law jurisdiction to pass it, and the second province. It would be a proud moment when we can stand up and vote in support of public participation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I've listened intently for the past hour to the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton regarding Bill 83 that's in front of us today. Basically, the bill in front of us amends three things: It amends the Courts of Justice Act, the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act in order to protect expression on matters of public interest.

What we're doing basically is trying to prevent—more than prevent—frivolous lawsuits that can be brought by either developers or persons who get involved in a lawsuit. If the developer wants to intimidate the people who are expressing concern about the bill, then this is a way to put a test in place, which this bill does, and then it also does two other things regarding matters similar to this. It amends the Courts of Justice Act. Also, in the final section, it amends the Libel and Slander Act and amends the Statutory Powers Procedure Act to provide submissions so that if someone complains, they can apply for costs without having to go before a judge orally. They can just do it in writing.

But the member offered other key points, and I just wanted to say regarding the issue of time spent here that the bill got introduced not too long ago, on June 4. On September 25, the Attorney General spoke, followed by the opposition party. On November 28, today, the third party has a chance to speak. I would just comment to the member that we have had this bill in front of us for a while, but we are proceeding. There are over 77 bills in front of us here on the order paper. I'm sure the Attorney General and the House leader want to bring this forward and deal with it as soon as possible, and I can assure you of that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I certainly commend the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton for consuming an hour on a bill that most of us have difficulty digesting because it does amend some very technical—these are three particular sections of our justice system, the Courts of Justice

Act, as well as the Libel and Slander Act and the Statutory Powers Procedure Act. But I think in its simplest form, it prevents abuse and intimidation for persons who could become liable or intimidated.

I really ask—I know the member. I have great respect. He is a lawyer. He's done the bar and he's articulate in legal lingo. Without being too assertive here, I wonder if he's actually issued one of those intimidating letters himself on behalf of his clients, to sort of push back that liability about your client—

Interjection.

Mr. Rob Leone: Table it.

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like him to table that kind of thing, if he could, because as a lawyer—and I know a few people who are lawyers who know that the law can use the power of the word and the pen to influence outcomes. Certainly in civil matters I think it's often done where people have more power. I would say that in civil matters, the person with the most money wins. Basically, you can delay procedures, avoid follow-up and miss court dates and all these kinds of things.

I think there's good intent, and I have it on good assurance from our critic from York–Simcoe that we would be supporting the bill. What's needed here for all members is a lot more discussion on the bill, so we have a full understanding of, are we diminishing some of the powers on either side of the litigant or the person being accused? I think it's important that those rights are protected as well.

Our justice system is independent of the legislative branch. As such, I'm sure that the Attorney General would be following the procedures and such that no one would lose their rights.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The member for Algoma–Manitoulin.

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Mr. Michael Mantha: It's always an honour to be in the House, and I say this with all earnesty, to have the privilege to hear our member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton explain his views. What I took back from his comments were actually four points: the cost of speaking up, the protection of those speaking up, the processes that those individuals go through and also making sure that there's a level playing field so that everybody has the opportunity to speak up.

The cost of speaking up—in his comments he talked about basically the roller coaster ride that individuals go through when they receive that lawsuit letter. They are filled with anguish and desperation, wondering what they're going to do, the fact that they're being threatened this way and the effect it has on that individual by silencing their voice. It's an effective way of actually silencing that voice. So it's really important for us to look at protecting those voices and make sure that we separate the ones who are actually speaking up for the rights of individuals and the rights of their communities, for their interests, and making sure that those frivolous allegations are dealt with expediently, and that we deal with that through the process.

He talked about how we can empower our decision-makers to make sure that they have the ability not only to determine which ones have merits or others that don't, but there's actually a penalty that is going to be imposed on those that are just trying to silence those voices. That is very key for us to having a just society. He also talked about making sure that there's a level playing field, making sure that the people who are going to speak up do have the opportunity to have their voices heard, because we should be embracing public participation; we should be making sure that those rights are rightfully protected at all costs.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Hon. Mario Sergio: I'd like to add some comments on Bill 83, which was just presented by Minister Gertsen, the Attorney General, and the comments made by the member from Bramalea–Gore–Malton. Speaker, I know that this bill has received considerable attention. It's good to see that it's being supported by both sides of the House. It stems from the fact that the so-called freedom of speech is really being trampled by greedy developers and very-well-oiled lawyers as well—no offence to any lawyers in the House. The fact is I've spent too many years watching developers coming in, making applications and running roughshod over the local people. The local people have been practically told at open meetings, "If you dare not to support this project, be ready to come to court." There is nothing more intimidating to the poor public than to be told very publicly by high-paid lawyers that they will be sued if they speak against a particular project. This is not freedom of speech. This is not how we do things here in Ontario, in Canada.

This piece of legislation, Bill 83, even though it's going through second reading, and as much as we want to talk about it a lot and get more out of it and into it, I would say is something that we should speed up, because the public demands protection from legislators, from us. I hope this will go through quickly. I hope that it will come back very quickly so we can give the public the protection that they deserve. I hope that this will be going to the House as quickly as possible.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Bramalea–Gore–Malton, you have two minutes.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I am very thankful for all the comments that were shared today, and particularly, je suis très heureux que mon ami d'Algoma–Manitoulin a résumé mes propos en deux minutes. Ce que j'ai dit en plus de 50 minutes, il l'a dit en seulement deux minutes. Mais c'est vraiment une question de légalité et une question de liberté. On a la responsabilité de protéger les lois et les droits des personnes qui voudraient dire « Non ».

We have the responsibility to protect the people who want to get up and simply say, "No, I don't like this. I don't agree with this. I don't support this." It's a fundamental principle that we need to support, and I thank all the members who have added their voice to this debate. I look forward to hearing more support.

I want to close on my final reminder, and I can't say this enough because it's so important. The member from one of the Scarborough ridings indicated that this bill has been brought forward, introduced and spoken on by the Attorney General and by the critic for the Conservatives, and now by the NDP. That's only three times. That's not enough. We need to give this bill more priority. If we're serious about making sure this bill gets passed, we need to give it the time that it requires and we need to give it the priority it requires.

If we're serious in this House about protecting the rights of public participation, then I implore the Liberal government to make sure this bill gets adequate time in the House so that it does get passed, and so that we can stand up on third reading and support a bill which would declare very loudly and clearly in the jurisdiction of Ontario that we support public participation and we support the right to dissent.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House now stands recessed until 10:30 a.m.

The House recessed from 1016 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: I'm excited to welcome from Lambton county, here to discuss OMPF funding at Queen's Park today, Warden Todd Case, mayor of Lambton Shores Bill Weber and general manager of Lambton county John Innes.

Hon. Eric Hoskins: I'd like to welcome Christopher Filice and his teacher Jay Kearsy and the grade 5 class from Royal St. George school here in Toronto. I hope that your visit to Queen's Park today will be a good addition to your civics class.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm delighted to introduce Adam Tomlinson, a co-op student working in my community office in Whitby, who's here today to observe the proceedings at question period. Welcome, Adam.

Mr. Paul Miller: It's my pleasure to introduce some of my brothers from steel in Sault Ste. Marie who are here today. I have Richard Beall, Paul Chlebus and John Notte—and a special guest, my good friend Joe Krmpotich and his wife, Sherry; Joe is also a Sault Ste. Marie councillor. Last but not least, my wife Carole Paikin-Miller is here.

Hon. Linda Jeffrey: I am honoured to welcome to the gallery today Parminder Singh from my hometown of Brampton. Parminder was one of the founders of the Punjabi-language Hockey Night in Canada broadcast that has a dedicated following from my constituents in Brampton-Springdale and across the country. Parminder also had a role in the movie *Speedy Singhs*. On behalf of the Legislature, welcome.

M. Grant Crack: C'est un grand plaisir pour moi de souhaiter la bienvenue au maire de Hawkesbury, M. René Berthiaume—also the president and warden of the united counties of Prescott-Russell. Welcome.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: I'm privileged today to welcome some visitors from India. We have here Mr. Karamvir Saini, who's the spokesperson for the chief minister—which is the Premier—of a state in India called Haryana. Welcome. Along with Mr. Saini are Gulab Sani, Hardarshan Singh and Ranjit Delai. Welcome to all.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a pleasure for me to introduce in the members' east gallery Dr. Lucie Blouin and her son Stephen Motyer, who are guests of mine here today. They won a lunch with their MPP. We look forward to them enjoying question period here this morning.

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to welcome the grade 5 class from Timberbank Junior Public School, teacher Chrissy Corrieri and assistant Kathy Viapiana. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): On behalf of the member from Ajax-Pickering to celebrate page Najat Halane are: mother, Fathia; father, Abdi; and sisters, Hayat and Fatima. Welcome.

On behalf of the member from Mississauga-Erindale for page Spencer Johne: father, Michael Johne; sister, Catherine Johne; and grandmother, Mrs. Von Essen. They are here visiting as well.

Welcome to all our guests.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to introduce Dr. Rosemary Sadlier, who is here representing the Ontario Black History Society. She's here for the debate this afternoon of Bill 125, the Lincoln Alexander Day Act—the second and hopefully third reading of that bill this afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Very interesting introduction.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'd like to introduce and congratulate Danny Strong, who is a member of our staff here at Queen's Park, on the occasion of his 35th birthday.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm sure he appreciates that one too.

ORAL QUESTIONS

CHRIS MAZZA

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health: Yesterday, the entire Liberal caucus gave Chris Mazza a standing ovation—

Interjections.

Mr. Frank Klees: —in response to the Premier's endorsement of his right to practise emergency medicine at the Thunder Bay hospital. Here is what a medical doctor practising in Fort Frances had to say in an email in response to that endorsement by the Premier yesterday: "I hope he meets a patient and/or family that was harmed by the performance ... of Ornge. He may finally get a realistic feel for how destructive and incompetent he was."

This minister fired Chris Mazza for that incompetence. She called him a liar and is suing him to recover health care funds that he siphoned into his own pocket. But

today, he is back on the ministry's payroll and practising emergency medicine.

What evidence does the minister have that Chris Mazza has recovered from his mental breakdown, his incompetency and his disrespect for our health care system?

Interjections.

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

Before we continue, when the question is being put, I would appreciate from the same side no other comments, and when the question is being put, I would appreciate no comments from the other side.

The same is true with the answer: No comments on that side; no comments on that side. Let's keep it there.

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite has a remarkable history of twisting what actually happened, and I would say that this is just another—

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I will ask the Minister of Rural Affairs to come to order.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): No, you did.

I'm also going to ask the minister to be very cautious of what her verbiage is. I am loath to think she would assume that any kind of language that is unparliamentary will be used. I caution her.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, you're making it difficult for me, but what I will say is that the member opposite has a remarkable history of—of not getting his facts right. This is just one more example.

Yesterday—he's quite right—the members of the Liberal caucus did give the Premier a standing ovation. The members of the Liberal caucus gave the Premier a standing ovation because she talked about the importance of due process, and that is exactly the principle, which the Premier talked about, that we endorse on this side of the House. There is a process. We respect that process.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The principle I want to speak to is the principle of doing the right thing because it's the right thing to do. No one is asking the minister or the Premier to interfere with accreditation. We are simply asking her to do the responsible thing.

The minister knows that this Chris Mazza refused to appear at a parliamentary committee, claiming mental incapacity. She knows that she called him a liar. She knows that she is suing him to recover precious health care dollars that he siphoned into his own pocket. Has the minister asked for a report from the College of Physicians and Surgeons? Has she asked the person who hired Dr. Mazza for the report on which he based his decision that he was mentally competent and was in good health and proper health to, in fact, practise at the emergency ward

of the Thunder Bay hospital? What evidence does she have to allow this man—

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

1040

Hon. Deborah Matthews: In fact, the member opposite is asking that I interfere with due process, and I will not do that.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons is the authority, should be the authority, and I respect the authority of the College of Physicians and Surgeons to determine who is fit to practise in the province of Ontario. I will not interfere with that, no matter how many times the member opposite asks me to.

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

Mr. Frank Klees: It goes back to April of 2011, when we first raised questions about Dr. Mazza and Ornge in this House. She told us at that time that she has confidence in the steady hand and the very competence of the board of directors. As the minister pleaded at that time, she has no authority to intervene.

And so under her watch, multi millions of dollars were wasted. Patients and front-line staff were put at risk.

Ten months later: criminal investigations. Ten months later she fired him. Ten months later she called him a liar. The minister and the Premier and her caucus may consider the defence of Dr. Mazza worthy of a standing ovation. We happen to feel it's a disgrace and an abdication of responsibility.

Interjections.

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

Interjection.

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

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I've taken full responsibility for getting Ornge back on track, and the member opposite knows that. Ornge is now well into a new chapter. It has new leadership. It has a new volunteer board of directors that is delivering results for the patients of this province. They measure how well they are doing, and I'm sure the member opposite would like to know how they're doing.

The most recent report on Ornge: Pilots were available to respond to calls 97% of the time; Ornge aircraft were in service 99% of the time; Ornge paramedics were available to respond 95% of the time; 96% of Ornge's patient transports between health facilities are confirmed within 20 minutes; and 90% of Ornge's patient transports from emergency scenes are confirmed within 10 minutes.

Speaker, Ornge is back on the right track, and it's about time the member opposite recognized the tremendous progress and work of front-line staff at Ornge.

MANUFACTURING JOBS

Mr. Monte McNaughton: My question this morning is to the Minister of Finance. Under the McGuinty-Wynne

government, Ontario has lost 300,000 good-paying manufacturing jobs. That is 300,000 Ontario families who don't know where their next paycheque is going to come from and 300,000 men and women who are looking to the province for help and assistance.

Minister, under our Paths to Prosperity series of white papers, Tim Hudak and the Ontario PCs have put forward hundreds of ideas to help create jobs and grow Ontario's economy.

My question this morning, Minister, is a simple one: Where is your jobs plan for the province of Ontario?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Let's correct some of the numbers here. Since this party came into government, we've had over 680,000 new jobs created. Since the depth of the recession, not only have the jobs that have been lost been recovered, but 470,000 more new jobs—net new jobs—have occurred.

It is occurring because of investments that we're making to stimulate economic growth by investing in our people and our skills, by ensuring that we strategically invest in infrastructure and projects that that party neglected all the while they were there, and ensuring that we make a dynamic business climate by maintaining our taxes low. We are doing everything possible, and every decision we make is about creating those jobs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Minister of Finance: Minister, you need to get out of Queen's Park and back to reality. The Heinz plant in Leamington is just another example of your careless approach to Ontario's manufacturing sector, but sadly, Minister, it will not be the last. In fact, as Ontario has been losing out, we have seen US states like Michigan, Texas and Indiana creating thousands of new manufacturing jobs with cheaper energy, less red tape and, importantly, modernized labour laws.

It is clear that your government does not have a jobs plan, and because of that Ontario's middle class is being completely gutted under your watch.

Minister, when will Ontario move forward, remove unnecessary barriers to job creation and modernize our labour laws like Europe, Australia, the UK and most of the United States have already done?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite just compared us to other jurisdictions around the world that are falling behind Ontario in job creation. We have over 173% of jobs returned to this province compared to only 80% in the United States, and well above OECD countries. In fact, in Ontario, because of our direction into new manufacturing and advanced manufacturing in new sectors of the economy that are going to be necessary for us to be competitive in the future—they want to take us back to areas where we can't compete. Yet Ericsson Canada has invested in more jobs in this province. Toyota, in Cambridge, has invested up to 400 jobs. Ford has invested 2,800 more jobs. GM has invested and secured 2,500 jobs for CAMI. We have Green Arc Tire Manufacturing in St. Marys—more jobs. We have more jobs in Brantford, in Brockville, in Arnprior and in

Wallaceburg, Ontario. Because of these investments, because of those incentives, companies are seeking—

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

Mr. Monte McNaughton: Back to the Minister of Finance. Minister, here are the facts: One million people are out of work in Ontario today; 300,000 net manufacturing jobs have been lost—nearly 40,000 of those since the Premier was coronated last spring. Our middle class has been gutted and we are seeing plants closing and major layoffs on a daily basis—1,000 people at Heinz, another 800 at Sears—while US states like Michigan and Indiana are growing and creating new manufacturing jobs at record numbers.

As you have blown this off as a mere transition, Minister, in fact only Tim Hudak and the PCs have put forward a plan to create jobs, grow our economy and modernize Ontario's labour laws. Finance Minister, will you finally admit that Ontario is in an economic free fall and that your government doesn't have a single plan to create jobs or grow Ontario's economy?

Hon. Charles Sousa: Mr. Speaker, again he's referencing other parts of the world and the United States that are lagging behind Ontario. We have exceeded our targets. We are not satisfied; we want to do more. That is why we've introduced the Supporting Small Businesses Act: to ensure that 90% of companies in Ontario will be more competitive and exempt from paying employee health tax. The opposition are stalling that very initiative to support small business and create jobs in Ontario. That party is looking at cutting those investments that we're trying to make to protect our future competitiveness. They want to slash and burn and hurt our economic recovery. We reject that option. We will continue to do what's necessary to create jobs, promote growth and ensure that we continue to stay ahead of the curve. We need to do more. We need everybody at their best. They want to divide Ontario. We won't stand for that.

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Yesterday, the energy minister said that hydro price hikes were "a fact of life." Ontario families are paying the highest electricity bills in the country, and they've seen those bills double over the last decade. They have one question: Are higher hydro bills a fact of life or are they a fact of life under the Liberal government?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, I think we should review some facts. The previous governments—Liberal, Progressive Conservative, NDP—had for 20 years an average increase of 3.5% in the rates. The current government, over a period of 10 years and through our 2010 long-term energy plan, see rate increases averaging 3.4% over a 20-year period.

What we can do is mitigate the rate increases, and we've already taken significant steps. We'll mitigate rate increases by deferring new nuclear. We'll take \$15 billion out of the rate base; the Samsung transaction,

taking \$3.7 billion out of the rate base; dispatching wind, taking \$200 million a year out of the rate base. We've already taken significant steps. The reality is that we are going to mitigate rate increases and we're going to keep them lower than they have been in the past, but—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: For families and businesses struggling to make ends meet, this is just the latest evidence of how arrogant and out of touch the Liberals have grown. The minister claims that these sky-high bills are just a fact of life.

1050

Well, let me ask this: The \$1 billion added to bills when Liberals cancelled gas plants, the \$180 million blown when Liberals committed to a nuclear expansion plan that never went ahead, the millions and millions and millions spent daily on private power deals and lavish compensation, all of the government's desperate wheeling and dealing—are these things all a fact of life?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: There are a couple of facts of life. We've moved the energy sector from an energy deficit to an energy surplus. We've moved it from dirty, cheap coal to a clean system.

Mr. Speaker, yes, rates have gone up because of significant investments that we have made in the sector to get it up to speed. That includes \$31 billion over the last 10 years, invested in generation and transmission.

I've just listed \$20 billion in rate mitigation measures that we have already taken in the last nine months. We're going to continue to do that. That's the policy under the new long-term energy plan, and we will be extremely successful in mitigating rate increases in the future.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, 10 years ago, Liberals were elected with the following promise to Ontarians: The government's "bungling of the hydro file ... will cost taxpayers hundreds of millions of dollars and leave ... businesses coping with impossibly high hydro bills.

"We will ... ensure Ontario has a steady supply of ... affordable electricity."

Well, 10 long years later, the cost of hydro bills has doubled. Ontario households have some of the highest-cost hydro in the entire country. The government has added billions and billions to those bills by signing and cancelling contracts whenever it suited the political needs of their party.

Is this minister really so out of touch that he's just telling people to suck it up and pay the bill?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: We have reduced the investment in health care by \$4 billion by moving to a clean energy system. We've taken \$4 billion out of the health care system.

But let's look at some of the other experiences. About a year ago, the Conservatives issued their white paper to privatize Ontario Power Generation. I want to read from the Toronto Sun—not the Toronto Star; the Toronto Sun. "Hudak should keep in mind the ... Tory government in

Ontario that tried to do that with electricity generation, promising it would lead to lower hydro rates.

"Instead, it led to the exact opposite—rates skyrocketed amid rampant Tory patronage, and the Conservatives, faced with rising public fury, abandoned the scheme...."

We have rectified the system; we have improved the system. Our decisions have been strategic. Moving forward, we're taking \$20 billion out of the rate base, and the rates will be mitigated.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Speaker, the Liberals have done nothing but follow the folly of the Conservatives on the hydro file.

My next question is actually to the Acting Premier. Over a year ago, the Liberals promised to bring in a hard cap on executive compensation in the public sector. Can the Acting Premier tell us whether the plan has changed?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I'll take the first question and I'll pass the supplementary.

I can tell you that managing public sector compensation is a very important part of our plan to control costs and to protect front-line government services that Ontario families rely on. We froze salaries for executives at hospitals, universities, colleges, school boards and provincially owned electricity companies. All aspects of compensation plans are frozen. Base salaries cannot be increased. In addition, the overall performance pay envelopes at designated employers are frozen. MPPs: I think it's important to note that we will also continue to see our wages frozen, five years in a row.

Is there more to do? Yes, there is, and I look forward to the supplementary, when the minister can reply.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Gee, Speaker, I'm surprised the Minister of Health could deliver that response with a straight face.

Today, the House will vote on a bill to cap public sector CEOs' salaries at twice the level of the Premier's. We've seen the government offering vague promises about taking some action on this file, but as usual, we haven't seen any action. Will the Liberals actually take action today and vote to cap public sector CEO salaries?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The Minister of Government Services.

Hon. John Milloy: This is not about vague promises; this is about our commitment in the 2013 budget, which that member and her party supported. The 2013 budget was clear that we are committed as a government to examining additional measures to manage compensation costs, including considering hard caps. That examination is under way, and the results will be announced forthwith.

But, you know, Mr. Speaker, the member represents her bill, and it was very interesting, when you reviewed her press conference yesterday, that she referenced a particularly high salary, and when the members of the

press pressed her on it, she said, “Oh, well, we’d have an exemption for it.”

You can’t have it both ways. This is a complex matter, and the bill that she has put forward does not take into account the many, many nuances that need to be dealt with in a policy that comes forward.

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The average household income in Ontario is a little over \$70,000. They’re paying the highest electricity bills in the country, the highest auto insurance premiums in the country, and they are scrambling to pay for caring for their aging loved ones. They’re the ones who pay the bills to make Ontario work, and when they see public sector executives like the CEO of Hydro One get a raise of \$70,000 a year—more than their entire household will earn in that year—they feel like their government just isn’t getting it.

Does the Acting Premier think that the CEO pay hikes are the best investment of public dollars, and if not, why the heck are they not doing anything about it?

Hon. John Milloy: The honourable member cannot take yes for an answer. The simple fact is, in the 2013 budget, which her party allowed to pass, we made a commitment to examine it. But this is a complex issue. Again, I remind her of her press conference yesterday. She mentioned, I believe, an OPG official who was paid an exorbitant amount, and someone pointed out that that person had special technical skills. So do you know what the leader of the third party said? “Oh, we’ll have an exemption for him.”

I mean, come on. You come forward with a simple solution to a very complex problem, which does not work, and you have to swallow yourself whole in front of a press conference.

We need a considered response. That is the work that we’re doing, and we will follow up on our commitment made in the 2013 budget that her party allowed to pass.

POLICE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. Minister, in May 2012, you announced that you had ordered your ministry to review how police officers across the province respond to calls involving those with suspected mental illness. This was following three fatal shootings in the province of Ontario.

In an interview, you stated that “we need to take a step back and see what we are doing and what is done elsewhere, and to come out with recommendations.” Well, Minister, members on this side of the House haven’t seen any indication of any investigation. Could you please give us a report on the status of this investigation today?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I’m pleased to answer this question. To deal with individuals who are suffering from mental illness, from the side of the police, is not an easy matter. Most of the time, when they have a call, they don’t know who is in front of them. That’s why I have

asked my ministry to work with the police force in Ontario and see what is the best practice that we have in Ontario to deal with people with mental illness and also to look at what is being done elsewhere, in Canada and in the world.

Each police force across the world is dealing with such a very important issue, and we are all sharing our experiences to put forward the best approach.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Well, I think it’s pretty clear from that answer that pretty much nothing has happened since May 2012, and the need is becoming even more and more urgent. You announced the need for the review following the deaths of Reyal Jardine-Douglas, Sylvia Klibingaitis and Michael Eligon. These individuals all suffered from a mental illness and were killed in a police standoff. Since then, there has been another death with the shooting of Sammy Yatim in July of this year.

1100

Minister, we need to prevent further deaths like this from happening. Will you stand in your place now and tell us exactly what you’re prepared to do to make sure that deaths like this don’t ever happen again?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: According to the member who asked the question, there is nothing that has been done. I’ll say that there is a lot more that has been done than when her party was in power, because there was nothing that was done.

I take mental illness and addiction very seriously. Again, that’s why I asked my ministry to launch a review into how police interact with the mentally ill last year. We have completed the first stage, a large step, of the review. We have analyzed what was done in the past 25 years and the report from the coroner. We have identified, like I said, best practices across the country, the USA, the UK and Australia. We have reviewed existing guidelines and models adopted by police services in Ontario. We have reviewed leading academic research. We are currently working on the next step, and we will continue until we have the right solution.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. John Vanthof: My question is to the Minister of Rural Affairs. Yesterday I had the opportunity to meet Walter Pallichuk, a Heinz grower in Leamington. Some of the members on the other side of the House might remember Walter. He’s the head of Drip Irrigation Inc., and they were awarded a Premier’s award of excellence for their work on irrigating tomatoes. But as of November 14, Walter can no longer grow tomatoes, and the current business risk management programs do not cover disappearance of a market like what has happened with the Heinz closure.

Not only are 740 people at the Heinz plant losing their jobs, but farmers have lost their markets for tomatoes, and they don’t know where to turn next. Will you work with the growers to create an emergency transition program and a long-term plan for the industry in Leamington?

Hon. Jeff Leal: Mr. Speaker, as you well know and the member knows, the Premier, in her role as Minister of Agriculture and Food, and the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Employment were in Leamington last Friday. They had extensive consultations with all the players involved in that. Everyone in this House is disappointed with the Heinz decision, but there was an interesting program on The Agenda last Monday evening with a professor from the University of Guelph. He went through the whole Heinz decision from A to Z. I recommend all members of the House take the opportunity to look at that program. We know today from media reports from Leamington, Ontario, that there's a number of entities that are looking at opportunities in Leamington to work with the tomato growers to make sure that they have a future in that fine community of Leamington.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. John Vanthof: Once again, back to the Minister of Rural Affairs: The Heinz growers had a three-year commitment from the company to buy their tomatoes, and they invested in their crop this fall based on that commitment. Their market has disappeared. The Risk Management Program doesn't work, and even if another entity steps up, it doesn't help them for this year's crop because it's unlikely that that will get all put together in time for this.

So, Minister, will you step up to the plate and stand up for the producers with those contracts that have disappeared and work with them to actually make sure that they can go to the bank and go to FCC and say, "Yes, we are solvent and we are still in place"?

Hon. Jeff Leal: I want to reiterate that the Premier, in her role as Minister of Agriculture and Food, and the Minister of Economic Development and Trade were in Leamington last Friday. They had an extensive and comprehensive round table with all the producers, the people and the economic development officers in that area. We have staff from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food on the ground right now looking for a prospective opportunity or for a new entity to continue the manufacturing of tomato-based products in that community. We're looking forward to a continuing co-operation of work with all the players in that community.

Let me tell you, Mr. Speaker: I met with a number of agriculture commodity groups this morning. They say the Risk Management Program is one of the most successful programs for agriculture in the province of Ontario.

SPORTS AND RECREATION FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is to the Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport. Ontario supports sport and recreation in our province, providing assistance to amateur and high-performance athletes alike. That's what it has always taken if a community, a province and a country seek to develop Olympians, professionals and international stars in sports.

Ontario needs to continue as a leader, supporting athletes at the grassroots level. We need to start early, get-

ting children interested in sports to develop as individuals and to stay physically and mentally fit. Community centres, sports associations and other programs help shape future Ontario sports role models.

Minister, how does Ontario promote and support youth to become involved in sport, fitness and recreation?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Mississauga–Streetsville. This Saturday, November 30, is national sports day. It is our country's celebration of sport. From grassroots to high performance, it is an opportunity for all Canadians to celebrate the power of sport and to build community and national morale, and facilitate healthy, active living.

Local organizations, communities and schools from coast to coast will open their doors to celebrate sport at the local level with events. That includes festivals, try-it days, open houses and pep rallies that celebrate sport at all levels.

Since 2003, our government has invested over \$752 million to support sport and recreation programs.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Minister, support for fitness and recreation means everyone has to pitch in. Municipalities can't do it all alone, operating on just the property tax base and through program fees. Community sponsors also need to know they're part of a team.

In my youth, I was a hockey player and a swimmer, and governments then invested the funds to build indoor arenas and pools. We developed our best swimmers, divers, water polo players and synchronized swimmers because our elected leaders had the foresight to build facilities athletes needed to develop and compete. Award winners or not, kids developed a strong body and a solid work ethic. Being able to compete as young athletes made us better people as adults later in life.

Minister, what is Ontario doing to give today's kids the same chance to develop and compete as past generations of kids had?

Hon. Michael Chan: Thank you, again, for the question. Participating in sport and recreation is vital to the health and well-being of all Ontarians. Our government recognizes the importance of Ontarians being active in sport and recreation. We want our province to be a healthy, prosperous place to live, to work and to play.

In 2012-13, we provided over \$23 million to our sport partners to promote participation and excellence in sport across Ontario, including almost \$10 million for the Quest for Gold program, over \$7.5 million to support provincial sport and multi-sport organizations and almost \$4 million for our key service delivery partners.

Through our investments, we are helping our athletes reach the highest levels of competition and promoting vibrant and healthy communities across Ontario.

DEER HUNT

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Thursday last, I informed the

House of a controversial four-day deer cull in Short Hills Provincial Park, which took place from November 21 to November 24, and which will occur again from today until December 1.

Hunters are allowed into this very small 6.6-square-kilometre provincial park. As I stated, there have been serious safety questions arise because of the small nature of the park and the fact that there are nearly 100 homes located in close proximity.

As you know, many residents of the area have serious concerns over public safety, and, Minister, as reported, this year's hunt was no different. There were again incidents involving public safety. In fact, your own ministry is investigating them at this time.

Minister, how is the MNR ensuring public safety during the deer cull in the Short Hills Provincial Park?

Hon. David Oraziotti: I'm pleased to respond to the question. As the member knows full well, the result of the hunt is part of the Haudenosaunee First Nations exercising what their traditional treaty rights are from the Nanfan Treaty, which was signed in 1701. So Ontario has an obligation to uphold their treaty rights in allowing the hunt to proceed.

1110

The Ministry of Natural Resources does have staff on-site. They are patrolling the site. It's a 660-hectare park. The Niagara Regional Police Service and the OPP are there, as well, to ensure safety.

The six days that have been specified are days in which there is very low visitation to the park.

So we are obviously ensuring safety. It would be irresponsible of the provincial government to not participate in helping to ensure the safety of these activities, given that we are obligated to uphold federal treaty rights.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Minister, your staff say that the basis of the cull is an attempt to manage and control the overpopulation of deer in the park. Last year, there were only seven deer harvested during the cull, and it was reported that last Saturday, again, only seven deer were taken.

Minister, not only did the Short Hills hunt fail to meet your objective, but in not allowing a managed, open hunt to all through a lottery or draw, the MNR is missing an opportunity to increase revenues to the SPCA.

Minister, if you're going to continue to control the Short Hills deer population, are you considering allowing a managed hunt consistent with your deer management strategy in the rest of the province, where it is necessary to bring populations into balance and protect habitat?

Hon. David Oraziotti: Speaker, I'm somewhat confused about the member's question with respect to safety. First, the member is talking about ensuring safety and the cost of safety and who's there to help ensure this is safe. Then in the same question, in the supplementary, the member is saying we should broaden the hunt, perhaps, and have more hunters in there shooting deer. So I'm a bit concerned about that.

This is about the treaty rights for the Haudenosaunee First Nations, and we are being responsible in providing appropriate safety. Twenty-one deer have been harvested to date, and we obviously expect that more will take place in the coming three days of the remainder of the hunt.

I have to assure the member that safety is the top priority. I would also indicate that I have responded to folks publicly, through an open letter. They should also be expressing concerns in the area to their federal members, Malcolm Allen, Dean Allison and Rick Dykstra, who are responsible for overseeing the federal treaties that are reached with First Nations in the province of Ontario.

The province is doing everything it can to ensure that safety is first and foremost.

I also want to say that the Minister of the Environment, Jim Bradley—

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

HYDRO RATES

Ms. Cindy Forster: My question is to the Minister of Energy. Under this government's watch, electricity prices have doubled in this province. One of the casualties of the doubling of these prices is the curling club in my hometown of Welland. The government said this morning that participating in sports and recreation is vital, but Frank Belchior, president of the Welland Curling Club, said because of high electricity prices, his club is in danger of closing. They are now paying close to \$7,000 a month during the season on hydro alone.

How does this government justify doubling the hydro prices and the pain it's causing for the residents in my hometown of Welland and across this province?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier, we have rebuilt the system. We've invested \$31 billion. That puts pressure on prices, pushing them up. We are now in a surplus situation, and we're now reducing the amount of investments that are going into the rate base, which will mitigate them in the future.

In the meantime, we've created a number of programs to be of assistance to people in the interim period. That includes the Industrial Conservation Initiative, the Industrial Electricity Incentive program, the Northern Industrial Electricity Rate Program, and the Ontario Clean Energy Benefit, which also assists farmers and small business people. I would be happy to sit down with the member and review the bill she's referring to, to see whether or not there are price mitigations in any of these programs that could be of assistance to her constituent.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Cindy Forster: Minister, recreational facilities such as the Welland Curling Club are at the heart of the social activity in small-town Ontario. If clubs like this one are being hurt because of skyrocketing electricity prices, it means that other community centres like arenas and other sports complexes across the province are also being slammed.

How does this government justify the doubling of electricity prices under its watch, the harm it's doing to communities, and what is it going to do to actually help these entities in our communities across this province?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: Mr. Speaker, we have a long-term energy plan which was initiated in 2010, which projected average increases over a 20-year period of 3.4%. As I mentioned earlier, because of the investments that were necessary in the system to get a clean system and eliminate dirty coal, it put pressures on the system.

In the meantime, we've created a number of price mitigation programs to help the people across Ontario, including a 10% discount, which is the Clean Energy Benefit. We have also taken strong steps in the last nine months to reduce price increases in the future, and that includes \$20 billion taken out of the rate base, which will mitigate prices in the future.

ENERGY POLICIES

Mr. Joe Dickson: My question is for the Minister of Energy. Yesterday, the minister announced that the Ministry of Energy will be releasing the 2013 long-term energy plan this coming Monday. When it comes to the electricity system in Ontario, one of the things I hear most often about from my constituents in Ajax, Pickering and Durham is that they want to know more about their energy bills, the environment and the overall energy system.

As our electricity system has been modernized with the advent of smart meters, smart grids, energy apps and time-of-use pricing, it is important for Ontarians to know why and how they use these tools. Can the minister please tell us what steps the government is taking to increase energy literacy?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I want to thank the member for his question. As I mentioned yesterday in the House, promoting energy literacy among Ontarians is a top priority for the Ministry of Energy. In keeping with this theme, yesterday we launched a new Web portal dedicated to educating Ontarians about their electricity system.

The website, called emPOWERme, provides an excellent overview of Ontario's energy sector and explains how generation, transmission and distribution networks function together to ensure that everybody has access to the clean and reliable electricity they need. The emPOWERme website is accessible to Ontarians of all ages, and I would highly recommend that members encourage their constituents to take advantage of this resource.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Joe Dickson: The emPOWERme website sounds like something that many of my constituents would definitely find very, very useful. All of us in the House today should agree that we need to continue to do more to promote energy literacy in Ontario. In fact, the need to do so was identified by consumers directly, through a number of recent reports, including the Drummond report, the Auditor General's 2011 report and the

Environmental Commissioner's 2011 and 2012 annual reports.

Constituents in Ajax, Pickering and Durham would like to understand how the system works and know the ways that they can reduce their energy consumption, which would help them save on their hydro bills—and all of their energy bills—and help the environment. Can the minister please tell us if the upcoming long-term energy plan might include more tools to allow more Ontarians to become more energy-literate?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I agree with the member that we can do a better job of informing Ontarians about the state of our electricity system. In fact, we heard this throughout the summer when we visited several ridings in the province to gather input from Ontarians on the long-term energy plan.

The website offers a number of video shorts that explain electricity generation, distribution, transmission and conservation. The site also includes an interactive electricity bill tutorial, info graphics and interactive exhibits about Ontario's supply mix and smart grid innovations. Encouraging a better understanding of the energy system and empowering consumers is a theme that will be reflected in the long-term energy plan.

There are videos on that site that are very, very simple and that explain how the system operates, and explain to individuals how they can benefit from it, including how they can lower their hydro bills.

PROPERTY TAXATION

Mr. Steve Clark: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Minister, the Premier's words of support for local food ring hollow when I see how you let the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. treat Ontario's local food producers, people like Nigel Smith in my riding, who makes fantastic cheese at Bushgarden Farmstead Cheese in Rideau Lakes township. MPAC is turning this amazing artisan cheesemaker's experience sour.

1120

One of the first visitors to Nigel's farm wasn't a customer; it was the MPAC taxman, who slapped him with an "industrial" classification. "Industrial" is the opposite of what happens here, yet this ridiculous decision cost Nigel an additional \$1,200 on his property tax bill.

Minister, will you have a conversation with MPAC and explain to them the difference between "artisanal" and "industrial"?

Hon. Charles Sousa: I appreciate the question; I really do. We are looking at MPAC now; we're having a review. The parliamentary assistant to the Ministry of Finance is doing an outstanding job, alongside the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, on ensuring that we have a competitive environment. We want to make certain that our companies succeed, especially our entrepreneurs, who are the creator of many jobs.

So I welcome the question. We will endeavour to review exactly what is occurring over there. As I said, a review is certainly under way around MPAC all around the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Steve Clark: Back to the minister: You know, Minister, if you want local food, you can't send the tax-man in to hassle them.

Nigel Smith spent three and a half years cutting through your red tape, to make world-class cheese, and MPAC jeopardized his operation with just one visit to the farm.

I'm also going to tell you about Terry and Dave McGurrin, from Edgewood Farms, who, for the first time in 12 years, kept their pancake house closed. They gave it up because MPAC demanded that they pay a commercial assessment for a six-week operation. Shutting them down wasn't enough. MPAC then came and hassled them—essentially interrogated Terry—about displaying maple syrup and owning a cash register or even part of a pancake griddle. It was absolutely disgusting.

How many more farm businesses will MPAC shut down before you and the Premier do your job?

Hon. Charles Sousa: A report has just come out today, reaffirming how Ontario is much more competitive than most jurisdictions in the OECD and in North America around its tax regime. We took initiatives to introduce the HST, to enable those companies to be even more competitive, which the opposition opposed.

More importantly, the member is asking a question about finding ways to make taxes more affordable for businesses and entrepreneurs. He should stand up and support the Supporting Small Businesses Act. That is what we're doing to exempt these very companies from paying those taxes, and they're holding it up.

Mr. Speaker, I'll endeavour to look at what he has proposed and what's happening. I would be happy to do that. More importantly, I wish he would stand up for those small businesses by supporting them with this act.

THUNDER BAY GENERATING STATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Minister of Energy. The people of Thunder Bay are telling this government that a biomass peaking plant won't cut it when it comes to meeting the demands for energy for the future mining projects in the northwest.

The Premier told NOMA, the Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association, that she hears their concerns, but the Minister of Energy stood in this Legislature yesterday and said he prefers to take advice from government bureaucrats in Toronto.

So just who is calling the shots when it comes to making decisions about power for northwestern Ontario?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: I would suggest that the people of Thunder Bay are calling the shots on this particular issue. We've had extensive consultations with them, with the task force that was set up and the committee.

The chair of the task force has indicated that he's pleased that we're converting the Thunder Bay station to biomass. He did raise some questions about the supply of the material. We discussed alternatives, how that could be addressed, and that issue will be addressed.

Thunder Bay will have the energy it needs when they need it. The whole northwest, under the plan that the OPA has rolled out, will have over \$2.5 billion invested in transmission, in generation. It's a great plan. A lot of research went into it—tremendous consultation with the aboriginal communities and the people in the area.

Mr. Speaker, I don't know why she's hammering this. Obviously, it's for political reasons. There is no issue of reliability for the electricity in Thunder—

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

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Yesterday, the Minister of Energy waved off legitimate concerns raised by the Common Voice Northwest Energy Task Force by saying, "They will not have to worry about their energy generation."

Thunder Bay has heard that line from Liberals before. After two previous power plant cancellations that cost the public \$20 million, you'll forgive northerners if they don't take this government at its word.

When will the minister take the advice of northwesterners on electricity for a change?

Hon. Bob Chiarelli: The leader of the third party has no evidence for what she is saying. The evidence is that Thunder Bay will have a reliable system of electricity and reliable generation. The Atikokan plant, the Thunder Bay plant will be more than enough to meet the needs of Thunder Bay.

I would like the leader of the third party to come with some evidence for her stand and position. She has no technical evidence. She has no experiential evidence in any way, shape or form. It's all anecdotal.

The system in Thunder Bay is reliable. They'll have electricity when they need it. They'll have much more transmission than they have now in the very near future.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. John Fraser: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Aboriginal youth are Canada's fastest growing demographic and also the fastest-growing potential workforce. Almost half of aboriginal peoples in Canada—First Nations, Inuit and Métis—are less than 24 years old. We know there exists a gap between aboriginal and non-aboriginal people, both in terms of educational outcomes and income.

We know that the success of aboriginal people in Ontario is essential to the success of all Ontarians. We also know that in Ontario, we're working together to build a successful, vital province where everyone has the opportunity to connect, contribute and achieve their goals. Only in this way can Ontario be the fair and just society it aspires to be.

Can the minister inform the House of what Ontario is doing to narrow this gap?

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, on November 18, I represented Ontario at the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group in Winnipeg. As a recent national chair of the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group for the past number

of years, our government has supported the continued call for a first ministers' meeting on aboriginal education with aboriginal leaders. We have been urging the federal government to work with us and the aboriginal leadership to close the gap on these issues. It is really important—I can't stress that enough—for the federal government and all of the provincial and territorial aboriginal organization leaders to be at the same table to find the solutions to these important issues.

At the working group, the provincial-territorial ministers and the national aboriginal organization leaders discussed a range of opportunities to reduce barriers to education and increase opportunities. I also worked with my colleagues in recommending that the federal minister have more dialogue with his provincial counterparts on these issues.

We look forward to working with the federal government on these issues. We need the federal government—

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

Mr. John Fraser: It's good to know that Ontario is showing leadership in the effort to advance these important issues.

Mr. Speaker, I understand that another priority of the working group is to end violence against aboriginal women and girls. About 50% of aboriginal women in Canada who have had a spouse or common-law partner in the last five years reported being a victim of spousal violence, more than twice the proportion among non-aboriginal women. Missing and murdered aboriginal women represent about 10% of the homicides in Canada, despite the fact that aboriginal women make up only 3% of the total female population.

I know that earlier this year, Premier Wynne joined her provincial counterparts at the Council of the Federation in supporting the call on the federal government from the national aboriginal leadership for an inquiry into missing and murdered aboriginal women. Mr. Speaker, through you, can the minister update this House on how the Aboriginal Affairs Working Group is addressing this issue?

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, again, this issue of missing and murdered aboriginal women is huge across the country. Again, at the Winnipeg conference—I was there last year and I was there just recently—all of the provincial ministers and all of the national aboriginal leadership team called on the federal government to launch an inquiry into missing aboriginal women. The federal government has not taken up that challenge, has not taken up that initiative.

We continue to press the federal government. The national aboriginal leadership continues to press the federal government. The national aboriginal women's leadership groups continue to press for this call. But so far, we haven't even had a nibble on this issue.

Last year when I was in Winnipeg, the federal government didn't attend. This year, the federal government attended for a part of the morning to discuss this issue and then went off to other duties. This is an important issue. We need the federal government at the table.

1130

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bill Walker: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, two days ago, in response to our leader's question about the Niagara south hospital project, you suggested I ask you a question about a hospital build in my riding. Firstly, Minister, thank you for the offer. After 10 years, the Markdale community no doubt appreciates your offer to answer our long-standing question about the construction date for the new hospital.

Secondly, I kindly remind you that your government did challenge Markdale to raise \$12 million for the new facility, which they did, and then you provided \$4 million in planning funding and erected a sign on the site advising that a new hospital was forthcoming.

So, Minister, please tell us, what is the intended construction date for the new Markdale hospital?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Speaker, I tell you, this is really getting exciting here, because the party that was opposed to building new hospitals, the party that voted against building new hospitals, has now decided that building new hospitals should, in fact, be a priority.

Interjection: They've seen the light.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: They have seen the light, and it is a very happy day, I have to say, for the patients of Ontario.

The member opposite knows that we are in very active conversations with Grey Bruce Health Services. I had a meeting personally in my own office with leadership from that organization. We acknowledge that the people of Markdale actually need enhanced health care. We are working hard to make that become a reality, and it's wonderful to have the support of the party opposite.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Mr. Bill Walker: Speaker, again to the minister. Well, Minister, thank you so much, but you know what? Conversations don't provide health care.

With all due respect, Minister, you encouraged me to ask you about the Markdale hospital project. If you're not prepared to talk about the new Markdale hospital, then you need to tell the hospital staff, the patients, the donors and the volunteers what they should do with the sign that you erected on their site in celebration of the new build announced over 10 years ago. As well, you need to assure the people of Markdale, and the Niagara region as well, that you won't compromise their health care and that finding money for their hospital projects is just as important as finding money to cancel gas plants.

Minister, will you do the honourable thing? Restore faith in elected officials by honouring the commitment made by your Liberal government to the people of Markdale and build the Markdale hospital.

Interjections.

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

Be seated, please. Be seated. Thank you.

Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think that the member opposite should talk to some of his colleagues who have been blessed with new hospitals in their ridings, and who will know that there is a process. I'm sure the member from Simcoe North could talk about Waypoint; the member from Barrie could talk about the Royal Victoria; the member from Cambridge could talk about Cambridge hospital; the member from Burlington—even though she voted against it, we're going ahead with the Joe Brant memorial hospital expansion; the member from Halton could talk to you about the Milton district; the member from Leeds–Grenville could talk about Brockville mental health; the member from Elgin–Middlesex–London would be more than happy to talk about St. Thomas Elgin; the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke would happily talk about the dialysis at Renfrew Victoria Hospital; and the member from Wellington–Halton Hills I know would be more than happy to talk about the Groves Memorial Community Hospital expansion.

Speaker, we have an impressive and proven history of building the hospital infrastructure our patients need, and I'm delighted to have the support now—a change of heart—of the Conservative Party.

PUBLIC TRANSIT

Ms. Catherine Fife: My question is to the Acting Premier. Recently, I received a letter from the regional government. They will be asking this government to improve rail services to Kitchener–Waterloo again. In 2011, with much fanfare, this government announced that GO train service was coming to Kitchener–Waterloo. Constituents in my riding were promised rail service to Toronto that works for them. They were told that service would start with four trips in the morning and four trips in the afternoon. Eventually, two-way all-day service would connect Kitchener–Waterloo to Toronto. Yet people are only getting half of what they were promised, and two-way all-day service won't happen for at least another 15 years.

Speaker, my constituents need transportation options that allow them to get to work. When will this government follow through on its promises and provide the rail service that the region of Waterloo needs?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Well, Speaker, I can tell you that the member from Kitchener Centre has been a passionate and strong advocate of enhanced transit from Kitchener to Toronto, and he has done an excellent job. As the member from Kitchener Centre said, we've done so well that people want more of what we're doing, and Speaker, I can tell you that we will continue to improve transit in this province.

We are committed to getting people out of cars and onto public transit. Since 2003, we've invested more than \$16.1 billion in public transit, and that's more than \$7.7 billion to GO Transit. Our commitment is very clear: We're committed to public transit, and we will continue to make sure that we get as many people out of cars and into public transit as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Supplementary?

Ms. Catherine Fife: Constituents and businesses in my riding are looking for more than empty words. Rather than wait for this government to live up to its promises, tech companies are taking matters into their own hands. Google, BlackBerry, OpenText, all of these companies have been forced to provide shuttle services to their employees in the region. At a recent CityAge conference, leaders of the 800 tech companies that employ 30,000 people in Kitchener–Waterloo repeatedly stressed the importance of rail service to the region.

When will this government include the rest of the province in its transit plans?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think we have found common ground, because our commitment is exactly to public transit that the member opposite is asking for. We know it's important, and we know that the Waterloo region is one of the largest and fastest-growing urban regions in Ontario. That's why we've committed up to \$300 million to support rapid transit in Waterloo region, and this project will connect the cities of Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge, while linking up with GO Transit services.

And, Speaker, more good news: The federal government has joined the province, and it has committed up to \$265 million. This is the single largest transit infrastructure investment in the region's history. In total, we've committed more than \$400 million to public transit to Waterloo region since 2003. This is great news, and we're moving forward together.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member from Leeds–Grenville has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I'm waiting for quiet.

—given by the Minister of Finance concerning MPAC and regulations against local food production. This matter will be debated Tuesday at 6 p.m.

The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs on a point of order.

VISITORS

Hon. David Zimmer: Speaker, I would like to introduce Adela Wan, who's a policy adviser over at the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, who is here. But here's why she's in the Legislature today: Because when the United Way did its fundraising campaign at the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, she bid about \$100 to come and visit question period and then have lunch with the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. So welcome.

Mr. Jagmeet Singh: I ask all the members in the House today to join me in welcoming a good friend of mine—I call him brother, although he is a little bit older than me—Mr. Harbhajan Singh Dhillon.

Mr. John O'Toole: I would like to recognize teacher Nancy Deratnay, who is a grade 5 teacher at Charles Bowman Public School in Bowmanville.

Hon. Michael Coteau: I'd like to welcome Rosemary Sadlier, author, and president of the Ontario Black History Society. Welcome.

Mr. Joe Dickson: I take the liberty of introducing Ajax councillor Joanne Dies, who is in the audience on the far side this morning with a number of other residents who are working to protect our Ajax waterfront and improve the water quality and livability in that area.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Again, maybe it's my problem, but I remind members that we've set aside time for doing introductions, and it's very difficult to try to allow for this to happen if we're not going to stay with the procedure. So I remind you, please, if you know they're coming and they're not here, introduce them during that time period. It will still show up on the record, and it shows that you cared about their visit. I appreciate your co-operation on that issue.

There are no deferred votes. This House will stand recessed until this afternoon at 1 p.m.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I would like to welcome the members from Oxford People Against the Landfill to the Legislature today. They're here today to see their petition presented, and hopefully I'll get that opportunity when we get to the petitions. They're Karen Paton-Evans, Steve McSwiggan, Bryan Smith and Suzanne Crellin. I would like to thank them for their hard work on the petition and welcome them to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I try to recognize you as long as you don't make a speech while you're doing introductions, but that's fine.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

EVERTZ MICROSYSTEMS

Mrs. Jane McKenna: Alan Lambshead is a resident of my riding of Burlington. Alan spent his career at an advanced manufacturing firm, Evertz Microsystems, a global leader in audio-video equipment for the television and film industry.

Evertz is also located in my riding, with offices located internationally, in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, Croatia, Hong Kong, India and the United Arab Emirates.

As part of its high-technology work, Evertz made a contribution to the democratic life of this province 30 years ago. On April 2, 1983, its digital timers went live here in the Legislature. The simplicity of their appearance conceals a sophisticated array of options that allows the Speaker and Clerk to judge remaining time as well as

control the ringing of the bells. Considered outrageous by some members 30 years ago, with the passage of time, these clocks have become a part of the history of this place, Speaker. It is now impossible to imagine the Legislative Assembly functioning without them.

I am honoured to represent the community of Burlington and proud that my riding has played a small but measurable role in the ongoing debate about the values, priorities and future of this great province.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Your time is up. *[Inaudible]* to the clock.

SERVICES FOR THE DEVELOPMENTALLY DISABLED

Miss Monique Taylor: I'll just use the end of her time by saying: That was a great statement. The reason why statements are so great in this House is, we get to hear the history of things that have happened before us. So, good job.

I hope that doesn't get taken off my time, Speaker.

I would like to thank my leader, Andrea Horwath, for appointing me, along with my colleague the member for Parkdale-High Park, to sit on the Select Committee on Developmental Services. Thus far, the members of the committee have left their political stripes at the door as we discuss the crisis in this sector, and I want to thank the members for that.

To date, we have heard from 10 different government ministries, which itself speaks to the complexity of the problems faced by those in the developmental sector. We have also heard from OPSEU, CUPE and Community Living. Yesterday, we heard from CAMH and former residents of the Huronia Regional Centre. I want to thank those who have submitted and presented so far, and I look forward to future presentations.

But we're just getting started. We will hear from others in Toronto and as we travel the province in the new year. I hope to hear from as many families and individuals as possible, people who need the services in this sector. We need to hear those stories. We know there are serious challenges, and we need to understand and fully know how to find solutions for these most vulnerable Ontarians.

There are still spots available, and I encourage those with a direct stake in our committee's recommendations to contact the Clerk of the committee to allow us to hear your story.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The clock is indicating you're finished.

MISSISSAUGA SANTA CLAUS PARADE

Mr. Bob Delaney: The productivity improvements and quality circles among the elves at the North Pole toy factory allowed Santa Claus a break to take the sleigh out for a pre-Christmas spin at the 2013 Streetsville Santa Claus parade last Sunday. Organized by the Streetsville Business Improvement Association and sponsored by

Enersource, the famous Streetsville Santa Claus parade wound its way from the corner of Britannia and Queen through the heart of historic Streetsville before ending at Station Road.

The Toys for Tots campaign benefited some 6,000 local needy kids. The police and other pipe bands were out in force in a kilometre-long parade where everyone bundled up against the cold and the biting wind. Families from Lisgar, Meadowvale and Streetsville, and from all over Mississauga and the surrounding areas, came to see Santa's new 2013-model sleigh, equipped to haul this year's latest toys, games and other gifts.

Our big, furry cat, Obi-Wan, made his eighth consecutive parade appearance, driving with me and Andrea in our decorated golf cart. Obi-Wan's many fans waved to him all along the parade route, and he always waves back.

Merry Christmas, Mississauga, and all the very best for 2014.

PAN AM GAMES

Mr. Rod Jackson: Over the past few weeks, we've seen the Liberal government vehemently defend its \$1.4-billion budget for the Pan/Parapan Am Games. Only under pressure to come clean, they recently boosted the budget to almost \$2.56 billion. Despite their ballooning revisionist budget, which doesn't even include the final transportation or security numbers, top executive salaries will still be padded by 100% just for showing up for work, and—get this—another 100% reward for just being on budget.

Logic would follow that these bonuses will be cut in half for the announcement of the new Pan Am spending. We need to defend public money and not have these executives receiving any bonus at all for doing the bare minimum, never mind the already-noted failure to perform.

Another issue I'd like to flag today is the apparent lip service given to the Parapan Am Games. This government has happily touted all sorts of legacies resulting from the games, yet what was missing was a clear commitment to the legacy of accessibility of the games for the Parapan athletes and the fans. I'm not sure if that is because there isn't a plan for the legacy of accessibility or if this is just another hidden cost somewhere on another set of books.

What's amply clear is that this government has no control of this file. No amount of money will mitigate this lack of management, no matter how hard they try. It's time for real leadership for the sake of all the hard-working Ontario families that are financing these games.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. John Vanthof: Recently, this Legislature passed a Local Food Act. It was unanimously supported by all parties, and I'm sure that all parties will try to lever some benefit out of it at some point in the electoral process.

But the mechanics of the act are vague. Just how vague became apparent in my visit to Leamington. The

pending closure of the Heinz plant made that abundantly clear. There is nothing more Ontario and more local than Heinz products, especially the ketchup, but the fate of the origin of those products now rests on the board tables of multinational companies.

That's a reality, and we have to put in place in this province conditions that can make our food production competitive, but that's only part of the solution. We also have to make sure that the inherent knowledge of farmers is protected, because as companies make decisions, farmers and the people who supply the farmers are often left wondering what the next move is. In the case of tomato farmers or in the case of dairy farmers, you just can't recreate that knowledge. We should have an Ontario food strategy that also protects the inherent knowledge of agriculture, because you can't just read that in a book.

SEAS CENTRE

Ms. Soo Wong: Last weekend, I had the privilege of attending the 27th anniversary of the Support Enhance Access Service Centre, better known as the SEAS Centre. SEAS helps members of my community by promoting personal well-being, enhancing family harmony and encouraging community involvement. Today, SEAS and other local leaders are working together to build a welcoming community that supports the integration of newcomers into Canadian life.

1310

It was 27 years ago that SEAS was created to address the needs of newcomers, mostly centred around the Regent Park area. They offered ESL classes and provided settlement support. Today, SEAS is a successful organization that has grown to become a beacon of the community. SEAS has expanded extensively as a multi-service social agency that focuses primarily on family and immigrant services. I know that SEAS has had a significant impact on the lives of many newcomers in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt. They support ethnic communities, such as the Chinese, Filipino and Vietnamese communities, in the city of Toronto and York region.

I'm very familiar with the SEAS Centre for their work in the community, but also as a former public health nurse in our community. I want to congratulate the president of the SEAS board, Michelle Chu, and Rebecca Lee, the executive director, for their leadership and commitment to provide quality programs and services to welcome new Canadians in the city of Toronto and York region community.

Finally, I want to congratulate SEAS for their 27th anniversary.

MW CANADA

Mr. Rob Leone: I'm proud to rise today to thank a business in my riding for embracing lifelong learning and doing their part by helping an employee complete his or

her high school education. For years, MW Canada has been committed to ensuring that employees have the time and the resources to complete their high school and high-school-equivalent education.

Statistics show that adults who are at lower levels of literacy are 2.5 times more likely to suffer unemployment than those who reach literacy levels of 3 or higher. Canadians with level 1 literacy experience daily challenges such as trouble filling out a catalogue order form, completing a job application form, using online banking, completing an online application for employment insurance, and reading health and wellness information.

In my private member's bill, the Promoting Educational Success Tax Credit Act, employers like MW Canada will receive a 25% tax credit for helping to ensure that their employees acquire the tools they need to function in today's economy.

But MW Canada's actions will have a greater effect down the road. Statistics show us that the single greatest thing that we can do to ensure that our children are excited about education is to value education ourselves.

An American study by the National Center for Children in Poverty found that almost three quarters of all children with parents who have not completed high school will be raised in low-income homes. The same study shows that the number drops to less than half for those with a high school education.

MW Canada continues to raise the bar for their employees, and I'm proud to acknowledge them today. I encourage all members to speak with businesses in their riding about how the Promoting Educational Success Tax Credit Act can help bring a stronger Ontario.

LACROIX SPORTS

M. Phil McNeely: J'aimerais m'adresser à cette Chambre aujourd'hui pour souligner le succès d'une institution locale située à Orléans : Lacroix Sports, située en plein cœur d'Orléans, célèbre cette année 40 ans de loyaux services auprès de la communauté.

Dans le domaine du commerce au détail, peu nombreux sont ceux qui peuvent se vanter d'être une institution. Des clients fidèles et le désir de s'impliquer dans la communauté sont les éléments nécessaires pour créer une telle institution, et c'est exactement ce qui motive le propriétaire de ce magasin à succès, M. André Lacroix.

M. Lacroix et ses employés se sont toujours efforcés d'offrir à leur clientèle un service hors pair. Son implication sur la scène sportive locale ainsi que dans la communauté n'est plus un secret pour personne. La philosophie de base du magasin Lacroix Sports de procurer aux sportifs de la région des articles de sport de qualité à des prix compétitifs en font un pionnier dans le monde du sport à Orléans.

En 1995, Lacroix Sports se joint à La Source du sport, un réseau de magasins de sports indépendant. La Source du sport satisfait maintenant les besoins d'une troisième génération de sportifs. Je me dois donc de féliciter cette

entreprise d'Orléans qui non seulement est un succès mais qui en plus redonne à la communauté. C'est plus d'un million de dollars que Lacroix Sports a recueilli au fil des ans avec son tournoi de golf annuel pour venir en aide à des individus et organismes locaux.

Alors, félicitations à Lacroix Sports et à son propriétaire André Lacroix pour ses 40 ans de loyaux services à Orléans.

HOSPICE CARE

Mr. Jim Wilson: I rise today to recognize and thank the board, staff, volunteers and supporters of Matthews House Hospice in Alliston and Hospice Georgian Triangle in Collingwood. Both hospices have worked diligently over the years and have provided tremendous end-of-life care.

But while these local hospices receive wonderful support from the families, seniors and businesses in my communities, government support has not been so forthcoming. In fact, there seems to be a huge discrepancy between how hospices are funded in Ontario. Hospices surrounding my riding, in Barrie, Huntsville, Richmond Hill and Owen Sound, all receive operational funding from the province. In fact, Owen Sound was approved for funding, and they don't even have a facility built yet.

My question to the Premier and the Minister of Health is simple: Why is there such a divergence of support from the province for the people of Simcoe-Grey?

Matthew's House submitted a request for operational funding for a five-bed facility in April and have heard nothing from the government since. Their four-bed residential facility is up and running.

Hospice Georgian Triangle presented their pre-capital submission for operational funding back in July and have also heard nothing. They have shovels in the ground to build their new six-bed facility.

My riding is doing its part; the people there believe it's time for the government to do its part. We're not asking for new money. We're simply asking for our fair share. When is the government going to create a fair and comprehensive strategy to deal with this issue and respond to the needs of the residents in Simcoe-Grey?

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank all members for their statements.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

MAJOR WILLIAM HALTON
DAY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE JOUR
DU MAJOR WILLIAM HALTON

Mr. Chudleigh moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 142, An Act to proclaim Major William Halton Day / Projet de loi 142, Loi proclamant le Jour du major William Halton.

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. Ted Chudleigh: The bill proclaims September 22 in each year as Major William Halton Day or, in short form, Halton Day.

If I may, Mr. Speaker, Major William Halton was known throughout the area for his support of the veterans of the War of 1812. He was a caring man who deserves that recognition, for which the reputation of Halton still carries on, caring for our vets.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: A point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order: The member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, we're going to have an important debate in this House this afternoon in regard to Lincoln Alexander Day, a bill that I think this entire House is going to support. I would like to seek unanimous consent in order to be able to move a motion in regard to that.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion regarding private members' business this afternoon. Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I seek unanimous consent, once Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day, 2013, is passed at second reading, that it immediately be called for third reading; and that Bill 52, Sikh Heritage Month Act, 2013, be discharged from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and be ordered to third reading and called for a third reading vote; and that Bill 53, Children and Youth in Care Day Act, 2013, be discharged from the Standing Committee on General Government and that it be called for a third reading vote.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): To provide the member with some clarity, you received unanimous consent to deal with Bill 125 only.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So you're asking for another unanimous consent?

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Okay. We will dispense with the unanimous consent, and now we will deal with this unanimous consent.

Do we agree with this unanimous consent?

I heard a no.

It is now time for introduction of bills.

The member from Scarborough–Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: Mr. Speaker, I seek unanimous consent to move a motion with respect to private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Scarborough–Agincourt is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion regarding private members' time. Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from Scarborough–Agincourt.

1320

Ms. Soo Wong: Thank you, Mr. Speaker—that the order of the House dated May 9, 2013, referring Bill 53 to the Standing Committee on General Government be discharged and that the bill be ordered for third reading; and that when the order for third reading of the bill is called, the question shall be put on the motion for third reading of the bill without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Could I have the paper sent? Page, please pick up the paper and give it to the table. We'll dispense with this once the material is presented to the table.

The member from Scarborough–Agincourt moves that the order of House dated May 9, 2013, referring Bill 53 to the Standing Committee on General Government be discharged and that the bill be ordered for third reading; and that when the order for third reading of the bill is called, the question shall be put on the motion for third reading of the bill without debate or amendment.

Do we agree? I heard a no.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay on a point of order.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I'll try this again, maybe in a different way. I think all of us here are trying to do the right thing in this Legislature. I know the member from—I don't know the riding—Mr. Arnott is trying to do a bill that everybody is going to support. Nobody is going to oppose it. We think it's a great bill. But I think it's also an opportunity for all of us, in the spirit of trying to work together within this House, that I seek unanimous consent to move a motion in regard to private members' business.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Timmins–James Bay is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion regarding private members' business. Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again, Speaker, I will try again, in the spirit of trying to do what's right here.

I seek unanimous consent that once Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day, 2013, passes second reading, that it immediately be called for third reading; and that Bill 52, Sikh Heritage Month Act, 2013, be discharged from the Standing Committee on Social Policy, and be ordered for third reading and called for a vote; and that Bill 53, Children and Youth in Care Day Act, 2013, be discharged from the Standing Committee on General Government and be called for a third reading vote as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Bisson is seeking unanimous consent to call Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day, 2013—calling for second reading—that it immediately be called for third reading; and that Bill 52, Sikh Heritage Month Act, 2013, be discharged from the Standing Committee on Social Policy and be ordered for third reading, and that at the order of third reading be immediately called and the question put on the motion for third reading without

debate; and that Bill 53, the Children and Youth in Care Act, 2013, be discharged from the Standing Committee on General Government and be called for a third reading vote.

Do we agree? I heard a no.

MOTIONS

ORDER OF BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): It's now time for motions.

The member from Wellington–Halton Hills on a point of order.

Mr. Ted Arnott: No, it's a motion—oh, sorry. You're right.

On a point of order, I'm seeking unanimous consent of the House with respect and consideration for Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day. I'm seeking unanimous consent to move a motion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Wellington–Halton Hills is seeking unanimous consent to move a motion regarding Bill 125.

Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from Wellington–Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: Speaker, I move that, during consideration of private members' public business this afternoon, in the event that Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day, 2013, receives second reading, the order for third reading shall immediately be called and the question put immediately without debate or amendment.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Wellington–Halton Hills is moving that, during consideration of private members' public business this afternoon, Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day, 2013—receive second reading, the order for third reading shall immediately be called and the question put immediately without debate or amendment.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: A point of order, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I can recognize the member for a point of order while I'm in this. I just want to make sure that he realizes that I'm now at the point to vote on that.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again, in the spirit of cooperation, I would like to amend his motion to add both bills that we had spoken about earlier as part of that particular motion.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): So, if I have this right, that is a request for unanimous consent to add the other two bills. Do we agree that the other two bills will be added to this amendment? I heard a no. The member may—

Mr. Ted Arnott: Just a point of order, Mr. Speaker. If I could just point out to the House and remind the House that this is a private member's bill that is co-sponsored by members from all three parties. The member for

Scarborough–Rouge River and the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek are co-sponsors of this bill. This is not my bill; this is our bill, Mr. Speaker, and I'm asking that we deal with it this afternoon and pass it into law.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): I thank you for the clarification, but we need to finish this unanimous consent, which is for Bill 125 and Bill 125 only: that third reading be called immediately, and that the question be put immediately, without debate or amendment. Do we agree? Agreed.

Motion agreed to.

ORDER OF BUSINESS

Mr. Jim Wilson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe–Grey on a point of order for unanimous consent.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I seek unanimous consent to move a motion regarding Bills 71 and 105.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member from Simcoe–Grey is requesting unanimous consent to move a motion regarding Bills 71 and 105. Do we agree? Agreed.

The member from Simcoe–Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I move unanimous consent that Bill 71, Protecting Child Performers Act, 2013, be scheduled for one day of public hearings and one day of clause-by-clause on December 4th and 11th in the Standing Committee on General Government; and

That the order of the House dated November 4, 2013, referring Bill 105, An Act to Amend the Employer Health Tax Act to the Standing Committee on General Government be discharged; and

That Bill 105 now be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs for one day of public hearings on Monday, December 2, 2013, from 9 a.m. until 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. until 4 p.m., and one day of clause-by-clause on Wednesday, December 4, 2013, from 1 p.m. until 4 p.m.; and

That, if the committee does not report Bill 105 to the House on the next sessional day following the day scheduled for clause-by-clause consideration, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and reported to the House.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): A point of order for the member from Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Just to the opposition House leader: The copy you gave me said December 3 and December 5. You read differently. I'm just wondering.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Yes, it was just changed, so I'm sorry to not notify you of that.

Interjection.

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's the 2nd and 4th. Any problems? Okay. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): Mr. Wilson moves that Bill 71, Protecting Child Performers Act, 2013, be scheduled for one day of public hearings and one day of

clause-by-clause on December 4th and 11th in the Standing Committee on General Government; and

That the order of the House dated November 4, 2013, referring Bill 105, An Act to Amend the Employer Health Tax Act to the Standing Committee on General Government be discharged; and

That Bill 105 now be referred to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs for one day of public hearings on Monday, December 2, 2013, from 9 a.m. until 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. until 4 p.m., and one day of clause-by-clause on Wednesday, December 4, 2013, from 1 p.m. until 4 p.m.; and

That, if the committee does not report Bill 105 to the House on the next sessional day following the day scheduled for clause-by-clause consideration, the bill shall be deemed to be passed by the committee and reported to the House.

Do we agree? Agreed. The motion carries.

Motion agreed to.

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VISITORS

Mr. Frank Klees: Point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Newmarket–Aurora on a point of order.

Mr. Frank Klees: Thank you, Speaker. I want to extend a special welcome to the students from Foundations Private School, from Aurora, grades 4 and 5. They're here with their teacher, Pamela Spencer.

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

PETITIONS

HIGHWAY IMPROVEMENT

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

“Whereas pedestrians and cyclists are increasingly using secondary provincial highways to support healthy lifestyles and expand active transportation;

“Whereas paved shoulders on highways enhance public safety for all highway users, expand tourism opportunities and support good health;

“Whereas paved shoulders help to reduce the maintenance cost of repairs to highway surfaces; and

“Whereas the member from Parry Sound–Muskoka’s private member’s bill provides for a minimum one-metre paved shoulder for the benefit of pedestrians, cyclists and motorists;

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

“That the private member’s bill, which requires a minimum one-metre paved shoulder on designated provincially owned highways, receive swift passage through the legislative process.”

I’m pleased to affix my signature and send it to the table with page Zachary.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Mr. Speaker, as you are aware, I did introduce the people from Oxford People Against the Landfill earlier, who weren’t here. On their behalf, I want to present this petition. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the purpose of Ontario’s Environmental Protection Act (EPA) is to ‘provide for the protection and conservation of the natural environment.’ RSO 1990, c. E.19, s. 3.; and

“Whereas ‘all landfills will eventually release leachate to the surrounding environment and therefore all landfills will have some impact on the water quality of the local ecosystem.’—Threats to Sources of Drinking Water and Aquatic Health in Canada;

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

“That section 27 of the EPA should be reviewed and amended immediately to prohibit the establishment of new or expanded landfills at fractured bedrock sites and other hydrogeologically unsuitable locations within the province of Ontario.”

Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I want to thank the people from OPAL for presenting this petition, I want to thank you for allowing me to read it, and I’ll affix my signature.

AIR QUALITY

The Speaker (Hon. Dave Levac): The member for Dufferin-Grey.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Simcoe–Grey. You’re expanding my riding. I’m into the next county now.

“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 were, in fact, the result of factors other than the Drive Clean program, such as tighter manufacturing standards for emission-control technologies; and

“Whereas from 1999 to 2010 the percentage of vehicles that failed emissions testing under the Drive Clean program steadily declined from 16% to 5%; and

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

“Whereas the new Drive Clean test no longer assesses tailpipe emissions, but instead scans the on-board diagnostics systems of vehicles, which already perform a series of continuous and periodic emissions checks; and

“Whereas the new Drive Clean test has caused the failure rate to double in less than two months as a result of technical problems with the new emissions testing method; and

“Whereas this new emissions test has caused numerous false ‘fails’, which have resulted in the overcharging of testing fees for Ontario drivers and car dealerships, thereby causing unwarranted economic hardship and stress;

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

“That the Minister of the Environment must take immediate steps to begin phasing out the Drive Clean program.”

I agree with this petition, and I want to thank Mr. Larry Moore of Tottenham for sending it to me.

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.’”

I agree with this petition. I’m pleased to sign my name to it, and I pass it to page Spencer.

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 an 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.”

I couldn’t agree more. I’m going to sign this along with the tens of thousands now and give it to page Najat to deliver to the table.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I’ve previously read this petition into the record, and I don’t think it would be productive to reread it. But at the time when I presented it, I did mean to say and forgot that 2,600 people in my riding with concerns over the landfill signed this petition.

SOUTH BRUCE GREY HEALTH CENTRE

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Health Minister Deb Matthews announced a 1% funding supplement to recognize the unique needs and challenges of small rural hospitals; and

“Whereas the South Bruce Grey Health Centre is one corporation made up entirely of four small rural hospitals; and

“Whereas the South Bruce Grey Health Centre was shut out of the 1% funding supplement that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care is allocating to small hospitals; and

“Whereas the province is using weighted cases as a dividing line and has not recognized that the South Bruce Grey Health Centre is composed of four separate small hospitals; and

“Whereas this funding oversight will cost the South Bruce Grey Health Centre approximately \$300,000 in much-needed operating revenue;

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

“To review the impact on our residents that this funding decision will have and to request that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate the 1% funding supplement for small rural hospitals to the South Bruce Grey Health Centre.”

I totally agree with this petition. I’ll affix my signature and send it to the table with Ana.

LYME DISEASE

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

“Whereas the tick-borne illness known as chronic Lyme disease, which mimics many catastrophic illnesses such as multiple sclerosis, Crohn’s, Alzheimer’s, arthritic diabetes, depression, chronic fatigue and fibromyalgia, is increasingly endemic in Canada, but scientifically validated diagnostic tests and treatment choices are currently not available in Ontario, forcing patients to seek these in the USA and Europe; and

“Whereas the Canadian Medical Association informed the public, governments and the medical profession in the May 30, 2000, edition of their professional journal that Lyme disease is endemic throughout Canada, particularly in southern Ontario; and

“Whereas the Ontario public health system and the Ontario health insurance plan currently do not fund those specific tests that accurately serve the process of establishing a clinical diagnosis, but only recognize testing procedures known in the medical literature to provide false negatives 45% to 95% of the time;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to request the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care to direct that the Ontario public health system and OHIP include all currently available and scientifically verified tests for acute and chronic Lyme disease in Ontario and to have everything necessary to create public awareness of Lyme disease in Ontario, and to have internationally developed diagnostic and successful treatment protocols available to patients and physicians.”

I'm pleased to affix my signature, Speaker, and send the petition to the table with page Zachary.

RURAL AND NORTHERN ONTARIO TRANSPORTATION

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

“Whereas the loss of transportation service will further destabilize rural economies and impede on residents' ability to get to school, work, doctor or hospital appointments, or any other service unavailable locally;

“Whereas the prosperity, productivity and participation of all segments of society depends on a viable, accessible transportation network;

“Whereas the lack of a transportation service negatively impacts those people with special needs, accessibility challenges, seniors and those living below the poverty level;

“Whereas Greyhound Canada plans to cut bus service and Via Rail plans to cut train service in rural Ontario;

“Whereas there is no secondary carrier serving rural Ontario's students, workers, volunteers, tourists, business travellers and any resident without a driver's licence;

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

“To immediately strike an all-party committee at Queen's Park to study transportation needs in rural and northern Ontario.”

I support this petition and will send it with page Najat.

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WIND TURBINES

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

“Whereas we, the residents of Clearview township and neighbouring townships, oppose the wpd Canada Fairview wind project on Fairgrounds Road and all wind energy projects in Clearview township; and

“Whereas we support the petition of mayors and councillors from 80 municipalities, farm organizations, the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario, which petition requested

that the province place an immediate moratorium on all wind projects until an independent and comprehensive health study has determined that turbine noise is safe to human health, amongst other things; and

“Whereas wpd Canada's Fairview wind project violates the OLS airspace and usability of registered aerodromes in Clearview, including Collingwood Regional Airport and Stayner field, and wpd Canada's draft renewable energy approvals reports do not recognize these impacts or the jurisdiction of the government of Canada; and

“Whereas wpd Canada is seeking final approval from the province for the Fairview wind project prior to completion of the federal Health Canada study and prior to federal actions to protect aviation safety;

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

“That the government of Ontario agree and accept that until the federal health study is completed and federal aeronautical zoning is in place, that it will immediately take whatever action is necessary to give full effect to a moratorium on all wind turbine development in Ontario, including all projects for which final approvals have not been given.”

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

CANCER TREATMENT

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: “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 totally agree with this petition. I'll affix my signature and send it to the table with Spencer.

MARKDALE HOSPITAL

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

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

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

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

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

I support this petition and will affix my signature and send it with page Amy.

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 ... 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.

CANCER TREATMENT

Mr. Steve Clark: 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 ... 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’m pleased to affix my signature and send it to the table.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

Mr. Joe Dickson: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

“Whereas the regions of York and Durham are at the final stages of completing an EA for the YD-WPCP (York Durham water pollution control plant’s) outfall; and

“Whereas the regions of York and Durham have chosen as the final solution an alternative which will not address the quantity of total phosphorus (TP) nor soluble

reactive phosphorus (SRP) being deposited into Lake Ontario; and

“Whereas Lake Ontario has been identified as the most stressed lake of the Great Lakes in the July/August 2013 issue of Canadian Geographic; and

“Whereas the town of Ajax and PACT POW (Pickering Ajax Citizens Together—Protecting our Water) have documented the excessive algae blooms on the Ajax waterfront with photos and complaints to the region of Durham; and

“Whereas SRP, and indirectly TP, contribute to the growth of algae in Lake Ontario;

“Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to ask that the government of Ontario require the regions of York and Durham to implement an alternative that will reduce the amount of phosphorous (both TP and SRP) being deposited into Lake Ontario from the YD-WPCP.”

I will attach my name to that, Mr. Speaker.

VISITORS

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member from Brampton West.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you very much, Speaker. I’d like to take this opportunity to introduce some very special friends who are visiting. Two of them are from Brampton, Baljinder Lailna and Surinder Dhaliwal, and Mr. Gurkirpal Singh is visiting us from India. I would like to take this time to welcome them to the Legislature.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Mississauga–Cooksville.

Ms. Dipika Damerla: Speaker, as you’re aware, the member for Wellington–Halton Hills was able to successfully get unanimous consent for his Bill 125, and I would now like to seek unanimous consent to move a motion with respect to private members’ public business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Mississauga–Cooksville has requested unanimous consent to move a motion. Agreed?

I heard a no.

Interjections.

Mr. John O’Toole: You have to give us some notice.

Mr. Jim Wilson: You have to talk to us first.

Mr. John O’Toole: You have to talk to us first.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

CAPPING TOP PUBLIC SECTOR SALARIES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE PLAFONNEMENT DES HAUTS TRAITEMENTS DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

Ms. Horwath moved second 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 Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my privilege and pleasure to stand on behalf of New Democrats to once again urge this Liberal government to do the right thing by the people of this province and cap the top public sector salaries so that we can get some fairness back in the province of Ontario.

Ontarians deserve to know that their money is being treated with respect, and when they see people in the public service, quite frankly, making sky-high salaries that keep growing, it makes them wonder exactly what the priority of this Liberal government is.

It's a simple plan. In fact, it's such a simple plan that it takes but one page of legislative language to actually enact it.

As people across this province have been asked to tighten their belts by the Liberals, it's only fair that we put a cap on those at the very top of the public sector income level.

A cap of twice the salary of the Premier would mean that the highest salary paid to any public sector executive in this province would be \$418,000. Now, by my calculation, that's a pretty generous salary.

In 2012, the Liberals actually claimed that they were ready to move on this initiative that New Democrats have been raising since at least 2010. The Minister of Finance of the day said that a cap "will work to bring some of the overly generous compensation packages back to reality."
1350

Now, the fact is that some of these salaries just don't square with reality, and, in fact, New Democrats have been saying that for a long time. Finally, the former finance minister, back in 2012, came to reality, and realized that that's in fact the case. Right now, in the public sector, there are more than 180 people—more than 180—who are making twice the salary of the Premier or more. In fact, there are 25 people who are making more than three times the salary of the Premier, and some of them are making significantly more than three times the salary of the Premier. But rather than take any action, the Liberals, after they had introduced this idea back in 2012, decided instead to prorogue the House, because they were more interested in their own political fortunes than they were in actually delivering results for the people who make this province work.

Since then, we've heard a lot of talk, but we've seen no action. In fact, the Premier was sworn in about 10 months ago, and since then Ontarians haven't seen anything related to the capping of CEO salaries at all. They've heard a lot of conversations, but they haven't seen any action. People respect the work that public sector executives do. I think Ontarians respect those positions and respect the hard work and the many hours that get put in by these folks. But people also want to

know that our public dollars are being treated with respect as well.

Over the last four years, Kevin Smith has made \$2.8 million, and now he's telling the people of Niagara that the cupboard is bare and that people in Welland, in Port Colborne and Fort Erie have to have their hospitals closed. He didn't have his wages cut back, but hospitals have to close.

There are always tough choices to be made, and we know that. New Democrats understand that very, very clearly. But I think Ontarians expect us to focus on making choices that help everyday people instead of helping CEOs make sky-high, six-figure salaries. The Liberals seem to want to close hospitals and fire nurses so that they can keep paying hospital CEOs top salaries. It doesn't make sense, and it's the wrong priority.

For context, in terms of CEO salaries and what's happening in other provinces, let me share a little bit of information with you. The CEO of Manitoba Hydro, which runs the entire hydro system from generation to delivery and everything in between in that province, earned—guess what, Speaker?—not \$418,000, which would be the cap if this bill became legislation or became law in this province. That CEO at Manitoba Hydro earned \$229,000 in 2011, so just a little bit over what our Premier earns.

The head of Hydro One here in Ontario made \$1 million, and the head of the OPG, Ontario Power Generation, made \$1.7 million in the same year. Hospital CEOs at all five major downtown Toronto hospitals made well above the proposed \$418,000-per-year cap, and some of them are pushing \$1 million.

In comparison, the average household income in Ontario is \$73,290. The CEO of OPG will earn more by January 16 than the average Ontario household will make in an entire year. It'll take the CEO of Hydro One until January 27 to earn as much as the average household will make in an entire year. That gives you some perspective of what we're talking about when we talk about these salaries being totally out of whack. Kevin Smith will have earned more than the average household by the second week of February.

There is no doubt in our minds that it is time for some balance here in Ontario. People are finding it harder and harder, though, to trust anything that the Liberals say. When I introduced this bill, the Premier—the then Minister of Transportation—voted against it. But in 2012, as I already mentioned, the then Minister of Finance indicated that in fact Liberals were going to move forward on it. The government House leader said yesterday that the government would think about it.

We know the Liberals are happy to make promises; we know they're happy to discuss issues. But the problem is that they never, ever deliver for the people of this province. So while they've been telling people to tighten their belts and telling folks that they're going to have to suck up the high electricity prices, they're just going to have to deal with the fact that wages are stagnant and life is getting tougher and tougher—that's what they're

telling Ontarians—and in the meantime, they're telling the top managers in the public sector that they can continue to get sky-high raises year in and year out.

You know, the CEO of Hydro One actually got a raise of \$70,000. That's almost as much as the average family pulls in in an entire year, and that was only the raise of the CEO at Hydro One. Last year, 4,800 managers got a bonus. The average family in Ontario hasn't seen a raise in years; in fact, hundreds of thousands have seen their income go down since the recession hit.

The Liberal record speaks for itself; it is a very clear record. But I want to talk about the Conservative record a little bit, because yesterday the Hudak team showed again that they're firmly planted on the sidelines, screaming and yelling, and not delivering a whole heck of a lot for people either. I was really surprised to hear PC members say that they weren't going to support this legislation.

New Democrats—let's be clear—are bringing forward a practical tool to get the highest public sector executive pay under control, and the Conservatives say that they will not support that. Now, the PCs never miss an opportunity to tell Ontarians that they need to have the right to work for less. That's their agenda: Ontarians have to have the right to work for less. But they seem to think that the public sector CEOs should be able to have, and be entitled to, a sky-high six-figure salary. Something's out of whack there. Instead of doing anything to stop waste, the PCs seem to think that hard-working families need to earn less and think that the sky-high limit should be in place for those at the top echelons of our public sector. Where's the balance there? Where's the priority there? It's not with regular people; it's not with everyday Ontarians.

Ontarians expect their government to respect the public purse, not just talk about respecting their money, and that's why New Democrats are calling on this cap of public sector CEO salaries, because we've heard a lot of talk from the Liberals, a lot of talk, but as I've said, we don't see any action coming from that side of the House.

It's also why we ensured that Ontario will have a Financial Accountability Office, frankly. We made that a condition of the budget, but now we're watching as Liberals are backpedalling on that commitment as well. We know there are savings to be found in LHINs and CCACs, yet the government refuses to take any of our advice in making sure that those savings are realized.

We're not alone in facing this issue of skyrocketing CEO salaries. It's happening around the world, and we want to take concrete steps just like other jurisdictions are taking concrete steps as well, and I'm going to share some of those with you.

Spain's Conservative government capped executive salaries at state-owned companies at €105,000 in 2012. The French are moving to cap CEO salaries at 20 times the rate of the lowest-paid employees. The Dutch government is moving to limit golden parachutes at €75,000. Germany and Sweden joined the Obama government in capping CEO pay in companies that receive

public money. Speaker, Ontario is falling behind while these leaders are actually taking on an issue that the public is demanding be addressed in jurisdictions all around the world.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel has said that she'll move to place limits on management compensation, saying this: She understands, "when people shake their heads over salaries that tip the scale"—and those are her words—that means the government has to act, and I believe that Ontarians are shaking their head day in and day out here in this province, as well.

Our bill is a very fair, very reasonable and respectful bill. It takes a reasonable approach to make sure that we're not doing anything to rip up existing contracts or existing agreements but acknowledging that we have to start somewhere and start cracking this nut, because the people of Ontario deserve their dollars to be invested in things that make Ontario a great place, not just making great the people at the top so that they can be in the seven-figure salary range.

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Ontarians want their government to put them first. Whether it's creating jobs, strengthening health care, making life more affordable or making government more transparent, we need to respect public dollars. New Democrats do that. We need to ensure that public dollars are being invested in putting people first, not on sky-high CEO salaries, and we need to see action. I invite the Liberals to adopt this bill by voting for it today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate. The—

Mr. Toby Barrett: Haldimand–Norfolk.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Haldimand–Norfolk.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Thanks, Speaker. I welcome debate on this bill capping top public-sector salaries. I do agree that we're long overdue for some austerity in government budgeting, because we're obviously in an economic period of austerity. I agree that it's time to put an end to the gravy train.

The question out there: Are top bureaucrats overpaid? Are top bureaucrats overcompensated? Are all bureaucrats, on average, overcompensated? Again, questions: Are all public servants—whether it's federal, provincial or municipal—overcompensated? You have to include not just wages and salaries. We should be talking about all of the perks: the pensions, the early retirement, the total package.

There's some research. We have to look at the research. We want research that's, obviously, neutral and objective; that may be hard to find, depending on who sponsored the research. I've looked at the Fraser Institute, the Frontier Centre and the CFIB. The Canadian Labour Congress has done some work on this as well.

The research I have does indicate that if you take a look at all the public servants, not just those at the top, public servants are overcompensated. They're overcompensated by something in the order of 30% in the province of Ontario, compared to similar work in the private sector.

Now, I listened to the leader of our third party in the media studio, and she said something—I don't have the exact quote. I recall her saying that public-sector servants are ridiculously overcompensated. Now, that's a sign of fiscal conservatism in my mind, and I say that in the context of seeing a recent fall economic statement where our Premier is obviously very left-wing as far as matters around budgeting and the economy.

I'd like to refer to another indication from the leader of the third party. Ontario taxpayers want their money to be respected. I fully agree. Again, we have to look at pensions. We have to look at early retirement—much more than just wages.

There was an indication, too, that people are in the public service, not to get rich. I fully agree with that. I think that's what we expect as residents of Ontario and as taxpayers, those others who are essentially paying the freight, so this is a good move.

We have to put the spotlight on public sector compensation, beyond wages—vacation time, gym memberships, dental, early retirement and job security, for example—and then compare it to similar jobs in the private sector. On average, we do find that those working in the public sector—when we include in the very top level, as this private member's bill does, we see that if you've got similar work in the private sector, you're 30% off. That's not fair, and it's also expensive, as far as people paying taxes.

The Fraser Institute—there was some research arguing that very high top-compensated professionals, those at the top, if they were in the private sector, on average, would be making more. Again, that perhaps counter-indicates what we're hearing today.

Don Drummond—we all know his report: Half of government spending is on public sector compensation. This year that would be—well, we had a \$128-billion budget, so \$64 billion goes to public sector compensation; yet again, another very important reason why we should be debating this bill.

The most important thing, as was indicated, is the taxpayer. These are the people, by and large, who don't have the pensions you see in the public sector. They are the ones who are paying the freight. People getting paid by the taxpayers shouldn't get a better deal than the taxpayers themselves for doing the same kind of work.

In that context, these are some of the issues where I agree with the sentiments of this legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Hon. Glen R. Murray: As folks probably know, there's a freeze on right now for senior public sector salaries over \$150,000, and a number of other measures—we have contained spending within 1%. We are tracking ahead of schedule, about \$5 billion ahead of where we intended to be, according to our fiscal plan. This is a better record than any government in Canada, provincial or federal. It is a faster return to balance—the only one ahead of schedule—than any predecessor party in here.

While our government shares the concern about fair compensation and control, and will be bringing forward measures to do that, I am profoundly disappointed by the simplicity and almost ridiculousness of this particular position, Mr. Speaker. This is not good public policy. This is not a studied, market-based evaluation of the ranges for different types of CEO compensation—none of that. There is not a single grain of evidence that actually talks—if you want to get the best hospital CEOs, the best university presidents—about what the range of compensation is in North America. Simply to say “twice what the Premier's is” is great for probably 70% of cases. But there will be places where a hospital foundation or a university foundation wants to bring one of the world's leading academics or leading scientists here.

Right now in the United States—because our national government fails to invest in research and public sector excellence—the Obama administration, simply on artificial photosynthesis and climate change, is spending more money on that one area of research than the government of Canada does to attract all leading researchers. What they're proposing would undermine our ability as a country to attract the most outstanding academics, scientists, corporate business leaders and hospital CEOs.

This is what the NDP has become, Mr. Speaker, not the bright light of social democracy and innovative thinking. It's interesting that the leader of the third party quoted the most unpopular Premier in Europe—the person who actually practises their economic policy—President Hollande of France, who is tracking about 12% in the polls and has broken all records. This is what the NDP has become. They are like the French Socialist Party: bereft of an economic agenda, illiterate about globalization and completely bereft of an understanding of talent in an innovation economy.

Now, Mr. Speaker, why did the third party not quote Sweden, Finland and Denmark? Actually, they have a studied, market evidence-based range, and they have flexibility.

Interjections.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: They're getting a little testy, Mr. Speaker, because they know I'm right. They know that this is nothing but crass politics, aimed to get—this is the same game the Tories play. You heard the member from the Tories say, “Well, you know, Mr. Speaker, people in the public sector get paid 30% more than people in the private sector, and it's unfair.” So the left here has now figured, “Well, that's working well for the Tories, so who do we attack? We can't attack public sector workers, so we'll really start attacking the high-performance people.”

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Essex, would you come to order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: While I share the concern about bringing in controls, they're taking examples from Spain—Spain, the country that is almost insolvent. This is just absolutely, hysterically funny. They're taking their cues now from the Spanish conservative party leading the

most bankrupt government in Europe—the most unpopular president in Europe—not from the more progressive social democratic party, that actually does that.

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Do we have to control that? Yes. Have we taken steps that are way beyond what any other government has? Yes. Do we have to bring CEO salaries down? Yes. Is this the way to do it? No. This will blow up in your face. This is, Mr. Speaker—there is—

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Tell that to people on social assistance raising children.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: But this is it, right? The member from Parkdale–High Park does her normal, politically correct “wrap myself in the flag of the anti-poverty activists.” The problem for my folks in St. James Town is really the problem because of what Dr. Bell gets paid at University Health Network. Well, what do you want to pay his successor? What do you want to pay if you want to get the CEO from Johns Hopkins? Don’t Ontarians deserve the best scientists, deserve the best leaders?

Do I agree with you that the general pay rates are too high in senior executive salaries? Yes. Do I agree with you that there should be a systemic reduction of a lot of those? Yes. Do I think that this is the right answer? No, because it’s a blunt instrument. You’re doing the same things that the Tories did when they wanted an across-the-board wage freeze—and the New Democrats, Mr. Speaker, joined us. What did the Tories scream? They screamed what the NDP is about to scream at us. The Tories screamed, “Well, you guys aren’t serious about wage restraints.”

Without violating collective agreements, we have basically an across-the-board wage freeze, and we didn’t have to introduce the social contract that the New Democrats did, or bring forward the draconian anti-labour laws that the Conservatives did. What you’re proposing for management is as ridiculous as a legislated wage freeze.

If you want to work together on something, and you actually wanted to do this in a non-partisan way, why don’t we do market-based ranges? Why don’t we provide flexibility where there is excellence? Why don’t we have the more sophisticated kinds of approaches that Finland has—which is interesting, because the left, since Clinton and Blair, have moved mostly to become liberals because of the pragmatism of a mixed-market economy. Some 5% of companies build 50% of—

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The public sector is not a market economy; it’s the public sector.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Leader of the third party, come to order, please.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: The leader of the third party, who likes to call—it’s fascinating to me. The leader of the third party always likes to ascribe motives to every other party, because her party, of course, doesn’t do politics and doesn’t talk about Niagara or Windsor for any electoral reasons, because they’re above all that.

The problem is simply this: There are lots of ways to do that. Since—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Hamilton Mountain and the member for Timmins–James Bay, come to order.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: I’m going to wrap up, Mr. Speaker, because obviously those folks over there are so beyond criticism that they can’t hear any, and can’t have the courtesy to actually listen to someone without interrupting them.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I’m going to ask the minister to speak through the Chair.

Hon. Glen R. Murray: Mr. Speaker, I think the objective is a worthy one. I just don’t think this is the path to anything.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order: the member for Durham.

Mr. John O’Toole: I would seek unanimous consent to allow the Minister of Transportation to have another five minutes.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): that is not a point of order.

Further debate?

Mrs. Jane McKenna: I’m pleased to rise this afternoon to speak to Bill 136, the Capping Top Public Sector Salaries Act. But if you really agreed with this, you should have supported the wage freeze bill that we had.

This is a piece of legislation that we have seen before from the leader of the third party. A similar piece of legislation appeared before this House as 2010’s Bill 57. Since then, through two budgets, the third party has propped up a Liberal government that has continued the policies the members find so distasteful.

If the member truly thought the government’s spending was out of control, why was this not a deal-breaker on one of those occasions?

Bill 136 intends that “a public sector employee’s salary shall not exceed the amount that is twice the Premier’s annual salary”—at the moment, \$418,000.

The details are important here. “Exceptions are provided for salaries that were established before the bill comes into force, for salaries that are established under a collective agreement, and for salaries of employees prescribed by regulation for work of a scientific or technical nature.”

There is a fair bit of wiggle room. It is not clear whether this measure would address salary or—more meaningful—total compensation. It does not make explicit mention of performance bonuses or merit pay or any of the other escape clauses that allowed this government to give 98% of public service managers a bonus in 2011. Those individuals shared a \$36-million windfall and saw bonuses worth as much as 12% of their salary. So the devil is certainly in the details.

On principle, I believe that nobody in this House would have a problem with people making the wages they deserve. There is inevitably a question of who is deserving of wages, or bonuses, for that matter, but the simplicity of the formula of Bill 136 does not have any room for merit.

It is, as the Premier has said, a blunt instrument. It is a public relations posturing, not a real solution. It is yet another headline-hungry gimmick that fails to acknowledge or address the real challenges facing Ontario today.

The proof of this can be found in some simple math. Using the sunshine list as a yardstick, there are around 180 public sector executives who would be affected by this bill. There are over one million public sector employees in Ontario, many, if not most, of whom would be exempt from this bill. It would cover about half of the cost of bonuses given to those 8,700 civil service managers. Spending adds up.

What is talent worth? How much are we prepared to spend on expertise? That, Speaker, is a more complicated debate than Bill 136 is ready to attempt.

I'm not prepared to support this bill.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's an absolute honour and a privilege to stand and support a bill that is incredibly simple and straightforward, incredibly fair and open and transparent, and to cry, "A pox upon both your houses," to the Liberals and the Conservatives for not supporting this.

Let's take the Liberals, to start, Mr. Speaker. Let's look at what they're really saying. First of all, about their own Premier, they're saying that a woman who works about 12 hours a day—I'm just estimating what she puts in—seven days a week, who has post-secondary education, who had to fight for her job and has to get re-elected by the voters, is not worth even half of what some of the public CEOs are worth—who happen to be, by the way, mainly male. So I would, first of all, call them out for the misogyny implicit in their comments. That's what they're saying about their own Premier. Their own Premier: That's what they're saying.

The Conservatives are saying, "Yes, let's regulate the public sector salaries of all of those little people"—you know, the teachers and the nurses and the midwives and all of those people—"but no, no, no, the people who are at the top of organizations like hospitals and universities"—even if they have the same academic qualifications, the same years of experience—"oh, no, no, they're worth 10 times, 12 times, what those little people are worth."

Let's look at what those salaries really mean—and we're talking pre-Christmas here. We're talking pre-Christmas, when women who are heading single families—many of them are working for minimum wage and trying to buy presents for their children. Let's go to their door, Mr. Speaker, with this message. Knock on that door and tell them, "You know what? I don't care that you may have a master's and can't get a job. I don't care if you've got a BA or a PhD, or even if you're a TA or a teacher in the university structure who can't get a full-time job"—of which there are thousands. "But you are not worth what the CEOs of those companies"—mainly male, again—"are worth," even with the same academic qualifications, even with the same years of experience, but who may have connections with high places.

That's what we're really saying. Do we want to carry that message to their door? I dare you: Carry that message to the door of your constituents. That's what I dare you to do.

To the Tories: I dare you to talk about fiscal restraint and not look at the top CEO salaries. I dare you to take that message to your constituents in talking about fiscal responsibility. I mean, it's shameful. It's absolutely shameful.

Let's talk about OPA and OPG and what those salaries really mean. Take-home pay, now: Anybody who's listening to this, I don't know what your take-home pay looks like, but here's what you'd be looking at if you were one of those CEOs. You'd be looking at, probably, about \$60,000 in your pocket every month. For most people, that's the lottery, Mr. Speaker. That's winning the lottery. A million dollars a year: That's the lottery. We buy 6/49 tickets, and we don't even win that. Come on; that's the lottery. How much money do you need? How good are you?

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Really what you're saying is, "What is the worth of human labour here?" That's what you're saying. You're saying that that woman who is working as a nurse—her labour is not worth even a tenth of what the CEO of the hospital is worth. That's what you're really saying. Do you want to take that message to the door? I dare you. Take that message to the door. We will. I dare you to. I dare the Tories to take that message to the door in the next election. You knock on the door with your message of fiscal restraint, and you say, "But yet, for you, but not for your boss." Take it to the door.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'll be very quick. I think the NDP have it partially right. Our leader Tim Hudak has said that the proper solution here is an across-the-board public sector wage freeze. What the NDP are trying to do is not offend their union friends—I understand that—but that just demonstrates how illogical it would be to be in government.

Here's the real issue: I'm quite impressed with the leader of the NDP for stealing most of our lines. What she actually said today is, and I'm quoting her now, "The public sector is not a market-based economy." We agree with that observation to the extent that everyone in the public sector should be treated fairly. If the economy is going down, the public sector has to track that. We have to all work together to improve the economy to go up, because we need those essential services. We need the police and the fire, the doctors and the nurses. No one disputes that fact. But if you don't address the needs of the economy—the problem with Kathleen Wynne is, she's expanding expenditures faster than the growth of the economy. Don Drummond said it. Our leader said it. They have part of it right. Follow our lead, and you'll do fine.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm really pleased to have this opportunity to speak to this bill again. I know that our leader covered a lot of ground, and the member from Parkdale–High Park covered a lot of good ground as well. I just want to add my piece to the whole thing.

I just think if you put this to the public and you tell them, “Do you think if somebody earned \$418,000 that that would be okay as a salary?” Would they say “yea” or “nay” to that salary? Would they say, “No, it’s not enough,” or “It’s too high”? They would say, “Would that I could have such a salary to live on on a daily basis.” They would be happy as flies on you know what if they could have that kind of salary on a yearly basis.

The majority of human beings work hard. But with this government and the Tories, they are saying that if a civil servant is earning \$500,000, \$600,000, \$700,000, \$800,000, \$900,000 or \$1 million, it’s okay because it’s part of a market economy and we have to take care of these people. They work hard. They’re intelligent. Well, as the member from Parkdale–High Park said, is the Premier not intelligent enough that she should only make 200,000-some-odd dollars, and someone working at OPG or some hospital deserves \$700,000 or a million bucks, but she’s not because she’s not intelligent enough or that she doesn’t have the skills? That’s the point that our leader is making, that no one should be making more than twice the amount of the Premier in this place. We think the Premier earns very little for getting slapped around each and every day by us and the public. Yet these civil servants make anywhere from \$500,000 to \$1.6 million, and Liberals are saying that’s okay.

The Minister of Transportation is saying the NDP is not innovative enough, that this is a ridiculous proposition and that we should put this to the marketplace. What magical power do these people have that they wouldn’t be satisfied with a \$418,000 salary? What magical marketplace power do they bring that they deserve to make a million bucks instead of \$418,000? How do you defend that? How do Liberals defend that? How do Tories, who on a regular basis stand here and say, “We represent the little guy”—every day, each and every day, they represent the little guy—stand up here today and say, “The NDP has got it wrong. They’re doing politics. We’re for the little guy, not the NDP.” Please; you guys make me laugh. I crack up each and every day with the politics of the Conservative Party.

And the Liberals? For the Minister of Transportation to stand up and say how disappointed he was, how simplistic this motion is, how utterly ridiculous it is, and that he’s got an innovative solution to this problem—innovating, my foot. They have done absolutely nothing on this file. He talks about innovation all the time; they have done absolutely nothing by way of innovation on this issue, and this is an important issue for the people of Ontario. It’s a big issue. No one deserves to have that kind of a salary.

The member from Mississauga, I was waiting for you to speak, because I wanted to hear what you had to say, but you’re waiting till the last moment. I regret not

having had a chance to hear you, but I’m going to listen to you in a moment. No one deserves this kind of salary; no one. For the Liberals to defend that, somehow saying it’s too complex, it’s a delicate issue and we need to let the market take care of this—no. You Liberals have it wrong on this one, and as the member from High Park has mentioned, you will face the public one of these days, and it will come soon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: It’s often said that for every complex and difficult problem, there is a simple and obvious solution, and it is always wrong. Such is the case with this bill that has been defeated once before and deserves the second thrashing that it’s taking today.

The bill proposes choosing a purely arbitrary benchmark for the salaries of executives in the public and the broader public sectors. Why the Premier? Why not, for example, the average of a basket of private sector CEO salaries? It’s purely arbitrary. The point here is not whether you believe that some, many, all or no senior executives are overpaid, underpaid or fairly compensated in the public, private or broader public sectors. The point being debated here is whether executives and the entities that employ them—the government, schools, hospitals, ministries, universities, boards, agencies and other entities—are administering their payrolls or whether rules, policies and exceptions for employees are now being made on the floor of the Legislature in this type of ad hoc fashion. Aside from the gaping legal loopholes that would mean steady work for litigation lawyers, the mechanics of making such a ham-fisted and clumsy proposal work in the real world would likely stall its implementation indefinitely.

The other key point is that the legislation is flat-out unnecessary. Ontario has frozen compensation across the public sector, and it is working. Growth in public sector compensation is far below that in the private sector, and the province is achieving through legislative action, good sense and co-operative collective bargaining far better results than what this type of unworkable populist legal sledgehammer ever could.

The proposal suggests that CEOs would find themselves perhaps slashed below the pay rate of many of the highly specialized support staff working under them. The member’s bill proposes what amounts to management by exception, so what this misguided bill suggests is that top executives merely work with their boards to demote themselves to a subordinate position in which a lower-paid figurehead is the nominal CEO of the organization, but the real decision-making happens with a group of supposedly lower-ranked people in a management committee who collect money through circuitous means, such as fees and other measures. It’s just not intelligent public or business policy and it deserves to go down. In the law of unintended consequences, it may not be what the member originally had in mind, but it is most certainly the outcome.

In our government, we’ve had a strategy to restrain the growth of public sector wages, and it has worked. We

have not chased away our best management talent, as this bill surely would. We have not forced salaried employees to either take an abrupt salary cut or to bend and twist their job descriptions, their titles and their compensation packages to conform with an arbitrary and dumb law. And let's be clear: The member suggests that beating up on fewer than 200 people across Ontario is somehow going to help bring down the deficit, or restore or bring about some sort of fiscal equilibrium that she may have in mind. It just isn't going to happen.

The member talks about how much some public sector CEOs earn relative to the average Ontario household, and she may well talk about how much the owner of a GTA-area factory makes. Or she may talk about how much money market traders or partners in law and accounting firms make, or how that could compare with professional athletes or any other benchmark. It's interesting, but it's not about proper administration in the public sector.

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The point of this is that this bill is a message to thinking Ontarians that the NDP aspires to be little other than a populist opposition party, and it says very clearly that this member and her party are simply not ready for the realities and hard choices of actual government.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I'm pleased to rise to share my thoughts on Bill 136. In my opinion, this will do absolutely nothing to address the real need for wage restraint in the province of Ontario. It's a red herring, a smoke-screen and a mirage. Once again, the third party is displaying, through this legislation, that they're not ready to tackle the real issues that face this province. They're trying to pull a fast one here, Speaker, and we won't stand for that.

The purported aim of capping top public sector salaries would cap executive salaries in the public service at twice the Premier's annual pay, but you really need to read the fine print of this bill to see what it actually does. Quite frankly, if the NDP were serious about public sector wage restraint, they would have supported the PC Party's across-the-board wage freeze legislation, which would have had a much bigger impact on the public purse. Instead, the NDP trot this out, which is nothing more than an attempt to appear tough on wage restraint when, in fact, it's not. In fact, it's anything but tough on wage restraint.

What they won't tell you is that only about 180 executive salaries in all the province of Ontario would be impacted. That's not even a rounding fraction. But when you read the bill, you learn it won't impact any salaries established prior to its becoming law. Even if the bill was applied retroactively, the \$20 million or so we're talking about is a far cry from the \$6 billion that could be saved through a legislated, across-the-board wage freeze, which we proposed and they rejected. Maybe the NDP needs a calculator with more than an eight-digit screen.

As I said previously, this is a red herring. We saw the NDP employ the same type of rhetoric last spring during

the gas plant scandal and the budget. They called the Liberals corrupt and liars in the morning, and then voted for the budget in the afternoon. In doing so, they propped up a government that has, in the past three years, awarded wage increases in eight of 10 contracts they negotiated, costing the province far more than they hope to save with this legislation. They say one thing and then do the opposite. The NDP has stolen page 1 out of the Wynne Liberals' playbook. They're one and the same.

Thank you for the opportunity, Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I will use what's left on the clock wisely. The first thing I want everybody to understand: Let's say we look at energy, because energy has been in the news an awful lot; \$1.1 billion to save a couple of Liberal seats. Well, the CEO of Ontario Power Generation makes \$1.7 million; the CEO of Hydro One makes \$1.03 million a year. This is cash that we pay, each and every one of us, because they are part of the broader public service, and they are two CEOs who handle the energy system in Ontario.

It's funny. Just next to us is Manitoba. Manitoba did not privatize their energy system. Manitoba still has it government-owned. They have one CEO who is respected the world over. Not only does he handle power production and distribution; he handles the entire system. And he makes \$229,000 a year. How could it be that somebody who handles the entire system makes a fraction of what the CEO of Ontario Power Generation makes for handling the generation part, and a fraction of what the Hydro One CEO makes for handling the distribution part?

Other parts of our country that deal with the same top-level pool for recruitment are able to recruit at \$229,000 a year, but Ontario is not able to do any better than \$1.7 million for one part of their system. I find that hard to believe.

We find this throughout. I handle the health file for the NDP, and let me tell you, in health care it is rampant. There are more health executives making more than double what our Premier makes than there are making less.

It doesn't matter where you go. If you go to London Health Sciences Centre, it's \$600,000 a year. Although there is a salary freeze—and let me tell you, the people who deliver the care know that there's a salary freeze because their salaries have been frozen. Well, there's a salary freeze, but the CEO got a \$45,000 raise. How could that be? We can go to Sunnybrook in Toronto, just down the road. Everybody knows where that is. The CEO is at \$760,000 a year. They are part of the broader public sector that is supposed to be frozen, except that they got a raise for \$50,000 last year while this frozen policy is in place.

I can keep going on and on and on. I can go to St. Joseph's health centre in London—\$470,000, and a raise of \$20,000. You can go to any of the five major hospitals in downtown Toronto and you will see the same thing.

Or we could go to Niagara. We were talking about Niagara this week and the Niagara Health System. Everybody knows Kevin Smith now on a first-name basis. He's the person making recommendations for closing all the little hospitals down Niagara way. Well, he makes \$721,000, and in the last four years he cashed in—\$2.8 million of taxpayers' money went into his salary.

We can do better, and that starts with capping CEO salaries at twice the Premier's salary.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The leader of the third party, you have two minutes.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to thank all of the members who participated in the debate today. I can tell you, I am quite pleased with the colleagues in the NDP caucus, obviously, who support this initiative.

I guess "disappointed" is the wrong word; I think "disgusted" is the word that I would like to use when I look at where the other two parties sit on this particular issue. This issue is not new. It continues to be a problem here in this province, and as we've just heard from the speaker who spoke before me, the member for Nickel Belt, the Liberals have pretended for the last several years to get a grip on this issue and actually start dealing with these runaway compensation packages, but they have not been successful.

Now the Liberals are claiming that some kind of market voodoo they come up with is going to somehow create the answer. Well, I have to tell you, even the members of the Liberal caucus who got up to speak to this bill do not have the information, the understanding and the knowledge to be truthful in this House, because they don't even know what's happening with executive compensation in the public sector. That is problematic. You can't solve a problem if you don't admit that there's a problem, and there is a problem here.

When it comes to the Conservatives, I just can't understand it, except perhaps that maybe they're friends with those people who are in those seven-digit salaries. Maybe they're the buddies of those folks. They go out on the golf course with them. They hang out with them on Bay Street. I don't know, but what I do have to tell you is this: The people of this province expect their public sector employees to be respectful of the public dollar and to have a salary that is within a reasonable range of what everyday people are able to earn. It shouldn't be dozens and dozens of times more. That is not fair.

Private sector, God bless. Public sector, let's have some responsibility and fairness.

VISITORS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): We have with us today in the Speaker's gallery a delegation from the Senate of Kenya, of the Parliament of the Republic of Kenya. With us is Mrs. Consolata Munga, senior deputy clerk and head of the delegation; Mr. Samuel Njuguna, director of committee services; Mrs. Serah Mbuli Kioko, director of legislative and procedural services; Mr. Kefa Omoti, principal research assistant;

Mr. Denis Abisai, principal legal counsel; Mr. George Wanyoko, senior assistant Hansard editor; and Mr. Edwin Afande, first counsellor, Kenya high commission in Ottawa. Welcome to our guests from the Republic of Kenya.

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RURAL AND NORTHERN ONTARIO TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Bill Walker: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should immediately strike an all-party committee at Queen's Park to study transportation needs in rural and northern Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Bill Walker: I would like to preface this debate with an undeniable fact: Presently in rural and northern Ontario, which is home to two million people, public transportation is essentially non-existent. That's 393 communities where residents cannot readily access transportation to get to work or doctor's appointments or to visit family and friends.

Some of you sitting to the left of me and across from me represent these communities. You see first-hand the struggle your constituents face in completing very basic everyday tasks, and that without the convenience of a car, life very quickly becomes challenging and frustrating. You know first-hand that without access to some mode of transportation, these families face a serious and deep disadvantage as they're restricted from participation in social and economic opportunities.

Rural and northern Ontario comprises nearly 88% of Ontario's land mass but has only 6.5% of our total population. Its proportion of seniors are growing faster than the province's. It has experienced an outmigration of youth that is unprecedented and a continuing cycle of lower incomes and greater poverty. The bottom line is that mobility directly impacts our quality of life every day. We need transportation for vitality, healthy growing communities, social agencies, the private sector, health agencies, schools and our jobs and our economy, Speaker.

It has a huge impact for the ability of people to find and maintain a job, especially in today's dire economic circumstances. Everyone in this has a stake. Let's act now and avert another looming crisis.

In my current role as critic for children and youth, I've been out travelling the province, meeting with people, and in my backyard of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound as well. What I'm hearing is that youth are having huge opportunities diminished for them because they don't have public transportation. They can't get out to some of the opportunities that are existing for them. In some cases, because they can't get out to even get the training, then there isn't that opportunity, or they're leaving our communities altogether.

With an already limited availability of education and training programs in rural and northern parts of Ontario,

our youth is forced to move to urban centres. With that, they're forced to negotiate long-distance travel, and in many cases, once they get there, they don't come home, and we lose some of our brightest and best. Regrettably, with the recent suspension of private carrier services by Greyhound, negotiating these distances has hit a snag. Yet again, the people who need the transportation the most seem to be getting hit the most by this downsizing.

In my own backyard, Craig Dawson, a business entrepreneur observed, "I have seen many smart kids from the Bruce Peninsula discontinue their post-secondary education merely due to the lack of their ability to get home on the weekends and/or holidays to be with family and peers. If they had that available to them via public transportation, they could do well at school, graduate and possibly bring their education expertise back to the Bruce peninsula to ... their home community." No doubt some mode of affordable alternative is needed to help our youth reach their economic potential.

Poverty reduction: Again in my travels and in my former role as deputy critic of health for rural and northern Ontario, we saw this at many stops. Anti-poverty groups have been telling for us for years about the so-called intersection of health, transportation poverty. Their advice is that a more accessible transportation system would help to reduce some of the inequalities that currently exist in rural and northern Ontario. According to the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force, who just submitted their report to the government, we need to support the formation of this committee:

"(1) creating a vision for what public transportation in rural Ontario should look like in the future;

"(2) setting standards for public transportation across Ontario; and

"(3) determining what strategies and priorities need to be in place to make the future happen."

Furthermore, the poverty task force advises, "Best practice studies and examples of other provincial initiatives, such as BC Transit, have demonstrated the benefits of an effective rural public transportation system to increase accessibility to essential services and employment; lead to lower commuting costs for residents and fostering the development of local and regional businesses. We believe that an integrated public transportation solution connecting people and communities will lead to a better quality of life; and a more sustainable future for Grey and Bruce county residents."

This advice brings to mind the controversial report the Liberal government adopted in 2004, entitled *Small, Rural and Remote Communities: The Anatomy of Risk*. In the words of Lawrence Solomon of the *National Post*, "For the first time in memory, possibly for the first time in Canadian history, a prominent government panel is recommending that unsustainable rural areas in Canada's heartland be taken off life support and allowed to die a natural death."

Interjection: It's a Liberal report.

Mr. Bill Walker: That is a Liberal report, yet another report—the demise of rural Ontario.

I take great offence with the report's recommendation to pull the plug on small communities, as I do with the generalization that everything north of the GTA is on "life support"—their quotation. More importantly, I'm deeply offended that this government would actually accept such rubbish and a demoralizing attitude about rural and northern Ontario.

The future of the province lies in healthy communities, communities that put food on your table and give you the mineral-rich Ring of Fire, our aggregates and many other great commodities that support the thriving economy that we need if we're ever to be the leader of Confederation again.

Massive gas tax funds: My colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has brought the gas tax to this House seven times. Finally, after seven times—lucky seven—he finally did, but up until then, both the NDP and the Liberals squashed that bill, and that was only to bring more money back to rural Ontario for things like infrastructure, roads and transportation. You just cannot afford to let our rural communities fizzle away, nor to become non-existent. It's unacceptable, and many on this side, our caucus particularly, will not allow that to happen.

Healthy communities: There's no dispute that access to public transportation is an important component of healthy and sustainable rural communities. For this reason, the many supporters of this resolution asked me to convey to you that they're hopeful that the adoption of this resolution for an all-party rural and northern Ontario transportation committee will be the first step in achieving this goal.

This was echoed by the Southwest Economic Alliance: "The alliance has actively advocated for improvements to passenger transportation for our region.... In Ontario, our key 'ask' is the establishment of an all-party committee of the Ontario Legislature to study all aspects of passenger transportation in the region.... To date, over 35 municipalities have passed resolutions in support of it. SWEA strongly supports your private member's bill and will communicate that to all parties over the coming days"—Serge Lavoie, president, Southwest Economic Alliance.

It was also echoed by the Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus, the great county of Grey, Owen Sound, Sudbury, Chatsworth, Georgian Bluffs, the town of Deseronto, the township of Nipigon, the town of Hanover, northern Bruce Peninsula, and the town of Bancroft economic development and planning committee, all of whom are certainly concerned about the lack of available rural transportation options and are eager to be part of the dialogue.

The public health office in Grey and Bruce also said, "We certainly see this as a health equity issue"—Lynda Bumstead, chair of public health in Grey and Bruce.

John Keith, manager of public transportation services at The Rural Overland Utility Transit—acronym TROUT—a division of Community Care North Hastings, repeated the same: "You have our full support for your

resolution for a rural and northern transportation committee.... TROUT public transit held a rural public transportation conference in Bancroft on November 15, 2013, and I am encouraged by the awareness and increasing understanding of the need for public transportation solutions in rural regions across the province. There was representation from 13 counties at the conference ... effective support from the province will certainly be helpful.”

The Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities said, “FONOM wishes to extend resolution support for a rural and northern transportation committee at Queen’s Park.... As you’re aware, rural and northern communities continuously struggle with a lack of access to transportation. A rural and northern committee would address [these] communities’ needs.... Public transportation issues, which are currently not meeting the needs of rural and northern Ontarians, are of great concern to FONOM—” Alan Spacek, president of FONOM.

From Ashley Farrar, social planning co-ordinator, Social Planning Council Oxford; Mike McMahon, chair, Social Planning Council Oxford; and Carolijn Verbakel, vice-chair of the Social Planning Council Oxford: “We need provincial leadership to make sustainable, affordable rural transportation a reality. We would appreciate [your] support of Bill Walker’s motion.”

From Mike Coxon, CEO, Mills Community Support Corp.: “Glad to support this!”

From the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, or CARP: “We recognize that transportation services in rural, dispersed communities will need subsidy, creativity and flexibility. We very much support the establishment of a high-level committee to address the transportation needs of communities such as ours.” This was sent by Haliburton Highlands CARP, chapter 54.

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And from Kate Hall, Peter Minaki, Lisa Tolentino, Heather Ross, Terry Wright, and Shirley Moore, members of the Rural Transportation Options committee: “Transportation services in rural communities with low population densities will require subsidy, as do all urban transit systems. Rural communities are known for their social innovation and there may not be a one-size-fits-all solution. However, an all-party committee that is tasked with studying the issues associated with a lack of transportation services in rural communities is a welcome first step. We support the establishment of a high-level committee to address the transportation needs of rural residents in Haliburton, Kawartha and Brock, and others across the province.”

“We fully support your motion”: Marilyn Bird, executive director, Lanark Transportation Association.

“The board of directors of the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition strongly supports your resolution”: Lorna McCue, executive director, board of directors of the Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition.

“The Huron-Perth Transportation Task Force, I am pleased to inform you that we strongly support your

resolution for a rural and northern Ontario transportation committee”: United Way of Perth-Huron.

Mr. Speaker, as I travel across the province and speak with people, again I’m reminded of my colleague Mr. Yakabuski’s PMB. Finally, it’s at second reading. It’s in committee, and hopefully, some of that money does come back to rural Ontario and can address some of the needs once this committee is formed and can actually make some good recommendations.

People in a rural area, such as Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound or my colleague from Huron–Bruce or any of the colleagues from rural Ontario, need this travel system to be able to get to things like specialist appointments, to be able to get to job interviews, to be able to get to training, to be able to get to co-op opportunities, to be able to get to—many of our seniors are volunteers, but they need a reliable way to get to their programs.

When I’ve been out in the hustings, I’ve been talking to people like the Poverty Task Force, the United Way, the seniors’ groups and youth groups, and it’s heart-wrenching for those individuals who have children with special needs who need some help to be able to get there—

Interjection.

Mr. Bill Walker: Northland railway.

Mr. John O’Toole: They’ve cancelled it.

Mr. Bill Walker: They’ve cancelled that one, yes. I mean, in northern Ontario, how do you get to Toronto, to the specialists that you need, now that they’ve cancelled that Northland railway? Speaker, it heartens me when I see these parents who have children who need the special access and yet there’s nothing there in the way of public transportation to them. Who more than in a rural area needs these type of services? And even something as specific as the Liberals changing the way they’re doing physiotherapy, moving them to more urban centres: How do these seniors get to those programs when they have moved them without—no thought process that there isn’t just a subway car to jump on and do that?

It is clear, Mr. Speaker, that rural and northern Ontario need us to act now. Implementing a reliable and effective transportation system can increase the quality of life for our residents so they can travel to their medical appointments, to work, to shop, to volunteer or—you know what?—just to be able to visit family and friends, which is a huge part of people’s health.

It would be sensible if all three parties at Queen’s Park, and I invite my colleagues, agreed to study the demand, obstacles and feasibility for rural and northern transit. If you, like me, believe we should take a more active role in supporting our communities’ transit needs and overall health and economic needs and vitality, then I ask you, each one of you in this House, to support this resolution. Vote to strike an all-party committee to study transportation needs in rural and northern Ontario immediately.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Peggy Sattler: I’m pleased to speak to this motion today, not as someone who represents a riding in

rural or northern Ontario but as the representative of the urban riding of London West. I'm also pleased, on behalf of our party, to express support for the motion from the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

The reason that this issue is important to me as a representative of the urban centre of London is that London is very much part of a very tightly linked regional economy throughout southwestern Ontario that relies very much on a strong transportation network. London has developed an economic strategy that is focused on establishing the city as a trade and transportation hub of southwestern Ontario. London has an industrial land strategy that is focused on acquiring land to attract new businesses, many of whom are international companies and many of whom, who have already set up their businesses in London, support the agri-food industry. We know that the success of these companies relies on their having a reliable transportation network so that they can get their products to market and so that we can bring in agricultural produce to support the agri-food industry that London is developing.

The city of London, in its spring pre-budget consultation, called on the government to work with the federal government to provide regular train service to Sarnia and Windsor, and also recommended that the province explore regular transit connections to smaller centres throughout the region, including St. Thomas, Port Stanley, Ilderton, St. Marys and Stratford. All of those communities are part of rural southwestern Ontario but are important to the city of London.

As we heard during question period today from the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, the government across the way seems to have entirely focused its transportation strategy on the GTHA. We need a big-picture transportation plan that will look beyond the GTHA and that will take into consideration the well-being of the entire province, not just a few select regions.

As the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound did, I want to acknowledge the work that has been done by the Southwest Economic Alliance, or SWEA. Earlier this month in London, SWEA convened a regional transportation summit that involved about 120 stakeholders who looked very specifically at the critical issue of the limited passenger transportation options in southwestern Ontario. The purpose of this summit was to generate some co-ordinated planning, some policy recommendations that would lead to more intercity passenger transportation in southwestern Ontario. As the member pointed out, the resolution that SWEA has been circulating has already been adopted by 35 municipalities, and they are continuing their advocacy work to draw attention to this critical issue in our region.

In particular, it's not just intercity transportation; it's also public transportation that is in crisis outside the GTHA. As the member pointed out, within smaller rural centres, public transportation is almost non-existent, and that creates huge challenges and barriers, in particular for low-income people, people with special needs and the elderly, just to access health and social services, which

we know are being more and more centralized as the government looks to close health care services and bring them into major centres.

We also know that job seekers who are looking for retraining opportunities, who are looking to upgrade their educational skills, who are looking to get to employment opportunities that are available, need public transit. They need an intercity transportation network that will enable them to take advantage of these opportunities when they come up.

We also know that the province of Ontario, during the two decades from 1989 to 2009, spent only 4.3% of its total budget on transportation and communication, which is less than BC and Alberta and, with the exception of Ontario, is also less than all Canadian provinces combined. Of the money that was allocated to transportation by the Liberal government in 2013-14, almost all was for the GTHA. So other regions are not getting the same degree of attention. Southwestern Ontario, in particular, is being disadvantaged by the government's single-minded focus on the GTHA and its reluctance, or its inaction, on transportation needs outside the region.

In closing—I'm going to share my time with my colleague—I did want to again express our support for this all-party committee and, in particular, my interest in looking specifically at the needs of southwestern Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: A point of order.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Stop the clock.

A point of order from the member for Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry.

Mr. Jim McDonell: Thank you, Speaker. I just wanted to welcome, or have the House welcome, Art Buckland, who is here from the Upper Canada District School Board. He's a trustee with them and a resident of my riding. Art is a huge volunteer in the riding of South Glengarry, although he lives in South Stormont.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you. The Minister of Rural Affairs.

Hon. Jeff Leal: It's a delight for me to be here this afternoon and provide some comments for my friend and colleague, the member of Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. It should surprise nobody that I think we're in favour of this particular resolution. I think it has some merit. Investing in transportation infrastructure, of course, is critical for our rural northern municipalities, and we've come a long way as a province.

One of the reasons that I got into provincial politics—I'm a former municipal politician, a city councillor in Peterborough from 1985 to the fall of 2003—was because of the downloading. We know that the previous government downloaded 43% of all the roads and bridges and other critical infrastructure in eastern Ontario. But you don't have to take my word for it. Ask the Eastern Ontario Wardens, who are a non-partisan group who

hired their own policy analysts to come up with that number.

We do know that they've pegged that number right on, and we do know that that's a deep hole, and we're slowly digging out of it. We don't want to go back to those days. We'll continue to make investments in infrastructure right across this great province.

You know, during this summer I was out talking to a lot of municipal colleagues—good friends of mine. I recall a meeting with the wonderful mayor from Owen Sound. Owen Sound is a wonderful community. It used to be the hometown of a former distinguished member here at the Ontario Legislature, the late Eddie Sargent, one of the most colourful guys ever to serve in this Legislature. I shared with the mayor about Eddie Sargent's commitment, and of course about people who have followed in his footsteps.

It was an opportunity to talk to the mayor. She was really delighted with what we're doing in terms of infrastructure: the new \$100-million program that we put in place. She was delighted that I was out talking to them and getting their input in order for them to help shape that program that's important to every part of Ontario, but particularly rural Ontario and northern Ontario.

We've invested \$5 billion in northern Ontario highways. Not too long ago, I was on Highway 11 going into North Bay—I represented the member from North Bay. What was interesting is that on Highway 11, as you go into North Bay, there's a wonderful billboard with a picture from Nipissing on it. I thought it was a great way to welcome one to North Bay to see that introduction to that fine community.

Over the last decade, we've also built 6,700 kilometres of new roads right across the province of Ontario. Let me put that in context. That would be like building a road from Ontario to Alaska. That's important, because when you get to Alaska, Sarah Palin can see Ottawa instead of Moscow. I just wanted to make that comparison.

We've built more than 800 bridges in that period of time. That means more people and businesses in rural and northern Ontario are getting to their destinations on time in a very safe manner.

I understand first-hand about infrastructure in northern Ontario. As I said, I've been touring it. In the cities across Ontario, there is urban transit—subway, streetcars; you name it—in rural and northern Ontario, we have roads and bridges. We all take notice when we drive over potholes or can't get across a bridge in disrepair.

Just on Monday, I was in the wonderful community—I chatted with my colleague the member from Simcoe-Grey. I was in the municipality of Adjala, near the community of Alliston. I was there to announce funding for a new bridge. I went to that bridge. I couldn't believe it. It's a one-lane bridge. The rebar was all rusting; the guardrails were hit by combines because they couldn't get across. I was there with my good friend Mayor Tom Walsh. Tom and I were there on Monday to announce the funding of that new bridge that's so very important to that wonderful community outside of Alliston, Ontario.

These kinds of strategic investments are what keep rural Ontario going. Just like families who set priorities within their own budget, our government is prioritizing rural and northern transportation projects. That's why we're moving forward. Our government is providing \$100 million for infrastructure in small, rural and northern municipalities. My good friend from Wellington there and my good friend from Nipissing—every day they come across the aisle. I get along well with them. They give me their projects and they say, "Minister, we want to make sure that that bridge or road gets funded, because we know how critical that is for these communities." I want to thank them for helping me. I said to them that I'll take their wise advice under consideration, of course, as we move forward.

Ms. Soo Wong: Get things done.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Getting things done, as my friend from Scarborough-Agincourt says. I know she's the kind of MPP who gets things done each and every day.

What we're doing together is we're looking to have a permanent infrastructure fund in our 2014 budget. I say to my friends across the aisle: We're looking at that. We're consulting to see if we can put that into our budget. Let me tell you, I look forward to my friends in the official opposition and my friends in the third party to look at supporting—if that initiative does find itself in our budget.

In 2013-14, we're investing \$513 billion in northern Ontario as part of our program for Highways 67, 11, and 17. We're looking forward to developing an integrated multi-modal transportation strategy, representing the largest public and stakeholder engagement in northern Ontario and rural Ontario. As I say to my good friend from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, it's great to see that the official opposition has finally come to the party. We welcome that with this resolution.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I appreciate the opportunity to join the debate and speak in support of the motion put forward by the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound. This is a very astute motion.

Before my friend the Minister of Rural Affairs gets out of earshot, I appreciate the opportunity and the recognition that you talked about in terms of crossing the aisle to talk to friends about infrastructure projects. We need good roads in order for transportation to travel on them. Maybe I'll come and visit you next week with regard to a project that I could get your help on—the Minister of Transportation as well.

Hon. Jeff Leal: Sounds like a wonderful endorsement for—

Ms. Lisa M. Thompson: I would thank you very much.

Again, coming back to reflect on the remarks that the Minister of Rural Affairs shared, we need good roads, absolutely, but in rural Ontario, specifically my riding of Huron-Bruce and my colleague's riding, Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound, good roads are all for naught if we do not

have an opportunity to have the viable transportation needed to support our populations in our small towns and rural communities.

The motion specifically states that the government “should immediately strike an all-party committee ... to study transportation needs in rural and northern Ontario.” This is to address an issue that has long been neglected by the Liberal government. It’s nice to see that we have all parties coming to the table under the spirit of supporting this motion.

Just yesterday, I met with a delegation from the Ontario Good Roads Association. It’s interesting, the data they’ve shared. They’ve got very valid, substantiated data that shows the poor shape our infrastructure has eroded to over the last decade. It’s important to talk about transportation, but specifically in my riding, we have bridges that are going to close because the dollars just aren’t there. As a committee, it will be interesting to see the bigger vision and how this can be addressed, because again, in order to have viable transportation for people who need it, we need good, stable, open roads for all in terms of connecting small communities throughout rural Ontario and northern Ontario.

It must be stressed, Mr. Speaker, that public transportation in many parts of rural and northern Ontario is virtually non-existent. This is a major problem in my riding. I want to share with you a couple of examples. Last Friday, in my constituency office in Kincardine, I met with representatives of Contact North. It’s an adult learning opportunity. There’s an office in Kincardine as well as a Contact North office in Exeter. We talked about the bigger picture of infrastructure and support needed by people in our communities. It’s staggering how transportation has been lost on this Liberal Wynne government, because we have people who are being encouraged—and we welcome them—to live in rural communities. They’ve maybe been a little down on their luck, and they find living expenses a little easier to manage, if you will, in smaller communities in rural Ontario. But they get out to towns like Kincardine and they don’t have the public transportation to get them from one end of the town to the other. It costs a lot of money—people on OSDP or Ontario Works sometimes have to pay for a taxi to go and get their groceries and back again. These are hard-earned dollars that disappear because we don’t have public transportation.

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To make it more poignant, there are people who want to turn their lives around. They want to better themselves through education, and again, we don’t have the public transportation in small communities in rural Ontario to help these people. They’re using their scarce dollars for taxis, to get from one end of town or possibly to another community, for their adult education courses. It’s just the proof in the pudding that this government continues to not connect the dots.

Going forward, in order to have a viable solution for public transportation, we need to address the issue at a

large level, at the committee table, with all parties present, and then chunk things down and understand how the transportation issue in rural Ontario is severe, and in doing that, we need to be able to encompass and draw in our partners. There’s the Rural Ontario Institute, ROI; there’s United Way. There are so many people who can assist the all-party committee, and I truly hope that our friends take up this opportunity to bring them to the table and, as the all-party committee of this House, get to the solution in a speedy way.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. John Vanthof: It’s an honour to be able to stand up again and, this time, speak on behalf of my NDP colleagues and speak on behalf of the residents of Timiskaming–Cochrane.

Regarding the motion to create an all-party committee to look at the transportation needs of northern and rural Ontario, I’d like to state from the outset that we strongly support this motion.

We are somewhat surprised that the member put forward a motion to create a committee, because I also put forward two motions in this House, and the last one was to create an all-party committee to look at something that’s equally important in northern Ontario. It was opposed by the party to the right, and not only opposed, but derided, about how a motion to create a committee—“Make a decision” and “You’re wasting your time.”

I’d like to put on the record that I don’t think creating an all-party committee is ever a waste of time. I fully support this idea.

Interjection.

Mr. John Vanthof: You can’t have it both ways.

Mr. Bill Walker: You must not have communicated it well.

Mr. John Vanthof: We communicated very well.

There’s one thing I’d really like to put on the record. The Minister of Rural Affairs said, “In urban Ontario, we have subways, and in northern Ontario, transportation consists of roads.” There’s much more than just roads. Ontario Northland is still there. The tracks are still there, but the Northlander was cancelled on September 28, 2012—so we’ve gone over a year. At the time, we were promised enhanced bus service, and we never really bought into that because it was, again, a promise. “Enhanced,” to me, would be a bus service that people actually—because the Northlander was most important for people who needed to go to major hospitals in southern Ontario, people who couldn’t stay on—and I’ve taken the night bus a couple of times. If you’re sick, you don’t want to take the night bus, because you’ll be dead by the time you’re off the night bus. I’m not trying to make a joke.

We looked at the numbers, and since the train has been cancelled, the ridership on the bus has gone up, but the overall ridership has gone down by 10,000 in a year. In Toronto, they’re going to say, “Well, 10,000, that’s not that much.” But for northern Ontario, 10,000 people who can’t get to a hospital any other way but with the train—so, fine, they’re finding cars or they’re just not getting help. They’re not able to travel, and no one has

ever discussed that. That's something this committee could discuss. That is something that an all-party committee—and I'm hoping the party to the right is thinking the same thing that our party was thinking: By creating an all-party committee, you take the politics out of it because you've all got skin in the game. What the Minister of Rural Affairs was saying, "Well, if you support what we're saying," is the political way to do it. In the long run, when you use politics, somebody always loses, because someone's always ignored.

Something else the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound touched on and I fully agree with—I don't remember the name of the study, but I've read it, about how rural communities mean nothing to urban Ontario, and we should shut them down, and that Toronto is the engine of Ontario. I've got nothing against the GTA. Toronto might be the engine, but rural and northern Ontario are the fuel. Without the fuel, Speaker, the engine stops.

One of the reasons I ran for this position is because a previous MPP was at an event in our riding. It was a mining town, and mining was in a slump. He said, "I'm sorry, folks, but mining is a sunset industry, so you better get ready." Well, mining isn't a sunset industry. Mining goes up and down. A large part of this province, a large part of this city, a lot of the skyscrapers you see on Bay Street were built from mining. A lot of things we have in the city were built on forestry and built on agriculture. Guess where that's done? Rural Ontario. Northern Ontario.

The people who live there need transportation, and, yes, we need good roads, and we have some good roads. We also need public transportation so our seniors can get to—we don't expect to have the biggest hospitals in Kirkland Lake. But when those people have worked and built this province, they should have the ability, they have the right, to have a public transportation system that can get them to a hospital where they can perform intricate services. We have that right.

I fully support this committee. I hope that they support, in future, other all-party committees so we can actually get something done.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Jim McDonell: It's a privilege to get up to support the private member's bill from the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound. It's a bill that I truly support.

We've seen a lot of cuts to rural Ontario, northern Ontario over the years. I think it's time that something is done. I look at my riding of Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, where our train service has been limited. You can no longer get a train out of here after 3 o'clock during the day. If you look at businesses trying to come to Cornwall—Toronto is the business centre of Ontario. Trying to come up to Toronto and make a return trip back is no longer possible by train. We have no airport. Bus service has been cut back. There's only one bus now even between Cornwall and Ottawa. We see that truly as an issue. I support the fact that we do need this committee to look after it.

It was interesting to hear the Minister of Rural Affairs talking about why he got involved in government. I was a former mayor of South Glengarry and the 2006 warden of SD&G. I got involved because I saw the cuts coming to rural Ontario. I go back, as mayor of South Glengarry—we received less money in OMPF funding than we did in 1999, if you can believe that.

I hear him talking about how they're doing all this support. Preliminary numbers are out, and it's hard to get them all, but in my riding of SD&G, the five townships have lost something like almost \$600,000 in funding, a cut getting close to 15%. I don't know how they read into that that it's actually encouraging and helping rural municipalities try to address their infrastructure. I had the privilege of meeting with members from Lambton county today. They were talking about similar cuts: 15% to their funding at the lower tier.

When they talked about the uploading, they said, "We looked at the uploading. It looks really good, until you try to access it and you find out that without spending your own money, you can't access about 70% of it." So the published numbers are just that: published numbers that mean nothing.

1520

We've seen this from this government time and time again. They blame the Harris government, but that was more than 10 years ago and they're still blaming the government. If this was really a wrong, I would have expected them to right that wrong—because I look at the taxes they've increased. Our party, the PC Party, looks at providing gas tax back to help this problem. When this government, when they brought in the HST, had a \$5-billion increase in revenue. It was a great opportunity to go back and give a little bit of money to rural territories. They never did that. I think there's lots of opportunity. I guess I have to leave time because other members will be rising on this. But there were just so many opportunities where this government could have stood up, could have helped out, but didn't. I think the people of rural Ontario are getting fed up.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Victor Fedeli: I too am pleased to rise on this very important bill. I must tell you, Speaker, that if we had a committee like this in place, it would have been obvious to the government a long time ago that the fire sale of Ontario Northland was not the answer to transportation needs in the north. They went ahead and announced this fire sale, as the member from the NDP said, back in March, a year ago in March, with no thought. As it turns out, during the gas plant scandal hearings, in the documents that we received, not only was there no thought, there was actually some advice from the finance ministry and from cabinet that the message on Ontario Northland to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines was "Defer. Don't make this decision. You don't know what you're talking about. We need more information."

The member from Parry Sound–Muskoka and I took time that summer to travel 1,600 kilometres, drive

through the north and visit with all of Ontario Northland's stakeholders—all of the mayors, all of their councils and employees. We talked individually to all of these important stakeholders about what their needs were. We got to understand what the problems were. Sadly, the Liberals went ahead without consultation, without notice to any municipality, without notice to the employees, and did this. That is the most serious aspect of what could come out of these consultations.

I have to tell you, Speaker, the gas tax, as the other member spoke about, is also unfair to northern municipalities. I know. I was mayor of the city of North Bay at the time, and there were five communities in the north that have bus service, that have transit. Out of all of those communities, only the five, what we call the large urban northern municipalities, got the gas tax. There are 444 communities in Ontario. The majority don't get the gas tax because the province and the people in Queen's Park just do not get that there is such a thing as rural Ontario and northern Ontario. We don't have transit service in all of these communities. What about Chisholm, Ontario? What about Mattawa, these communities that are vital to Ontario, to Ontario's economy, that have no transit? They get no gas tax. If this committee goes through, it's an opportunity for us to at least educate the people in this Pink Palace about what northern Ontario and rural Ontario are all about.

Speaker, when you think about what just happened last week—this major setback for all of Ontario, Cliffs pulling out of the Ring of Fire—this is a \$10-billion hit to the economy, \$60 billion of minerals that won't be coming out of the ground and helping to put people to work. All of those alarm bells that we've been ringing would have been heard by this committee. That's why this committee is so important.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

The member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bill Walker: Thank you to the people who have spoken to this: the member from London West, the Minister of Rural Affairs—he acknowledged Eddie Sargent, a very colourful person from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound; they seem to have a history and tradition of that, I'm told. I'm glad to hear that he's going to support it and I'm really, really glad to hear that he's talking about some significant support because the Ontario Good Roads Association was in my office yesterday talking to me about it, and there's a huge need for bridges and roads that impact transportation. What I really want is for the transportation system to be able to use all of those and, at some point, I hope they come through. He was glad that I came to the party. Well, I'm glad to come to the party. I just wish there was still some money in the bank when I got to the party so we could do that much more for the people of Ontario.

My friend and colleague from Huron–Bruce gets it. She understands the need for viable transportation in a rural area like her great riding beside mine.

My colleague from Timiskaming–Cochrane talked about the enhanced bus service and I trust that could be part of the study.

The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry, my colleague and friend—he, again, is a guy who has been in the trenches. He understands, from the municipal role that he played as mayor and warden in the past, just how significant transportation is in a rural riding.

Of course, my colleague from Nipissing, again, another former municipal mayor—thank you all for your support of this bill.

I hope it is something that we can take to get past the vote to get all-party support so we can move it to a committee and actually do something that's going to evoke some change in this province. Transportation is absolutely the linchpin in rural Ontario. We have to get people moving. It's about jobs. It's about health care. It's about children's education. It's about pure community spirit and people being able to be engaged in their communities and get out and share with their friends, their family and their colleagues. So I really hope for that.

I want to also extend a thank you to all of those groups, organizations and municipalities that sent resolutions of support. I truly hope that in a few minutes all of the parties will stand and be united in this minority Parliament and do the right thing: support this all-party committee to study a crucial need in rural and northern Ontario.

Thank you, Speaker.

LINCOLN ALEXANDER DAY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE JOUR DE LINCOLN ALEXANDER

Mr. Arnott moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day /
Projet de loi 125, Loi proclamant le Jour de Lincoln
Alexander.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Ted Arnott: This afternoon the Ontario Legislature has the opportunity to pay appropriate tribute to the honourable Lincoln MacCauley Alexander, a man whose political appeal crossed party lines and whose life was an example of service, perseverance, humility and humanity, which should guide us all.

I want, first of all, to thank my friends the member for Scarborough–Rouge River and the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for agreeing to co-sponsor Bill 125, the Lincoln Alexander Day Act, 2013. We are all privileged to serve as presiding officers of this House, working with the Speaker and my friend the member for York–Simcoe. I do not consider this to be my bill; instead, it is our bill. If passed by the House today, every member of provincial Parliament who supports it can claim some

measure of ownership and at the same time demonstrate that we can work together across party lines and recognize some timeless values that need to be recognized again and again in our time.

We worked together to show that it can be done. We can work together across party lines in this minority Parliament seeking to advance the public interest of the people of Ontario.

I also wish to acknowledge at the outset the presence in the House today of some special guests: Marni Beal Alexander, Lincoln Alexander's widow; her sister, Barbara Hotson; and Rosemary Sadlier of the Ontario Black History Society. Welcome to the Ontario Legislature today.

I believe that my remarks this afternoon need to answer two basic questions. The first question is: Who was Lincoln Alexander? The second question is: Why should the Legislature recognize the date of his birth, January 21, and enshrine that recognition into law?

I received many messages of support for Bill 125, but I want to start by quoting Dr. Alastair Summerlee, president of the University of Guelph, who knew Linc from his many years as chancellor of the university and called him "perhaps the most admired and respected public figure in Ontario." I agree, as I cannot think of anyone else who could be considered the province's most revered public figure.

All of us who were privileged to meet and know Linc have our own special memories, and I want to share one of mine with the House. Lincoln Alexander was the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario when I was first elected to the assembly in 1990. When he would come into the chamber here at Queen's Park for a throne speech or other special occasions—sometimes to give royal assent to a bill—he had a bearing and a manner that ironically seemed to be both regal and down-to-earth at the same time.

1530

But it was his sense of humour that endeared him to everyone who knew him. As chairman of the Ontario Heritage Trust, he visited Wellington county in the summer of 2008 to help unveil a historical heritage plaque at Glen Allan, recognizing the Queen's Bush settlement, which was a community of 2,000 black settlers, many of whom were escaped slaves who had come to Canada from the southern United States via the Underground Railroad.

"Good afternoon, Your Honour," I said, as I greeted him.

"They said there would be some big shots here," he replied.

I smiled, protesting that I didn't see myself as a big shot.

He said, "All you MPPs think you're big shots."

We both laughed, remembering that he too had been a parliamentarian and so, by his own definition, was a big shot himself.

Lincoln Alexander grew up in an Ontario that was far less tolerant and inclusive than the province we know

today, but as Sandra Martin wrote last year in the *Globe and Mail*, he had the capacity to turn "rejections and despicable slurs into a personal challenge to excel."

Excel he did, as a student, as a veteran of the Second World War, as a young professional, as a husband and father, and as a community leader, culminating in his election to the House of Commons as a Progressive Conservative in 1968—no small feat during that Trudeau-manipulation election.

Supported by his late wife, Yvonne, his son, Keith, and daughter-in-law, Joyce, he held his Hamilton riding through the next five elections, becoming Canada's Minister of Labour in 1979. Retiring from partisan politics in 1980, he served as chair of Ontario's Workers' Compensation Board, now called the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, and then represented Her Majesty the Queen as our Lieutenant Governor here in Ontario.

Next, he became the longest-serving chancellor of the University of Guelph, inspiring thousands of young people with his life story and example of overcoming discrimination, pursuing excellence and working for a better Canada.

If I were to read the full list of the committees, commissions, clubs and boards on which he served throughout his life, it would take up the entire 12 minutes of my allotted time, the list is that long.

A few minutes ago, I quoted Dr. Alastair Summerlee, president of the University of Guelph, and I also must recognize the importance of our local university in the development of Bill 125.

This past September, I was invited to a community breakfast at the university. During his remarks at the event, Dr. Summerlee thanked the university staff and community partners, and spoke about the year ahead. He mentioned that a new statue was going to be unveiled soon at the university. I immediately thought to myself, "Maybe it will be a statue of their former chancellor, Lincoln Alexander."

I must admit, I was initially a bit disappointed when Dr. Summerlee went on to say that the statue would not be one of Linc, but instead would be a statue of a gryphon, the university's symbol. But after I reflected on it, I thought that the Oxford dictionary's definition of a gryphon, "a fabulous creature, with an eagle's head and wings and a lion's body, combining the traits of intelligence and strength," fit Lincoln Alexander to a T. No wonder he was the longest-serving chancellor at the U of G.

While I was driving back to my constituency office after the event that fall day, just before the House commenced its current sitting, it struck me that I should introduce a bill to honour Lincoln Alexander. When I started to look into it, I was reminded that former Hamilton-area MPP Jennifer Mossop introduced a bill similar in principle to Bill 125, which passed second reading in 2007, just before she retired as an MPP.

Members will recall that she chose not to run again in the election that year so that she could spend more time with her family. But she has written me in support of Bill 125, saying, "I am delighted to know that Linc may yet

have his much-deserved day! He was an extraordinary human being. He was fully at ease in his own skin, and he made all those whom he met feel the same. What a gift!”

I know she wanted to be here today, and it would not be right if I didn't thank her now for her role in the evolution of Bill 125.

Our next step was to reach out to Linc's family. Amazingly and coincidentally, Linc's widow, Marni Beal Alexander, told me that she had been reaching out to Hamilton-area members of Parliament over the summer, asking if one of them would advocate for the establishment of a Lincoln Alexander Day in the House of Commons.

Marni is here today. She has written a beautiful message in support of Bill 125, and I'd like to share it with the House at this time

“Dear MPPs:

“It has been my hope and intent that the acknowledgement of Lincoln on Lincoln Alexander Day would become the platform where discussions in schools could take place on so many, many different levels.

“I know that the teachers welcome any reason to celebrate being Canadian with their students, and sometimes the school boards, with good intent, miss some fundamental opportunities for their students to learn.

“A Lincoln Alexander Day puts a face to the special day in his honour. It is our honour, really ... we who were so inspired by him, who experienced the enormous pride of province and country when in the same room as he.

“Lincoln was truly one of a kind, and one of the last. There will be no more Lincs. No one is even close.”

“Be it learning how Parliament works; What is a university chancellor, anyway?; Why is a Lieutenant Governor necessary and how does he or she affect us on a daily basis are all wonderful questions that will lead to classroom discussions and projects that might not have taken place had we not acknowledged this great Canadian.

“Inspired teaching inspires, and this is what Lincoln did for us in all nationalities, races, sexes, religions or lifestyles.

“These are all questions that beg the designing of a program, especially in the elementary grades, so that the children can truly appreciate and understand what a Canadian is and why people from so many countries far and wide want to come and live with us. Why Ontario? As I said, there are many levels to the question of Lincoln Alexander.

“So how do we solve a problem like our Lincoln?”

“I think we know the answer. Give him his day. Give his day to us. Let the children ‘link’ with their history and their pride in country through Lincoln. It will be a very special gift.”

Thank you so much, Marni, for this special tribute to the man we all admire and who you knew so well and loved unconditionally. Thank you.

A few years ago when I was working on a bill to recognize August 1 as Emancipation Day, the day slavery

was abolished in the British Empire—which was, incidentally, the very first bill ever introduced in this Legislature co-sponsored by MPPs from different parties—I came to know Rosemary Sadlier, the president of the Ontario Black History Society. Dr. Sadlier provides extraordinary leadership in this province, and the Black History Society aims to foster public interest and encourage interest in black history through education, oral history, publications, research and encouraging the leaders of tomorrow. We know that Black History Month is each February, and recognizing January 21 as Lincoln Alexander Day will allow the Black History Society to organize events that lead into all that they do in February to remind us of black heritage and history and the outstanding contribution of the black community to the country and province we know and cherish today.

I want to inform the House of Dr. Sadlier's support for Bill 125, and she writes: “The life and contribution of the Hon. Lincoln Alexander provides a connection to numerous areas of Ontario life: He was born in Toronto and excelled, despite some challenges, as a new Canadian; he moved to Hamilton to raise his own family; he served in the military, in the Royal Canadian Air Force, during the Second World War for four years, beginning in 1942; he attended McMaster University, then Osgoode Hall Law School. He steadfastly ran for public office, being elected in 1968—the first black MP—by 1979, he was the first black cabinet minister (labour). The Honourable Lincoln Alexander served as Lieutenant Governor from 1985 to 1991—the first African-Canadian vice-regal in Ontario.”

“I urge you to provide your support to this initiative, not necessarily because of the political stripes of the individual being honoured, but because of the meaningful tapestry of the numerous connections his life managed to touch and the impact that his birthday being marked as Lincoln Alexander Day would have on black and all Ontario residents.”

One of the treasures of my home library is an autographed copy of Linc's memoir, *Go to School, You're a Little Black Boy*. The title comes from his mother, Mae Rose, who used those words to inspire her son to embrace the opportunity of public education as the vehicle to success to life. One of the last chapters of that book is entitled, “A Lifetime of Fighting for Racial Equality.” The whole book details, in a matter-of-fact way, the many incidents of racism, subtle and overt, that Linc overcame during his life. But that chapter shows that even though we've come a long way in our efforts to build a society that is devoid of racism, where people are judged not by the colour of their skin but instead by the content of their character, we know we still have a long way to go.

He wrote: “Racism is simply a product of ignorance, but I am an optimist and I've seen great strides taken towards eradicating that evil. We need to look to the future while we pick up the torch from those who went before us.”

Madam Speaker, let us pass this bill today as a tribute to this great Canadian, and as a statement that this House

absolutely condemns racism, intolerance, prejudice and bigotry in all its forms, wherever it still exists. And no matter what your race, creed or colour, Ontario—our Ontario—is your home.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: It is with enormous pride that I stand here this afternoon to speak about Linc, Lincoln Alexander. Just a year ago, we celebrated the life of Hamilton's favourite son, the Honourable Lincoln Alexander, who passed away at age 90 on October 19, 2012. I want to thank the MPP for Wellington–Halton Hills for taking the initiative to bring forward the bill proclaiming Lincoln Alexander Day in Ontario on January 21 each year. More personally, I want to thank him for asking me to be a co-sponsor of Bill 125, a tremendous honour for a lifelong Hamiltonian who has heard of Linc Alexander for most of his life.

1540

I had the privilege of meeting Linc on numerous occasions, and yes, he did invite everyone to call him Linc. He was, in every way, an approachable, down-to-earth good guy. For those of you who had the experience of meeting him, you know how he made you feel like the most important person in that room. His mere presence and attention to you elevated you above all others, an inspiring feeling that lingered for a long time.

Although born in Toronto, Lincoln Alexander was a committed Hamiltonian. “[Hamilton] is the greatest city in the world,” he once said. “It’s all about the people. I have great faith in them. They are a strong and resilient people.”

Lincoln Alexander fought in World War II with the RCAF. He was well-educated, a lawyer by trade and the first black politician elected to the Parliament in Canada in 1968, representing Hamilton West, the same riding that was represented by Sir John Strathearn Hendrie from 1902 to 1914. Hendrie also moved on to be a Lieutenant Governor of Ontario from 1914 to 1919.

In 1979, Linc was appointed as Minister of Labour, making him the first black cabinet minister in Canada. After 12 years in the House of Commons, Alexander resigned his seat in an emotional farewell.

Then he continued his work for the people of Ontario by accepting the appointment of the chair of the Workers' Compensation Board. Once again, he was the first black person to hold that position.

But as we've already heard, he wasn't finished wowing us yet. Linc became the first black Lieutenant Governor of Ontario in 1985, Ontario's 24th Lieutenant Governor, the first member of a visible minority to hold that office. In fact, he was the first member of a visible minority to hold a vice-regal post in all of Canada.

As Lieutenant Governor, Alexander's focus was on education and youth. During his term, he visited more than 250 schools across this province. At each school visit, Alexander would advise students to pursue their education. This is a message his mother, as was said by the member from Wellington–Halton Hills, relayed

throughout his childhood. She would say, “Go to school, you're a little black boy,” a phrase he used as the title of his memoirs in 2006.

As the first black chancellor of the University of Guelph, he held the position longer than any other predecessor. He continued his string of firsts when he was appointed the first black chair of the Ontario Heritage Trust.

A good education and public service are the hallmarks of his trail-blazing legacy, something for every person, young or older, to strive for and achieve. His interest in and respect for our heritage was evident in his everyday life as a role model for young people of every colour and race. The Lincoln Alexander legacy is more than how he made you feel after a one-on-one encounter with him.

It's going to be an experience for so many students when they learn about him in their schools. They'll learn not only about his love of our heritage, they'll learn that February is not only when we celebrate Heritage Week, but the whole month is designated as Black History Month and has been since 1926 in the United States.

Historica Canada Black History Canada says on its website: “African-American Carter G. Woodson conceived the idea of having a time set aside devoted to the African, and African-American history that blacks were learning on their own. He chose the week in February that contained the birthdates of two people he credited with bringing about the end of American slavery, President Abraham Lincoln and black abolitionist, Frederick Douglass, which” back then in 1926 “he called Negro History Week.... The celebration expanded and over time became known as Black History Month.”

Historica Canada Black History Canada further states: “In Canada, this idea was first celebrated in Toronto by railroad porters within the black community by 1950; the porters had learned of it on their travels in the United States.... It was not until the Ontario Black History Society (OBHS) was founded in 1978, and petitioned the City of Toronto by 1979 to have February proclaimed Black History Month that the celebration started to trickle into the entire community. The OBHS has successfully lobbied the federal government to have February declared as Black History Month. In December 1995, the Parliament of Canada officially recognized February as Black History Month, following a motion introduced by the first black Canadian woman elected to Parliament, the Honourable Jean Augustine, MP of Etobicoke–Lakeshore.”

While all this was going on, there was Lincoln Alexander, setting the example and breaking down barriers everywhere. In 2011, Lincoln Alexander reflected on the evolution of equality through his lifetime and named Canada the best country in the world with respect to race relations. He acknowledged the country's immense progress over the years and took great pride in being Canadian, but made sure to remind people that it's still not perfect. As a young man, he witnessed and experienced various forms of racial discrimination, but most often noted the lack of job opportunities and career

options acceptable for minority groups as particularly frustrating.

During the Second World War, Alexander served as a sergeant in the Royal Canadian Air Force, for which he was decorated. After the war, he received his undergraduate degree at McMaster. In 1948, he married Yvonne Harrison, to whom he was married for 50 years. Yvonne predeceased him in 1999. They had a son, Keith, who is married to Joyce. They have daughters Erika and Marissa. In 1953, Alexander continued his studies at Osgoode Hall school of law and was called to the bar in 1953.

Even though he was academically well qualified and a man of impeccable reputation, Alexander's applications for work were rejected at many established law firms. Most of us can't even understand how the rejection must have felt, but Alexander returned to Hamilton and rather than quit or let himself be held down, he moved ahead. He made history in 1955 by becoming the first partner at Canada's first interracial law firm, Duncan and Alexander.

Continuing his upward trajectory, in 1962, Lincoln Alexander moved on to a new law firm: Millar, Alexander, Tokiwa and Isaacs—no relation to me. In 1965, his exceptional merit and contribution to the legal profession were recognized when he was appointed as a member of the Queen's Counsel.

Throughout his life, Lincoln Alexander set a very high standard of good citizenship. He was an exemplary role model, one who so completely deserves to have an act of this Legislature declare January 21 of each year as Lincoln Alexander Day.

Folks, he will be missed by all Ontarians, particularly by those Hamiltonians and others who had the privilege of meeting and knowing Lincoln Alexander. Linc, you'll be missed but never forgotten. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Further debate?

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, I'm pleased—

Interjection: Madam Speaker.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Madam Speaker; my apologies.

I am pleased to be asked to co-sponsor Bill 125 to proclaim January 21 in each year as Lincoln Alexander Day.

First, let me say thank you to the family members who are here, and especially Rosemary Sadlier from the Ontario Black History Society for joining us.

I would also like to thank my colleague MPP Ted Arnott for bringing forward this bill and for his hard work in resurrecting a proposal of a private member's bill by our former colleague MPP Jennifer Mossop, and I want to thank him for asking me to co-sponsor it.

Lincoln MacCauley Alexander served as the first black member of Parliament, the first black cabinet minister as Minister of Labour and the first black Lieutenant Governor of Ontario.

Mr. Alexander, a war veteran, served in the Royal Canadian Air Force during World War II. He completed

his bachelor of arts at McMaster University before attending Osgoode Hall Law School. After practising law for some time, Mr. Alexander decided to pursue politics and was elected in 1968.

After exiting politics in 1980, Mr. Alexander served as chair of the Ontario Workers' Compensation Board, known today as the WSIB; Doctor's Hospital; Shaw Festival; the Royal Agricultural Winter Fair; chamber-Works! ensemble of Hamilton; the Raptors Foundation; and the Ontario Heritage Trust.

He was also the chancellor of the University of Guelph, where he's recognized with a building named in his honour. He has been recognized with several honorary degrees, the honourable Lincoln Alexander award program, three elementary schools named in his honour, as well as the Lincoln Alexander expressway in Hamilton. In addition, Lincoln Alexander was named the greatest Hamiltonian of all time in 2006.

We are most grateful for his advocacy on behalf of young people and his dedication to strengthen education. He was guided by his mother's lesson that "accepting defeat was easy, but success was possible, and education was the vehicle to take you there."

1550

His Honour Lincoln Alexander has a legacy in my riding. Femi Doyle-Marshall and Kwesi Johnson, black youths from Scarborough–Rouge River, are recipients of the Lincoln M. Alexander Award. This award is an important representation of His Honour, considering his commitment to education, youth and multiculturalism.

I had the opportunity to serve as the city of Toronto representative on a provincial committee to review Caribana festival operations, which was chaired by His Honour. From my personal experience, he was a compassionate man who always looked out for others before himself. The commitment and respect that he brought to his work throughout his illustrious career validated that he was truly a wonderful representative of the people, a true Ontarian and Canadian. We should be proud to celebrate his life.

A day to recognize these achievements would allow every Ontarian and Canadian, especially those in the black community, the opportunity to understand how the Honourable Lincoln M. Alexander overcame all the challenges in life to strive for what he believed was a better Ontario and a better Canada.

Bill 125 will further commemorate his outstanding achievements and triumphs by declaring his birthday, January 21, Lincoln Alexander Day.

Speaker, it is my honour and pleasure to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Further debate?

Ms. Laurie Scott: Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Yes. The member from—I just want to get this right, sorry—Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

Ms. Laurie Scott: I'm very pleased and honoured today to speak on the proposal to name a day, brought

forward by all three parties in the Legislature—Ted Arnett, Paul Miller and Bas Balkissoon—An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day.

Now, we've all heard that Lincoln was a remarkable Ontarian. Born in Toronto in 1922, Lincoln Alexander hadn't always thought he was destined for politics. He was dedicated to serving the people of Canada. He was first elected MP for Hamilton West in 1968, and subsequently re-elected four times until retiring in 1980. As has been said, he was the first black Canadian to be elected as a member of Parliament, as well as the first to serve as a cabinet minister.

I want to also welcome the family today, and say that at that point—I was a young child—I had my first interaction with Lincoln Alexander. It was because when Lincoln was elected, my father, Bill Scott, who was a member of Parliament for what was then Victoria-Haliburton, was his first seatmate. So, as a child, I would get these phone calls. My dad would pass the phone, and he would say, "It's Santa Claus." That booming voice would come out, and, of course, it was Lincoln Alexander. So he's always been very important in our family's life.

When he decided not to run again for Parliament, he certainly did not leave public life. When he was appointed in 1985 by Brian Mulroney as Lieutenant Governor here in Ontario, he did not forget the interaction he had with our family. He came back to the village that I and my dad's family are from, Kinmount, and opened the Kinmount Fair as Lieutenant Governor. That was a big moment in a very small town. I'm very emotional today. I apologize for that.

Of course, the list of accomplishments goes on: Officer of the Order of Ontario, Companion of the Order of Canada and, to top it all off, in 2006, the Hamilton Spectator named him the Greatest Hamiltonian Ever. So I'm very happy that Mr. Miller has spoken today on the remarkable trailblazer that he was throughout his life.

For the small girl from Kinmount who first was introduced to Lincoln Alexander as Santa Claus on the phone, I want to say it's an honour to speak today and certainly in support of naming the day as Lincoln Alexander Day.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Further debate?

Miss Monique Taylor: First, I want to thank the members from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek, Wellington-Halton Hills and Scarborough-Rouge River for bringing this very important bill forward. The proclamation of January 21 as Lincoln Alexander Day is a wonderful acknowledgment of an extraordinary life, of an exceptional human being.

The Lincoln Alexander expressway cuts right through my riding of Hamilton Mountain. We know it as the Linc, just as we know and remember the great man himself. What a fitting nickname because it's so much more than a simple short form of "Lincoln." The highway connects one end of the riding to the other and it forms a good chunk of the highway that connects one end of Hamilton to the other. It links us together, just as our original Linc did.

He connected people. He connected communities. He connected ideas all across Hamilton through his many years of dedicated service to our community. He was our link in more ways than one. That service earned him the title of the greatest Hamiltonian of all time by Hamilton in 2006. We were proud to share him as he took his character, his compassion, and his significant skills beyond Hamilton's borders.

Linc came to Hamilton as a young man, taking a job as a machine operator to be close to Yvonne, a young woman he had fallen in love with and would later marry. They were together until she died in 1999. After serving in the RCAF during the war, he returned to Hamilton to study at McMaster. His mother had instilled in him the importance of going to school. Stelco turned him down for a sales job. They said customers wouldn't want to deal with a black man. So he went to law school: Stelco's loss and definitely our gain.

He had overcome the many racial barriers of that time to get to this stage. He was already a trailblazer, but he was only just beginning. There were so many trails ahead and he blazed through them all. As a young lawyer in Hamilton, he and a few of his colleagues established a law practice that celebrated ethnic diversity. For 12 years, he was a member of Parliament for Hamilton West. He was Canada's first black MP and he felt honoured to represent our city in Ottawa. He said that we were the greatest city in the world, and I for one would definitely agree with that.

In Ottawa, he served for a time as the Minister of Labour, becoming the first black cabinet minister in Canada. After a spell as the chair of the Workers' Compensation Board, he was appointed as Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, the first member of a visible minority to hold such a position anywhere in all of Canada. As the Lieutenant Governor, the Honourable Lincoln MacCauley Alexander remained as Linc despite the trappings and the pageantry of his position. He never ever put himself on a pedestal. He considered himself a person no different than those of us that he served.

Education and youth had always been important to Lincoln. Again, going back to the words of his mother, as we have heard, Go to School, You're a Little Black Boy was the name of his autobiography. Well, he had gone to school, and at 6 foot 3 inches, he wasn't so little anymore, but he still cared deeply for education.

I am definitely not going to have enough time; jeez.

Later in life, Lincoln again fell in love, with his wife, Marni Beal, in 2011, and she made his final years so much happier for him in life as she stayed with him. Through his life, he received so many awards, as we have heard quite directly in the House already this morning.

Lincoln Alexander died on October 19, and he will be missed but he will definitely never be forgotten. It all started on January 21, 1922. Today, I hope all members will join us in supporting this bill to mark his birthday, January 21, by proclaiming it as Lincoln Alexander Day.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): The Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: It gives me great pleasure to rise to speak of an old friend. I knew Linc very well; we spent a fair bit of time together. I'm pleased to join in the recognition, even the adulation, that we're expressing today.

When he passed away in October, his granddaughters remembered him simply as a true human being with flaws and perfections. While Linc's heart belonged to Hamilton, he served on behalf of his entire province and his nation. He was not hemmed in by the prejudice of others, nor the expectations of his time. He demonstrated that every individual part of our being informs who we are, but it does not define who we are, and that if we believe in our own abilities, our potential has no limit.

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As a man, he was more than the sum of his parts. Now, as a memory, he is a symbol of the service that we must all endeavour to offer.

Speaker, Linc was a friend. So was Arthur Weisz, who died in October. Lincoln Alexander and Arthur Weisz used to joke with each other about being the two finalists for the "greatest Hamiltonian of all time" award. By the way, that is an important distinction because a lot of great people come from Hamilton, right? By any measure, they were two outsiders: the first black member of Parliament and the Holocaust survivor. But they both became beloved citizens and achieved true greatness and loved each other.

I have three vivid memories of Linc. I was a second-year university student when he was running for re-election as a Conservative member of Parliament. I went to the all-candidates meeting to support a friend of mine, Peggy Leppert, whom Mr. Miller probably knows, who was running for the NDP. During the debate, Peggy fainted, and without a second's hesitation, Linc bent down, scooped her up in his big arms and carried her off to receive medical attention, then came back to join the debate and completely decimated the Liberal candidate.

Some years later, I was a young politician myself, sitting beside Linc at a dinner. I wasn't scheduled to speak, but the organizer stopped by my chair and, as a courtesy, asked if I wanted to say a few words. I said, "No, thanks. It's not my place to speak." Linc grabbed my arm, squeezed it tight—he was a strong man—and I remember he said, "Listen, my young friend, when someone asks you to speak as an elected official, you never say no; otherwise, you're disrespecting them and their invitation." An important piece of learning for an early-30's kid, right? It was wise counsel, and I took his advice.

I knew Linc best, however, as a patron of the Burlington Teen Tour Band. One Christmas celebration, the organizers were waiting to get started and frantic because they couldn't find Linc. He was supposed to be on stage emceeding the event. I said, "I bet I can find him." I headed into the kitchen, and there he was flirting with everybody, all the cooks and all the volunteers. He was a very generous, genuine and compassionate man, truly a great Hamiltonian, and I continue to miss him still.

We give thanks for his life. Marni, it's good to see you here.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Further debate?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I consider it a great honour that I have today to stand to support Bill 125 and recognize the importance of Lincoln Alexander. It is undeniable the wondrous impact Lincoln Alexander has had. He once said, "Anyone can become a great part of the Canadian way of life and make a difference economically, politically and socially."

"Don't get sucked in by saying you can't because there's always a future in this great country of ours if you work hard and stay in school."

Many people have referenced similar quotes made by him, but I think it really is emblematic of the man and the kind of person he was.

He first distinguished himself as a fighter pilot during the Second World War. Following the war, Lincoln Alexander went on to become the first African Canadian partner at a law firm. He continued to serve this country as the first black MP and cabinet minister and as the first African Canadian Lieutenant Governor in Canada. To add to this list of outstanding achievements, he was the longest-serving chancellor at the University of Guelph.

His election to the House of Commons in 1968 helped inspire all those around him at a time when the civil rights movement was at its peak in the United States. His place in Canadian history is only matched by his love for our shared heritage.

As many of you already know, he was the chair of the Ontario Heritage Trust from 2004 to 2010, and it was in this role I had the opportunity to meet him on several occasions. He said, "The Ontario Heritage Trust is extremely important to me because we have to understand our cultural, natural and built heritage and make sure people preserve and respect and look after it." Being a former history teacher, it was a great honour for me to speak to him about the important role the Ontario Heritage Trust plays in preserving our history for the generations to come.

I admired both the passion and eloquence that he brought to the role of chair. His contributions to the Ontario Heritage Trust have truly helped raise the profile of its efforts and the importance of preserving our history for future generations. His successes were so widely appreciated that the trust established a legacy fund in his name.

Speaking and meeting with him, it was clear to see how his presence inspired the enthusiasm of those he met. He remains a compelling example of how a man from humble beginnings was capable of becoming a leader the whole country admired. His remarkable contribution set the standard for generations. Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day, is a testament to a man who will forever be remembered in the hearts of those he has inspired.

I would like to commend the member for Wellington-Halton Hills for taking on this initiative, as well as the

members from Scarborough–Rouge River and Hamilton East–Stoney Creek for working together to create this tripartisan bill. It is with great pleasure that I give my support to this bill and recognize our two guests here today in recognition of the importance of today's bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): The member from Scarborough–Guildwood.

Ms. Mitzie Hunter: I stand today in strong support of Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day. This bill would establish January 21st in each year as a day to honour and celebrate the late Lincoln Alexander. It is so wonderful to see that Marni is here, as well as Ms. Rosemary Sadlier, the head of the Ontario Black History Society, to hear these tributes on behalf of Lincoln Alexander.

Lincoln Alexander was a remarkable Ontarian and a great Canadian. He was a true trailblazer. To echo my colleague's statements today, the list of firsts in his name is quite remarkable.

To name a few of these firsts: the first black member of Parliament; the first black federal cabinet minister; the first black Lieutenant Governor; and the first person to serve five terms as chancellor of the University of Guelph. As the bill itself states and his long list of accomplishments illustrates, "His life was an example of service, determination and humility."

His commitment to education, equality and community service left a lasting mark on Canada, and his legacy continues to inspire young people today. Last February, I judged an essay-writing competition for Black History Month at RBC. One thing really resonated with me after reading all of the essays submitted by the students: the importance of having role models like Lincoln Alexander in the community. He truly inspires the community at large, and in my riding of Scarborough–Guildwood, where there are a large number of black youth, this is really important. It is especially important for them to hear about and be inspired by the accomplishments of someone like Lincoln Alexander. He is an example of how education can help you rise above circumstances you were born into.

This lesson and his message about education are a vehicle to equality. It's one that many youth still need to hear today. To paraphrase Lincoln Alexander, youth today need to hear it is not their duty to be average, but it is their duty to set a higher example for others to follow. They need to hear about people who have set that example, like Lincoln Alexander, and they need to hear that they too can set higher examples for themselves.

Kathy Grant joins me here today. She is in the members' gallery. She started the Legacy Voices project, which is dedicated to preserving and documenting black Canadian military history and service. She has seen first-hand the impact that Linc has had on students and youth.

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One speech really resonated with her. She says a young girl spoke about Lincoln Alexander and said the following: "I found him to be an excellent example of how challenging yourself to test the limits of your poten-

tial can actually surprise you with incredible success and leave a lasting impression on those around you."

I can say that his energy and dedication to serving his community have made him a role model and an icon for me and so many in my community, especially in my role as a member of provincial Parliament.

Linc's commitment to serving his community has spanned an entire life, from enrolling in the Royal Canadian Air Force in World War II to sponsoring a cadet group which today is serving in our community. I got a chance to meet them this Remembrance Day. That's why this bill is so important. We need to be reminded each year of Linc's legacy. We need to be reminded that we must continue to work hard towards the ideals of tolerance and inclusivity. We need to be reminded that there is still work to do to achieve this equality here in Ontario.

Mr. Alexander said, when reflecting on his own life, "How many of those things I touched on still need attention today." And when we take a quick look around even this chamber, we know that there is more work that we need to do. We need to be reminded that education is the most essential tool that we have towards achieving our goal of more equality and inclusivity in society, so it is my sincere hope that my colleagues today will see the importance of Bill 125 and support the establishment of January 21 as Lincoln Alexander Day.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): The member for Wellington–Halton Hills has two minutes to reply.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: No, there's still time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Oh, I apologize.

Further debate.

Mrs. Jane McKenna: It is my great honour to rise today to speak to Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day, and I'd like to recognize Linc's beautiful bride, Marni Beal Lincoln, there in our west lobby. I'm grateful to my colleague from Wellington–Halton Hills for bringing this bill forward, as well as his co-sponsors from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and Scarborough–Rouge River.

The Honourable Lincoln MacCauley Alexander was one of the most accomplished Ontarians of our time and perhaps any other. When he passed away on October 19, 2012, at the age of 90, he left behind a life filled with accomplishments that would serve as a beacon to others. He was the first black member of Parliament, the first black federal cabinet minister, the first black Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, and much, much more.

But for all his historic accomplishments, the thing that magnified the stature of Lincoln Alexander most of all was his absolute humanity. Linc was a man of the people who was generous with everyone he met. As far as Linc was concerned, we were all his constituents. He was a wonderful citizen as well as an exceptional public servant, and while he is rightly recalled as the trailblazer for minorities, he didn't care to be called the "black MP." He would tell reporters that he much preferred to be

called the MP who was prepared to stand and speak on behalf of anyone who suffered prejudice or injustice. Linc once revised the old saying that hell is other people to better reflect his heartfelt world view. He believed that heaven was other people.

Watching him move through the room at any of the countless events that filled his social calendar, nobody could doubt his sincerity. I hold fond memories of Linc's 90th-birthday celebration at the Burlington Music Centre, hosted by the Burlington Teen Tour Band. He served as the teen tour band's patron since 1999. Linc also served as chancellor of the University of Guelph for a record five terms.

I first met Linc at the graduation of my eldest daughter, Jennifer, from the University of Guelph. The ceremony was held outdoors under a tent, and despite the shade, the temperature was roasting. There were a number of speakers, and with each one the crowd grew more restless. And then Linc spoke. His incredible presence—his words, his voice, his bearing—took everyone out of the moment. We totally forgot the heat.

Linc was a deeply dignified man, and he understood very well the gravity of public service. He is remembered still and always will be deeply loved because he saw the best in others and inspired them to do likewise. He was honest, he was forthright and he was true, a man of integrity who was never afraid to speak the truth to power; a man who lived openly, yet who had the capacity to surprise and delight others. His life, his long and glorious life, continues to offer us instruction in how best to live, how to unlock the best in ourselves, how to uncover the best in others and how to achieve greatness together. It is fitting that we, in this Legislature, honour this great man with a day that bears his name, and I am so happy to support this.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Further debate.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Everybody has got a story about Linc Alexander and what a great guy he was. My story about Linc Alexander is from one night at Flamboro racetrack. Charles Juravinski and his wife, Margaret, and Lincoln Alexander were at a table. We enjoyed a wonderful evening watching some fine horseflesh run in what I believe was the Canadian cup. Linc, of course, regaled us all night long with stories of events that had taken place in his life and how he felt so proud that he was able to give back so much to Ontario, which had given him so much over his life.

He was truly an absolutely remarkable individual. I think every Ontarian who ever met him and many Ontarians who never met him think the world of him. That's the kind of person who is so rare and yet so valuable to a province. Linc personified that to everyone who met him.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): The member from Wellington–Halton Hills on a point of order.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'd like to seek the unanimous consent of the House to allow me to divide the two

minutes of time that I have to sum up this debate with my colleagues who have co-sponsored the bill, the member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and the member for Scarborough–Rouge River, so that we each have equal time.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I want to express my appreciation to all the members who spoke this afternoon to Bill 125 and all of those who plan to support it. I just want to briefly read the conclusion of Linc's book, his memoir. It's very touching. He said: "When I get to heaven ... I await a glorious reunion.... And there will be my mother, who I know will meet me, and she'll tell me I've done well. Because I went to school, this little black boy."

Today, the Ontario Legislature speaks with one voice, and we say to the Honourable Lincoln MacCauley Alexander: Well done.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank all the people who spoke about Lincoln Alexander. We're very proud, in Hamilton, of Lincoln Alexander and all of his accomplishments and the way he treated Hamiltonians and his love for our city. Special thanks to the minister for his kind words and for his personal experiences with Lincoln Alexander over the years; that was really good to hear.

I'm thrilled that all three parties came together on this. It's a good thing to do and it certainly honours a man who is more than deserving of this special day that we'll cherish in Ontario for the rest of our lives.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: Let me say thank you to my colleague from Wellington–Halton Hills for encouraging me to join him in co-sponsoring this bill. I want to say thank you to everyone for the comments they made about Mr. Alexander, because he's truly a Canadian who—we will all cherish the memories we have of him, and I'm so proud to have had the opportunity to work with him on the Caribana committee. I want to say: Linc, thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

CAPPING TOP PUBLIC SECTOR SALARIES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE PLAFONNEMENT DES HAUTS TRAITEMENTS DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): We will deal first with ballot item number 61, standing in the name of Ms. Horwath.

Ms. Horwath has moved second reading of Bill 136, An Act to cap the top public sector salaries.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

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

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

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will deal with this vote after we finish the other business.

Fife, Catherine
Forster, Cindy
Gélinas, France

Marchese, Rosario
Miller, Paul
Natyshak, Taras

Singh, Jagmeet
Taylor, Monique
Vanthof, John

RURAL AND NORTHERN ONTARIO TRANSPORTATION

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Mr. Walker has moved private member's notice of motion number 51.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?
Carried.

Motion agreed to.

LINCOLN ALEXANDER DAY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE JOUR DE LINCOLN ALEXANDER

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Mr. Arnott has moved second reading of Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?
Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

LINCOLN ALEXANDER DAY ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE JOUR DE LINCOLN ALEXANDER

Mr. Arnott moved third reading of the following bill:
Bill 125, An Act to proclaim Lincoln Alexander Day /
Projet de loi 125, Loi proclamant le Jour de Lincoln
Alexander.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1622 to 1627.

CAPPING TOP PUBLIC SECTOR SALARIES ACT, 2013

LOI DE 2013 SUR LE PLAFONNEMENT DES HAUTS TRAITEMENTS DU SECTEUR PUBLIC

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Members, please take your seats.

Ms. Horwath has moved second reading of Bill 136, An Act to cap the top public sector salaries.

All those in favour, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Armstrong, Teresa J.
Bisson, Gilles
DiNovo, Cheri

Hatfield, Percy
Horwath, Andrea
Mantha, Michael

Prue, Michael
Sattler, Peggy
Schein, Jonah

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): All those opposed, please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Balkissoon, Bas
Chan, Michael
Chiarelli, Bob
Chudleigh, Ted
Coteau, Michael
Crack, Grant
Damerla, Dipika
Del Duca, Steven
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Duguid, Brad
Fedeli, Victor

Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Hoskins, Eric
Hunter, Mitzie
Jackson, Rod
Jeffrey, Linda
Kwinter, Monte
Leone, Rob
MacCharles, Tracy
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
McDonell, Jim
McKenna, Jane
McMeekin, Ted

McNeely, Phil
Milloy, John
Munro, Julia
Murray, Glen R.
Naqvi, Yasir
O'Toole, John
Pettapiece, Randy
Sandals, Liz
Scott, Laurie
Sergio, Mario
Wilson, Jim
Wong, Soo
Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 18; the nays are 39.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT STANDARDS AMENDMENT ACT

(LEAVES TO HELP FAMILIES), 2013

LOI DE 2013 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES NORMES D'EMPLOI (CONGÉS POUR AIDER LES FAMILLES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 19, 2013, on a motion for third reading of Bill 21, An Act to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 in respect of family caregiver, critically ill child care and crime-related child death or disappearance leaves of absence /
Projet de loi 21, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi en ce qui concerne le congé familial pour les aidants naturels, le congé pour soins à un enfant gravement malade et le congé en cas de décès ou de disparition d'un enfant dans des circonstances criminelles.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Laura Albanese): Further debate? The member from Essex.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I thank you very much, Madam Speaker, for acknowledging me this afternoon, as it is always a pleasure to rise in the House to speak on all important issues but particularly Bill 21, the Employment Standards Amendment Act, which deals with family leave. A family leave care act is how it's referred to.

I will say from the outset that there's no question this debate has received full scrutiny from this Legislature. Most of us have had the opportunity to speak on it. Most

of us have spoken on it in support of the need for a mechanism to allow family members to provide care for their families and loved ones who are in medical distress, who are facing treatment or who simply need some measures of care.

When the bill was originally proposed—actually, this is the second incarnation of the bill. The bill was previously introduced by Minister Jeffrey, who was the then Minister of Labour; it died on the order paper, I believe, last fall. But here we are again, and it has been amended, thankfully, to improve the bill. It's one of those positive aspects of the work that we do here. We scrutinize a bill. We give it full consideration, and then send it to committee and try to strengthen the bill. I'm proud that some good work has been done to make sure this bill is flexible and responsive to the needs of the people in the province when it comes to delivering care to their loved ones.

Speaker, I'm so glad to see so many people in the House. It's incredible that at this late time of day there are so many people. You must be all enthralled and just waiting with bated breath to hear what I have to say about this bill.

I do, of course, think it is a positive step. It's a small step, but it is a positive step. In my discussions and comments on this bill throughout the months and times that I've had the ability, I think I've referenced some of my own personal stories about how this type of bill would have affected or would facilitate my family in particular—and I think it always strengthens the debate to put a personal tone on it.

Currently—maybe I'll start with previously. In 2005, my brother Edward was injured in a mountain biking accident in Nelson, British Columbia. He was alone on his mountain bike, went down the mountain, fell off his bike and broke his neck and now is a high-level C7 quadriplegic. In 2005 here we were, a family based in Ontario—my mom, my dad, my sister, my brother and my other brother, Eddie, out west. He really had no family out there. Of course, within hours, my mom and dad were on their way to Vancouver General Hospital to see him and to be with him. They stayed there for six or eight months actually post-injury, to help him transition from being able-bodied to, now, the situation that he's in in being quadriplegic.

You know, there's no way that he could have gotten through that. It's unimaginable that someone could do that alone. Of course, our health care in this country, thanks to universal health care, pioneered by the famous New Democrat Tommy Douglas, who is revered and renowned and loved around the planet, really, for his delivery of universal health care—my brother did not incur one single medical bill. The treatment of that type of catastrophic injury, Madam Speaker, I couldn't imagine—actually I have seen some bills that have come forward for our friends south of the border in the United States who have suffered catastrophic injuries such as a spinal cord injury. They are in the hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of dollars that people have to suddenly

come up with to be helped and to receive care. Thankfully, Eddie did not have to do that.

He was a health and fitness professional, and I'm proud to report that today he continues to be a health and fitness professional. He trains elite athletes—snowboarders and mountain bikers. He's got an incredible amount of knowledge, in terms of health and fitness, but he's also an inspiration. You're not going to quit doing a push-up, you're not going to give up, when a guy in a wheelchair is yelling at you saying, "You can do one more rep." So a shout-out to my bro Eddie, who is kicking butt out in BC.

Again, it's because of the support that our family was able to give to him, and his community around him, that wonderful community of Nelson, British Columbia, who rallied around one of their wounded warriors and supported him. His friends in that community continue to help him in his endeavours, and I'm sure it's a reciprocal relationship, because he's so inspirational. That's one aspect, just one out-of-nowhere freak accident that touched our family.

I will tell you again that my aunt, Patti Brenner, who is from Vernon, BC, the youngest of 14 kids on my mom's side of the family—my mom is one of 14 children—was diagnosed with breast cancer two years ago. She was diagnosed with breast cancer and had a mastectomy two years ago. The cancer recurred—it came back just recently—and now she's going through quite intensive radiation and chemotherapy treatment in Vernon. She's there with her loving husband, Norm—a shout-out to Uncle Norm—but it's just them.

Once again, my mom has sprung into action. She has left Ontario to be with her youngest sister to provide loving, caring support for her sister as she goes through this treatment. She has also been joined by another sister, Aunt Sue, from Oakville, who is also out there. So, Patti's got two of her sisters there, helping her, bathing her, changing bandages, helping her with her medication, just helping take her mind off of it—just to be around a loved one.

At about noon, I gave a call to my Aunt Patti—actually, I was hoping to talk to my mom, because I miss her. But I spoke with my Aunt Patti. She answered the phone, and she was in great spirits. She's so touched. It's been four months now that my mom has been out in Vernon. She's so touched; she's so amazed that she has this support network around her with her two sisters being there during her treatment, who are not going to leave her side, who are dedicated to seeing her fight this and get through this. She's so touched; she called them angels. She told me today, "Taras, if they wouldn't have come, if they had not been here with me during my treatment, I would've given up, because it's so hard."

Anyone who has gone through cancer treatment themselves, anyone who has been a survivor, anyone who has seen a family member or a friend go through cancer treatment knows how difficult it is. It's one of life's most enormous challenges; all the more reason to have loved ones around you to support you and to facilitate your care

and successful treatment and recovery. That's what we all hope.

That's what our system is built upon. That is the principle of universal health care: If you get sick, although we may not know you, although we may not be a family member, we are all pooling our resources to make sure that everything in our capacity is done to make sure you get better without financial burden, without hardship to your family. No one should profit from anyone's illness or injury, and that is a fundamental belief, I think, of Canadians. It is certainly one of the pillars of the foundation of the New Democratic Party and it is one principle that I and my colleagues will defend to the end of the earth, because it is humanistic. It's the essence of being a living, breathing sapien that we help each other, that we care for each other, that we do everything we can.

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I think that's what Bill 21 acknowledges: that we are better off when we have our loved ones around us. It facilitates our rehabilitation and it gives us hope. It gives family members hope that they're not alone. So I wholeheartedly endorse the bill, its impetus and hopefully its positive effects.

At the nucleus of the bill, although I've spoken about health care, it's actually a labour bill because it deals with the fact that any one of us would, I'm certain, jump at the opportunity to help one of our loved ones, but reality sets in, in that we all have careers and jobs and things to do. It is difficult for someone to arbitrarily take a leave or take a day off or a week off from work to provide treatment. There was no protection prior to Bill 21 built into the Employment Standards Act. Therefore, what theoretically could have happened is, had my mom been working—thankfully, she is retired, and I'll say proudly that she is retired as a 35-year worker from the General Motors trim plant in Windsor, where she received a wonderful wage, benefits and a retirement package because she was a unionized worker in an automotive plant in downtown Windsor.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: God bless.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, God bless. For sure. There's no way that she could—actually, if she didn't have the benefits of her job and her retirement plan right now, I don't think she could afford to take that leave to care for her sister Patti right now, or, for that matter, to have cared for my brother Eddie.

But the point is that, theoretically, prior to Bill 21, or as it stands right now, someone who is working would have the need to provide care for a family member, and that employer could deny that leave, could say, "You know what? Sorry about your luck. Sorry about your family. We apologize that one of your loved ones has come down with a chronic or terminal illness, but we can't let you go. There's no room for that. And if you do want to go, we're just going to have to let you go forever. You'll no longer be a part of this organization."

I think it's difficult for any one of us to imagine that there would be an employer that would be callous like that. I generally think the people around me are caring,

understanding individuals. It really would be, I imagine, a rare circumstance that an employer would be so not understanding and not caring about one of their employees' need to provide care for their family member. But, of course, we do know that there have been instances of that.

This Bill 21 is the remedy to that situation, because what it essentially does is it provides unpaid job-protected leaves of absence to provide care or support to certain family members who have a serious medical condition but are not at the risk of death. We know that there is federal legislation on the books that provides for protected leaves of absence for public sector workers when the scenario is dire, when the family member is at imminent threat of dying. This one allows us to leave our workplaces to provide—initially, it was to provide blocks of weeks of care. Essentially, the employee would request a leave of absence to provide care for an elderly loved one or anyone, really, who was diagnosed or identified as having the need for support. That presented a problem. As we debated this bill throughout the House, we really identified, and I think the government came to the conclusion that yes, in fact, it was a little bit prohibitive in the sense that sometimes family members don't quite need a full block, a full week of time to provide that care. Sometimes it may actually simply be an afternoon. Sometimes it may be to take a family member to a doctor's appointment. Sometimes it may be to administer eye drops or medication. Sometimes it may be to change bandages or just to check up on somebody because there's no one else in that family, because, as we've all acknowledged, I think quite universally here, someone who is a family member providing that care and support and comfort is ultimately more holistic and something that has more value than simply an intake worker.

Personal support workers do great jobs, and they have a deep connection with, ultimately, their patients. They develop close relationships and intimate relationships where they really, truly care for their patients. But there is nothing like a family member. There are certain emotional connections there that go beyond the patient-caregiver dynamic.

I think, again, that's a point of this bill that is being acknowledged here. It's one that fills a gap that we know is looming in terms of our demographic, where Ontarians are getting older. We're living longer, be it with maybe some more complex health care issues, but, nevertheless, we are living longer.

What that means is that we're going to need to be taken care of, ultimately. Someone is going to have to be there, or something is going to have to be there to help us along the way. It certainly is a comforting aspect to know that in this province, we can be progressive, we can be proactive in anticipating that the best people to initiate that care are the ones around you: your loved ones, your family and friends.

Again, the concept of the bill is one that has—in my time in this House debating the bill, I've only heard a real consensus around the need and support for the bill. I

believe it will certainly pass, and I believe it has been strengthened at committee.

I'll read a couple of aspects that have been changed.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes. New Democrats and Tories initiated these changes at committee, one of which I had already referred to in terms of portioning off those blocks of times and allowing caregivers to take smaller chunks, that being days at a time, and making it, therefore, more responsive and more flexible to the needs of the patient, of the family member. So New Democrats and Tories teamed up to amend the bill to strike out the requirement that the leave only be granted in week-long periods.

I will mention, though, that Liberal members protested at committee that the change would be difficult for employers to implement—fair enough. Yes, I can understand that it might be difficult for an employer to say, “Yes, you can leave tomorrow at noon,” rather than, “You can leave tomorrow at noon for a week at a time,” when the employee only needed an afternoon. Would you rather them leave for an afternoon, or have to take the whole week off?

I think the government came to the conclusion that, yes, those who are going to take advantage of this are going to need it to be flexible, and that's what we want also. We want a bill on the books that actually is functional, something that's not just going to sit there and be a feel-good bill. We need it to be responsive, and we need it to address the issue, fill the gap. We saw that that amendment at committee was one way to do that.

Another way that it was changed was initiated by the PC member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, who argued that changes to those folks who authorize the sign-off—a medical practitioner—should be more flexible; not simply a doctor initiating that sign-off, where they identified that the patient, the family member, was in need of medical assistance, was in need of care. I guess I'll read it: Randy Hillier argued that in remote parts of the province, sometimes all residents have access to, on a day-to-day basis, is a registered nurse. So now the bill allows physicians and registered nurses or psychologists, under the laws of the jurisdiction in which care or treatment is provided, to sign off that a patient requires family care. That's another really good improvement to the bill, Mr. Speaker. It's a really good improvement, and it's the work that we do here each and every day. It's the reason we're here, right? It's to take a bill and make it stronger.

1650

It's interesting that it didn't come to the table as strong as it is now. You would wonder—Liberals are notorious for studying and forming committees and contemplating having discussions.

Hon. David Zimmer: Getting things done.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: We're the ones who get results, as we did in this bill.

But it's a wonder why the bill didn't come to the floor fully nuanced, with all the bells and whistles that we know it could have had.

We hear, Mr. Speaker, that the government is complaining that we've debated this bill ad nauseam. I may not disagree with that. We've had full debate. I almost want to say “fulsome” debate, but Peter Kormos would be throwing things at me if he heard me say the word “fulsome,” so I would never use that word. We had full and complete debate.

But we had to go through that debate. Evidently, we had to go through that debate to get to the point to bring it to committee to convince the government that these were amendments that needed to happen, that needed to be implemented to strengthen the bill, and maybe make it more responsive and proactive and, ultimately, something that benefits the province. So that blows their argument out of the water, I say—full stop. And I don't hear any disagreement from the members of the government.

Speaker, one of the aspects of the bill that I think has not been addressed and one that has been punted down the road—as many important issues are when it comes to actually effectively dealing with the problems of the day—is the fact that there is no aspect of financial assistance attached to this bill, as in other bills that are in the same vein: employment insurance, disability support and other mechanisms where we have social safety nets. This, I think, is one of them. It is a social safety net in so many ways.

But the government has, I guess, assured us that they'll take up the discussion in terms of financial support through employment insurance or some other mechanism with their federal colleagues. So what the government is saying is that we're going to talk to the federal labour minister, and we'll see if the minister is willing to support this program with some measure of financial assistance to help with family members who are taking that leave. It's to help them with gas money or to help them with transit money, just the small things that make it a lot more cost-effective than if you, as a government, are going to have to pay for support workers or, God forbid, more complex health care down the road if it isn't delivered by a family member. So I see this as being something that is actually cost-effective in that light. The discussion around financial support is that, yes, our federal friends—once they get the decks cleared with everything happening in the Senate, once they figure out who is spying on who, once they figure out all the other issues that they have regarding where the pipelines are going and who is going to benefit from that—will help us out with our issues.

But actually, in terms of priorities, we hope that they help us with the Ring of Fire development first, because we're counting on them to come in and make this thing happen, because we can't go it alone.

Interjection.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Oh, yes, and when it comes to retirement security, the feds are going to step in. They're going to support us there as well in terms of enhancing the CPP.

Interjection: Housing.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Oh, housing. That's when we're going to finally make headway, when we have a partner at the federal level.

Friends, colleagues, members of the government, I tell you: Give it up. It's not going to happen with our Conservative friends at the federal level. You guys might have relationships. They might have lots of backyard barbecues that they go to and they can hobnob and talk about these things, but it is not going to happen at the federal level. I urge you, in the words of the illustrious leader of the Progressive Conservatives: Take bold action. Go it alone on this. Attach a little bit of money to it, just enough to show that this is a priority. "We believe in families. We believe that family support is the way to go. We think we can help. We can find money."

Hon. David Zimmer: Bold action.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I urge you to take bold action. Don't count on Stephen Harper to come to the rescue. The cavalry is stuck in the mud. They're stuck in the Senate. They're not coming.

Speaker, I don't know if I've wavered from the debate. You haven't interrupted me, but I'm pleased to continue.

My point is that this could have been a complete mechanism to deliver this level of support—and I believe it will ultimately be precedent-setting. There are no other jurisdictions that have this in this level, because it deals with family members who are not in imminent threat of dying. It's a caregiver act for those who have serious medical conditions.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's better than a kick in the teeth.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: It's better than a kick in the teeth, but not as good as a trip to the dentist, I guess.

What I think is that we could do this. We could find the resources to do this. People ask me each and every day in my constituency, my wonderful riding of Essex, "Where has the money gone?" It's vaporized.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Corporate tax cuts.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Well, there's corporate tax cuts. But literally, they called it Project Vapour. It was \$1.1 billion that went to gas plants. You wonder if a fraction of that could have been allocated—and it's easy for us to say. It's easy for us here in this chamber to imagine a billion and a half dollars just sitting there that they were going to waste somewhere. Well, we could have told them lots of places to spend it; we certainly could have. We continue to do that, especially when it comes to health care delivery. When you poll residents of our respective communities and ridings, it's number one. They want to make sure that their health care system is safeguarded, provided for, maintained and also enhanced. They want to know that the system is effective and efficient. They want to know that there's actually oversight, unlike what we saw at Ornge—that there's actually somebody steering the ship. They want to know that we're actually making headway in dealing with chronic diseases.

I've got an idea for you, Speaker. We've got an epidemic in terms of diabetes in this province—many of us have met with the Canadian Diabetes Association—yet there is no comprehensive strategy for us in this province, through our Ministry of Health, to actually combine the resources around research and development to cure the disease. We never talk about that. No one in this House talks about curing diseases, especially chronic diseases. We talk about delivering better standards of care, we talk about best practices, but in the province of Banting and Best, the co-discoverers of insulin, which was one of our proudest moments in this province, one that saved the lives of millions of people around the world, I would think that it has come time for us to realize that we can do better than just treating people; we have to eventually start to cure people.

I'll tell you, if I was a member of government and if I was the Minister of Health, I would see that as quite an economical way to go. I would see that the money put into research and development, not only just to keep treatment going—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I hope you're going to tie this to the bill soon.

1700

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Well, it's health care-related. I guess what I'm saying is value for money, cost effectiveness. When you spend a little bit of money, Speaker, is my point—when you spend money in the right positions and situations, then you get downstream benefits and effectiveness and efficiencies in the sense that it costs you less.

So, again, Speaker, if I may revert back to the notion that, imagine if we cured type 1 diabetes, which is insulin-dependent diabetics—

Ms. Soo Wong: Speaker, a point of order.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Point of order, the member for Scarborough—Agincourt.

Ms. Soo Wong: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is not talking about Bill 21.

Interjection: Yes, he is.

Ms. Soo Wong: No, he's not—not about juvenile diabetes, nothing to do with it. This—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you.

The member for Essex, and I would ask you to tie this into the bill quickly.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: So I would imagine, Speaker, that some family members will be delivering care to patients who have diabetes, because it's a chronic disease, and for the member to stand and to suddenly acknowledge that she's trying to pay attention is kind of ignorant.

My dad is a type 1 diabetic. My father, Boris, is a type 1 diabetic. He was diagnosed at 19 years old. Please, honourable member, stand up and try to interrupt me as I talk about my dad being a type 1 diabetic. And guess who provides care for him? Our family. He's 73 years old. At some point in his life, he will need us to take a larger role in his care, and I hope it's well into his 100th

year. I absolutely do. He takes a proactive approach on his health. He exercises. My colleagues here have met my dad. They know he works out every day. He takes vitamins; he takes care of himself. He's doing everything he can do to lower the costs on our health care system, and we're talking about costs—

Ms. Soo Wong: Good.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, it is good; it's excellent, it's wonderful. It's a part of the debate. I look forward to you standing up and sticking to the lines here, my dear, because it is frustrating—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): I would ask the member to withdraw, and if I could ask you to speak through the Chair.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I withdraw, Speaker. Maybe it is my fault. It's an emotional issue, because we're talking about family members delivering care to other family members. That's hopefully what this bill will facilitate, and I'm picturing how it will impact my own life. I think it's beneficial for us to do the same thing as we contemplate the ramifications of this bill and how it will work and how it won't work. That's our job. It's our job to scrutinize and criticize the benefits and potentially the pitfalls of the bill, and it's difficult to do that without bringing in some personal stories.

I apologize that maybe I brought it a little bit too close to home, but I think it's important that we all understand that it goes further than simply allowing somebody to take a day off work. It really has an incredible impact on the families that are going to be affected and that are currently affected, and I think it's incumbent upon us to do all that we can do, even if it means our getting emotional about how we can do better, and we should challenge ourselves about how we can do better in this House. That's a part of the debate here generally on a whole host of issues, but particularly when they're issues regarding life and death, as they sometimes are, and this is an issue about health or illness.

That being said, Mr. Speaker, I have indicated my support for the bill. I have indicated that I think the work that has been done at committee, through New Democratic members as well as members from the PC caucus that put a lot of thought and effort into it, that fought as well, that stood on some pretty hard principles that this bill could be better and have never really given up—this is a government bill, and we could have easily taken it on face value and moved on to our own respective agendas. We all have our own bills that we'd like to see move forward. But it's about making sure that we give it the full scrutiny that it deserves and that the people in our province deserve. It's why they sent us here on their behalf, and I feel that, at least on this bill, we've done a pretty decent job.

I look forward to hearing from all members of the House about how this enhanced bill will affect, maybe, members of their family, members of their community. I think that it's one that ultimately adds to the host of support mechanisms that this province can deliver and

that people in the province expect us to deliver, to be constantly working on, whether it be enhanced employment insurance, disability supports or injured worker supports. There are lots of ways we can continue to help lift people up and support them, not peg them down.

It's an encouraging time in the House where we can talk about a positive bill, one that I think doesn't really wedge anyone. It's not built on ideological lines—there's no question about that—but when it first came to the House, it was not enough, as we've seen with so many other bills that have come before us. It was not enough. It wasn't made to fully address the issue. It was made more to work around the edges and the fringes.

Maybe that's the benefit of a minority government, Speaker. Whether we all have to do more work and we all ultimately end up taking the credit—I know that my friends on the government side—it doesn't matter who takes the credit for it, as long as we get something done.

I'm proud that this will be one measure, ultimately, that we can go back to our ridings and say we helped. We actually produced something at the end of the day that I think will be effective for families.

It doesn't allow us to rest on our laurels, however. It's something that we should be always aware of, that there are ways and areas for us to identify, whether it be within our Employment Standards Act or our health care system that we need to provide enhanced support.

For instance, even in Windsor recently, we had a threat to our thoracic cancer services where people who were facing treatment would have been forced to travel to London to seek that treatment and they would have needed—but they rose up. They rose up when that threat was levied against them by Cancer Care Ontario. They rose up like something I've never seen before in my community. We are a blue-collar community. We're used to rallying together.

It inspired us, and it inspired me, to understand that we can never stop working and fighting for delivery, for effectiveness, and for good, quality services to come out of this province. It's something that we should strive for, and it's something that, through the measures of this bill, I think, all members have been committed to.

I want to end my remarks, Speaker, by thanking you for the time and thanking the members for their undivided attention as I end my portion of the debate. I look forward to hearing from my colleagues in the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'm very happy to speak on Bill 21, the Leaves to Help Families Act.

First of all, I want to introduce some guests that we have in the east lobby: Amy Yan, Kate Li, Cristin Napier and Sumi Shanmuganathan—Sumi, I'm sorry if I pronounced your last name wrong; they're here from the Heart and Stroke Foundation—and as well, on behalf of the Canadian Cancer Society, Ontario division, Florentina Stancu-Soare and Nicole McInerney; and on behalf of the ALS Society, Eleanor Leggat.

I just want to urge the opposition to support this bill and to pass this so we can make it into law, especially in

light of the short time we have before we break for the Christmas holidays.

I hope we can get everyone's support for this very, very important bill, which is all about compassion, the one word that summarizes and accurately reflects on what the meaning of this bill is about.

I hope we can get everyone's support so that we can make this bill, finally, into law.

1710

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I really did appreciate the member from Essex's comments, and I believe he made the point that he was emotionally and passionately involved.

He did explain the bill, that caregiver leave was important to families. I do admire the fact that he talked about his brother, who is quadriplegic from a bicycle accident. Thanks for bringing the real story of his life here and relating it to what members are trying to do: the right thing.

Often, the right thing is the right politics, quite frankly. I think that trying to relate to things, sometimes, from the notes we're often given does not serve the purpose of the bill with the kind of emotion that we have the privilege of representing here—not just our own families, but the people of Ontario, that we have the privilege to give voice to. It's in that context that I do admire your remarks.

I would say that the bill itself—I think you made the point as well that it really isn't costing Premier Wynne one red cent. In the committee, they did raise the issue that you're required initially to take the whole week off if it was to take your father to treatment at a hospital. You have to take the whole week off. Not only that, you're losing the income and not getting paid, because it's unpaid leave.

I think that sometimes they did try to switch it over to blaming the federal government, under some unemployment rules. But the amendment is now, I understand, that you can take one day at a time, but it will count as a number of days. That's an appropriate amendment, I think, that was made in committee.

I know that the member himself, in his two-minute remarks, has made a positive contribution to the debate on Bill 21, and I appreciate it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I really appreciated the personal stories that my friend from Essex brought into this debate, because it speaks to the importance of the care that family members provide, and the need to have that care built into our lives in some way. In this regard, the bill is progressive. The point about the care is that it provides hope when people are there, especially family members. It provides recovery; it provides hope and wellness, and that's a big part of what the bill does.

But there are limitations, and that's what the member from Essex spoke to, that the Liberal government doesn't ever seem to quite get, because they go halfway and they

never go the extra step. Mercifully, they provided some amendments that made the bill a little better.

The point of flexibility is a useful one, because sometimes it may not be a week that someone needs to take from work, but perhaps half a day or a day. That's just as good to the employer, not to have the employee missing for a whole week, as it is for the employee, who might not need that whole chunk of time. Building in the flexibility, I think, is good for everyone: the employer and the family.

But the limitation is that sometimes you may find an employer who may not give you the time. While the law permits it, it doesn't mean that it's easy to do, because an employer can be very, very powerful, and powerful enough to dissuade you from taking the time off.

The other point that my colleague and friend made is that it's unpaid care, and this unpaid care is usually taken by women, who already have a stressful life to begin with. When care needs to be provided, it's usually women who have to find the time to provide it and take time away from work to do that.

The amendments were useful. It would have been better if it went further, but what can you do?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Ms. Soo Wong: I'm pleased to rise to speak in support of Bill 21, the Leaves to Help Families Act.

I appreciated the member from Essex sharing his story with us today. I remember he shared similar stories with us when we took up the debate in the second reading debate. I appreciate those stories, because each one of us in this House has those stories about family members who went through some critical incidents or constituents who went through those critical incidents. It's about time our government talked about supporting families. As we know, by the year 2030—the population is aging. We will depend on family and significant others, who will be there to support us. The bill is not just about supporting families; it's also about being compassionate.

The bill, if it passes third reading, will recognize the importance of family, job security and ensuring workers' jobs are being protected while they are looking after their loved one. Yes, I heard the member from Trinity–Spadina say that unfortunately the bill does not allow for being paid for those days off. But I know from my constituents—they have said to me many times—they're more concerned that they have a job to go back to after looking after their loved one, because many times, their jobs have not been protected while they look after their sick loved one.

The other thing is, we have also heard that a number of agencies out there, such as the MS Society, the Parkinson Society, the Alzheimer Society, the Canadian Cancer Society and the caregiver coalition, all support Bill 21.

Mr. Speaker, at the end of the day, we all have a job here at the Legislature. We're here to support Ontarians, making sure families are strong and making sure families are protected, especially those who are looking after a sick loved one.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member for Essex, you have two minutes.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank all the members who added their comments. Also, I want to mention to the member from Durham, thank you very much for acknowledging that we all add so much more to debate when we add our own personal stories to it. We all are given talking points and bullet points on a variety of bills that come before the House, but people tend to tune out when you revert to being a talking head. So I try not to do that. Especially on an hour lead, I try to bring it home, bring it down to earth. I think that people connect on a deeper level with politicians when they do that. You've got to be a normal, average, everyday person to realize how bills in this House affect people who don't have the privilege of standing here and listening to the minutiae.

With that being said, I hope my comments added a little bit more of a personal flair to it, a little bit more of a connection to how we see, how I see how it could impact other families who are in this situation. I think it's a positive step forward; I really do. I'll be proud of the bill once it passes third reading, and I will promote it through my constituency office to members of my community who I think might benefit from it.

But ultimately, I'd love to see the financial supports, because we know that that provides, possibly, one of the greatest limitations. We have fantastic employers in the province of Ontario who are understanding and caring, who know and have maybe even been in the same situation themselves, who have had to care for family members—easy to understand and let employees go and deliver that care, but somebody has to be there to fill that gap, especially when we know that it's an unpaid leave. I am fearful that the take-up of this bill will be limited because of that limitation.

Nevertheless, I will support the bill and I hope to see it pass very soon.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rob Leone: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to start by seeking unanimous consent to stand down our lead.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Cambridge has requested unanimous consent to stand down their lead. Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Rob Leone: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I know our critic will have some time to add further to this debate.

I want to begin my comments today by addressing what the member from Essex was saying in his comments today. I also agree with the member from Essex that the debate in this Legislature is enriched when we bring in the personal experiences that not only we have as MPPs, but also those personal experiences that we hear from our constituents. At the end of the day, part of the vibrancy of our parliamentary democracy is based on the notion that commoners—which is what we all are: citizens of this great province—come to this Legislature to bring forth their perspectives, particularly from their own communities, to shed light on them and bring them

forth in a manner in which we can consider them when we're talking about policies that are going to affect people right across the province. It's only through that debate, through that perspective, that we gain a greater understanding of what we need to do in this Legislature.

1720

I wanted to start off by thanking the member for Essex for sharing his stories about his family in this Legislature. I remember not too long ago—maybe within the last week or so—the member from Essex actually elaborated on some of the stories about his brother in BC who succumbed to a very, very tragic bicycle accident when he was going down the mountain. If you have some time to spend with the member for Essex, you should talk to him about the inspiration that his brother is, I know to him, but it should be an inspiration to us all. He has really kept going. I don't think there's anything that's going to stop this guy, and it truly is a story that I think everyone should hear and be inspired by.

Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of the PC caucus and, obviously, my constituents in the riding of Cambridge to talk about the family caregiver leave act. I do that with a great deal of enthusiasm. I realize that we have been talking about this bill for a very, very long time, and it's not that we've spent hours of debate—although we have spent hours of debate talking about this very issue—but the length in time in terms of calendar days has been quite significant. Part of the reason for that, of course, is that we had a little proration that got in the way of dealing with this bill in a more expeditious manner.

So it's very important, I think, for all members of the Legislature to understand that while I know there is some degree of urgency that the member from Brampton West had expressed in his comments to the member from Essex, I think it is incumbent upon us to give this bill fair consideration because of the implications that it has for families right across the province of Ontario.

I'm also going to share some stories today because, as the member of Essex has said, I think it does shed some light on the debate that we're having in this Legislature about this particular piece of legislation. The first story I want to talk about—I happened to be invited by Gordon Milak, who is the CEO of our Waterloo Wellington CCAC. He had asked me to join a caseworker for the CCAC in Waterloo Wellington on a home visit to talk about, and to experience, exactly what the front-line workers are doing in providing home care for our elderly, but also to understand the patient needs. While we have talked at great length about investing greater amounts of money into home care, it's the stories that I heard from talking to that family that I think can enhance the debate of this particular piece of legislation.

I met a gentleman. His name is Donald. I believe his wife's name is Kaye. I didn't have that in my calendar, so I couldn't remember exactly what his wife's name is and, obviously, to protect privacy I'm not going to say their last names, because I haven't asked to talk about them. But Donald is an 83-year-old diabetic, and as an 83-year-old diabetic, he obviously has some challenges. He's still

fairly mobile, but he realizes that his mobility has decreased significantly.

One of the things that Donald is experiencing right now is the potential infection that he has on one of his toes. This infection on his toe is, obviously, of great concern to Donald because, if they can't keep this infection managed in an appropriate way, amputation is a likely result. It's not simply amputation of the toe that would actually occur in his case, but he would have amputation right up to his knee. So it's very important for Donald to have the kind of care that is necessary for him.

Now, the primary caregiver in Donald's case is his wife, Kaye, who is retired, so she's, obviously, very able still. She still has the strength and the wherewithal to be the primary caregiver for Donald. But there was a situation that occurred not too long ago, and is consistently occurring, where Kaye is trying to get some medical attention of her own. What that means—when she's going to get some testing, for example, because she is facing some other health issues—is, she's going to have to leave Donald by himself for long periods of time. The question then becomes—because home care is only in the home for half an hour or an hour a couple of days a week or three days a week or four days a week—how does Kaye get the medical attention that she needs when she has to go get it? She's having a procedure done—actually, she probably had the procedure done in the last week or so. She had to spend the whole day at the hospital. The question then becomes—she is faced with a scenario where she needs to seek medical attention for herself, and she has her husband, whom she's primarily caring for—who is going to be able to help Kaye on that day? Their children don't live very close to their home; they don't live in the city of Cambridge. So what has to happen is that they have to plan for somebody to come from a great distance—not that great a distance; I mean, it's certainly more than an hour's drive—they have to provide the time for one of their kids to help them in this situation. Mr. Speaker, that is part of the issue here. They're actually expressing to me that they didn't have that capacity to have a family member come—but in the event that it's a possibility, maybe this bill will allow a family member to take a day off work, to take a couple of days off work to ensure not only that Kaye gets the proper attention she needs, but that her husband, Donald, is also well cared for while Kaye is temporarily unavailable due to the procedure that she has to have.

It's those kinds of situations that I know members of this Legislature have brought up time and time again, through the debate on this particular piece of legislation, which we've been talking about for practically two years. It has been a long time. I understand that this is an important bill, and we probably will all have some degree of satisfaction when we see this passed. Ultimately, I think we all can accept some degree of satisfaction when this does happen.

As the member from Essex has suggested, it probably is something we're going to talk to our constituents about, because this is an issue about supporting families.

Families are the building blocks of society, and we should do everything we can to support their strength. Strengthening families is certainly an important priority for us.

I know that during the debate of legislation, we have, as the member for Essex has suggested, talked about personal stories in our families. I realize that the debate often does turn into some of the prevailing issues that we see in our health care system, and that is obviously part and parcel of what we're dealing with. Certainly, that's one of the reasons why we need this piece of legislation: because there are holes that can only be provided, in many cases, by family members within our households—our children, our offspring, our grandchildren, aunts, uncles, brothers, sisters, nieces, nephews. Wherever you can find some help, obviously you're going to take it.

Particularly as people get older, some of these concerns become much more prominent in their lives. My grandfather suffered a series of strokes before he passed away shortly after I was elected in 2011, and that required our family to find a way to make sure that he had the proper care. I know this is a situation that many families right across the province face, particularly when your grandmother, or grandfather, in my case—in families right across the province, where that person's primary language isn't English or French, it often is difficult to find medical services. It adds a layer of complication to the whole pyramid of what people are dealing with. In order for my grandfather to have proper care, he required one of his children to be present to translate for him. That all takes time. That all takes time away from what their children are doing, and if they're gainfully employed, as all his children were—it was very difficult, sometimes, to find the help for that period of time, where the children could help with the grandparent, get the care that they need to understand the situation that they are in. We see those situations in our homes and in our families right across the province, and I think it's a true testament to the bill that we can actually care for, particularly, new Canadians who perhaps don't speak English or French. We have to understand that there are also complications with the provision of their care that hopefully this bill can account for.

1730

My wife's grandmother is currently suffering from dementia. I know how dementia actually has a significant impact on families as well. You're always worried when you have someone who is suffering from dementia. You're always worried about whether Mom or Dad is safe. "Do we need to be doing more? Are we considering how many people are coming by to make sure that when they are in their own home suffering from dementia, they are actually safe?" This requires a degree, again, of coordination by siblings or by children of these parents who are suffering from dementia, because we want to ensure to the greatest extent possible that Mom or Dad or Grandma or Grandpa is in a safe environment.

So again, we're talking about some of the issues that we're dealing with regarding people's health and how

that relates to this piece of legislation, how we can help people help folks who are particularly in need. So I think it's very pertinent to bring those personal stories to the Legislature.

Mr. Speaker, one of the saddest days, I think, in one's life is when you hear stories that actually affect children. Thankfully, my children are healthy, but when friends come up with stories of some very terrible things that are happening with their children, it certainly pinches the heartstrings. When children are diagnosed with terminal cancer, it becomes very, very difficult for people to cope with. I think this bill obviously does a good job of accounting for the parents' need to be caring for their child, particularly with such a nasty disease as cancer.

I realize that section 49.4 creates such an opportunity, and I'll just read the explanatory note on this: "Section 49.4, which creates critically ill child care leave, is added to the act. Under section 49.4, an employee who has been employed by his or her employer for at least six consecutive months is entitled to a leave of absence without pay of up to 37 weeks to provide care or support to a critically ill child. Entitlement to critically ill child care leave is in addition to any entitlement to family medical leave under section 49.1, family caregiver leave under section 49.3, crime-related child death or disappearance leave under section 49.5 and personal emergency leave under section 50."

So I think, Mr. Speaker, this is speaking to a part of the bill where we're accounting for those situations. We never want to hear a story of a friend's child or any child who is in such a critical and devastating position as to be fighting for his or her life because of a disease that is so potent, like cancer.

So I think this bill is something to applaud, that we're actually dealing with circumstances to help these parents who are faced with perhaps the most traumatic experience they're ever going to go through with the serious care of their children when they are faced with this terrible and devastating news. I want to applaud all members of the Legislature for advocating for parents who are in every riding across the province, to help parents care for their children, particularly when they are faced with such devastating news.

We don't spend enough time talking about the other aspect of this bill, Mr. Speaker, which is the crime-related child death or disappearance leave. Now, this is equally traumatic, I think, for many parents, when they are faced with a situation where their child has disappeared or has been involved in a crime-related death. These are obviously scenarios that we have a hard time relating to because many of us have not had that experience, thankfully, but it's also very important. You can sometimes see these people when they are on a radio show or they're on TV or they're on a radio show or you're reading their story in an article, and as a parent, you're relating to what they must be going through.

I know there was a big case in Woodstock about Tori Stafford and her ensuing death, which I think touched almost every Ontarian, particularly because there were

lots of things going on within our region of Waterloo, which is really just down the road from Woodstock, in Oxford county. In fact, many people who live in my part of the riding of Cambridge often find themselves interrelated with folks in Oxford, whether they're playing hockey down there or whether they have family members who have moved into the county just across the border from us.

And when you're listening to the parents talk about what has transpired with their child, first of all, the devastation of the news, and secondly, that period of time when they don't know whether their child is alive or not, you can certainly, as a parent, sympathize with the mom and dad who are basically running an emotional roller-coaster. Sometimes there's good news that comes in, and you get excited and you get ramped up. As a parent, even as someone who's not actually involved in the situation, you're cheering for the police and you're cheering for those parents. You're rooting for them; you're praying for them. You feel that, but you know that it must be a hundred times worse for that parent.

And then, when you actually get the news that a catastrophe has hit, that tragedy has hit, and you have that sad news that a body has been located, you can certainly sympathize with the parents then. Their whole world has simply crumbled.

I know we talk a lot about this piece of legislation dealing with scenarios that we see almost every day in our ridings, but I know that every time these stories come out in front in the media, we, as parents and as human beings, certainly do a great deal to relate to those scenarios and those situations, and we have to be quite sympathetic to what mom and dad are going through. To have this piece of legislation brought forward to deal with those scenarios is a testament to the good work that this Legislature can produce. I really do mean that in the fullest sense, that this Legislature has the capacity to do great things. In fact, great things happen in this Legislature all the time, and when great things happen in this Legislature, I think we owe it to ourselves and to the people of Ontario to celebrate that. I think that this is going to be one of those instances where we can stand shoulder to shoulder with one another, in unity, to support a piece of legislation that at its very heart supports the foundation of our communities, which are our families: moms and dads, sons and daughters, grandmas and grandpas, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters. This bill has the capacity to do that.

I'm very pleased that we've had an opportunity to debate this as much as we have. I think that this bill has been improved by the amendments and the suggestions that members have brought forward, that the committee has thoroughly examined this piece of legislation, that we are able to be proud of what we're accomplishing here in this Legislature. This is, I think, a moment in the history of the 40th Parliament that we can certainly be proud of.

I'm glad to have had the opportunity to address this bill on behalf of the PC caucus and on behalf of the people of Cambridge and North Dumfries township.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Taras Natyshak: I want to thank my friend the member from Cambridge for his thoughtful discussion and consideration of this bill here today. I find him to be a considerate individual, a considerate human being, and level-headed. If you don't know the member from Cambridge, just have a chat with him. He's pretty level-headed.

Hon. John Milloy: He's a prince of a guy.

Mr. Taras Natyshak: Yes, he's a great guy, and I think he brings a lot to each and every debate we have in this House.

I want to tell him that he made me think about something that I had not considered: the language barriers that this bill may help families deal with. He referenced his grandfather, who required translation, ultimately, I would imagine, from members of his own family, to be able to facilitate the care he received, and as small of a measure as that may be, someone there to simply be able to facilitate dialogue between a personal support worker and the patient is an enormous portion of delivering good-quality care.

1740

Through the hours and hours that we've debated this bill, I've not yet heard that as a consideration. I want to thank the member from Cambridge for bringing that to the debate. I think the summary of his speech was that we should make sure that our efforts in this House, particularly when it comes to the health of the people in this province and safeguarding their health, which is the essence of what our job is—public safety is paramount—that we make sure when we walk away from here, when the lights go dim, that we did so knowing that we did everything we could do. We did absolutely everything we could do and we made it as easy as possible for members of our society and our communities to live healthy and productive lives, and I think that's where this bill is heading.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'm happy to rise again and speak on Bill 21, the leaves for helping families act. Most of the work that we do in the Legislature here requires a lot of evidence, and this is one of those bills where we really don't need any because I think all of us here in the Legislature have experienced at one time or another an illness in the family where we have had to take some time off to care for our loved ones and family members.

I want to thank MPP Rob Leone from Cambridge for his comments in support of this bill. I'm happy to report that we were able to strengthen this bill at the committee level where we're extending the fact that nurses and psychologists can also provide notes, because I know how difficult it can be for some people, especially in the rural communities, to access a doctor to provide a note so they can take this leave.

As well, we're adding other types of chronic or episodic illnesses to this bill because that was something

that we felt, at the committee level, was missing. As well, people can take leave in days instead of weeks because, oftentimes, you don't need a week off to take someone maybe to the doctor or take them to other medical appointments or whatever may be needed in terms of providing care for a loved one.

I would just encourage everyone in the House to support this bill so that we can quickly pass this important piece of legislation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: This is a very interesting bill because it's part of a march. If we look back, perhaps even 100 years, we find that many of our families were living in two-, three- and possibly four-generational homes.

I know in my case, my great-grandfather lived in Toronto township, which is now Mississauga, and there were three homes on the property. They ran the post office and a little hotel where the stagecoach stopped. They also had a 160-acre farm which they ran, and the family lived close together. There were also neighbours on either side of the farm, and if need be, they were available.

We heard in the House earlier this week about the tragic passing of a farmer up in Lindsay, I believe it was. His neighbours came in and harvested his soybeans in a day so that the crop was off. It was the kind of neighbourly thing that used to happen.

So this bill is a pathway to the future. In my grandfather's generation, there were probably three generations and eight to 12 people living in his home at any one time. If someone was ill or if someone needed care, they got it from within the family. There were probably one or two, possibly three, wage-earners in those days. Today, with two parents working, probably one generation with children, two generations living in a home, those situations that were there in the past don't exist.

This bill is moving us into the future. It's an interesting piece of legislation because as we go into the future, it's very much on an experimental basis, and this bill, I think, is a positive step in that direction.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Questions and comments?

Miss Monique Taylor: I'm really pleased to be able to stand after the member from Cambridge did his piece of debate on this bill. I think he did a really great job. He brought a piece to this third reading of this bill that I hadn't heard yet. That was the point where in a crime-related child death or disappearance, a family would have 52 weeks of unpaid leave for parents of a missing child and up to 104 weeks for parents when it resulted in death. That's a really important piece that I heard today. He mentioned Tori Stafford in that speech, and it brings us back to the reflection of how real this bill is and the difference it can make in a family.

Then it brings me back again just a bit further on how we in the New Democratic Party would have liked to have seen that be a paid time for families. With the

struggles that they're already facing, to have further financial straps put onto that family, as you can imagine, would only make it more difficult. We know how many families live paycheque to paycheque. Without that paycheque, how are they going to keep a roof over their heads when they're going through such struggling times? I really thank the member for bringing that portion to life for me, personally. As I said, I'm happy to support this bill. I'm happy that there were amendments made to this bill to strengthen it, such as breaking up those time pieces so that when we have a family member who needs an hour to go to the doctor, we do have that flexibility within this new law.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): The member from Cambridge, you have two minutes.

Mr. Rob Leone: I want to thank the member for Essex, the member from Brampton West, the member from Halton and the member from Hamilton Mountain for providing some comments on the speech I just made on the family caregiver leave act.

Although they were probably too generous in terms of what the speech contained in terms of hearing new things, I think it's very important for us to be in a position to bring up these kinds of stories and shed light on these issues—issues that we all probably have some knowledge of, but probably aren't connecting to the exact debate that we're having in this Legislature. That's what we're doing here as members of provincial Parliament and as members of this Legislative Assembly. That's our job. That's what we're supposed to do.

As I started off saying at the beginning of my talk and my remarks, I think the forefathers and foremothers of our parliamentary system would be very proud to see a Legislature functioning as it should: listening to debate, willing to amend some positions and strengthening a piece of legislation that, at the end of the day, we could all agree to.

I do want to just quickly remark on what the member from Halton said on the multi-generational homes that we face. There's obviously a story to be told there as well. I think people who are in their 40s and 50s often consider themselves part of a sandwich generation, where they're caring for not only their children, but also their parents. There are lots of complications with doing that. I'm not quite that age yet, thankfully, and I'll reserve that for the people who are, but you can see how challenging that becomes, the more generations you're a primary caregiver for.

Again, this piece of legislation has merit, and I look forward to listening to further debate on this matter.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Further debate?

Mr. Rod Jackson: I'm very pleased to rise in the House to speak to this bill, the Employment Standards Amendment Act (Leaves to Help Families). I've had the pleasure of speaking to this on numerous occasions at different readings and in different incarnations, if you will, and it's something that I feel quite strongly about. I have some background I'm going to share with everyone

about this and why I feel strongly about this act and think that it's a good act. It has minor flaws, like I think every act does. Nothing is perfect. But certainly I think a lot of it has been ironed out throughout committee.

1750

We're talking about some of the most difficult experiences that any family or person could be faced with in many cases, and we're talking about the ability of our Legislature to be able to show a little bit of compassion and to be able to show a little bit of understanding about the difficulty these families may face when they're dealing with some of these issues.

It is a shame that the financial devastation that many of these families face as a result of some of these tragedies that they incur isn't being addressed here as fulsomely as it can. Having said that, we know there's only so much to go around, and this is maybe a really good first step and the foot in the door, if you will, towards really trying to help these families out.

I think we all agree that some of the most traumatic experiences someone can experience are their loved ones becoming critically ill or losing a child even, or something equally devastating. There are so many combinations of what can happen to a family to create a situation where this sort of leave is actually needed.

In fact, it's kind of sad that, in this day and age, this sort of leave needs to be legislated. I think it needs to be said that there are a lot of employers out there today that do—I'd like to think that the majority of them are compassionate enough that they would be able to give this leave to their staff, if they have a tragic occurrence, in their businesses, when they can. Speaking from my own experience, my family has been in small business for themselves and entrepreneurs for generations, since the 1900s, starting with farming and moving right through the automotive business, starting out fixing tractors. I know that the one thing that my father always told me in business is, "You're only as good as the staff that you bring along with you." Everyone always says that the customer comes first; my dad always said that your staff comes first. You can't take care of your customers if you don't take care of your staff. If they're happy, then your customers are happy, and that's how you make your business work. Back to my original point on this: It is kind of a shame that this legislation needs to be had, because there are employers out there that don't view things that way, so it is important that we address it and make sure that these people have the right to be able to take the leave to be able to care for their family.

Everyone can relate to these issues. Everyone at one point in their lives, or even ourselves—we don't want to face these things, but we do. We've got to make sure that we do what we can to get these families through their trying times.

This bill has been carefully considered at committee, and there have been some amendments that I think many of us have debated and suggested that have gone through, after some really good discussion through committee. The fact that other medical practitioners other than doctors—for example, as has been mentioned, nurses and

psychologists—can write notes and justify why this medical leave is needed I think is a great way to go. I know in Barrie, for example, there are 30,000 people who don't have a family doctor, so just having access to a doctor is a whole other issue. It can be difficult for some of these families, so to allow for nurses or other medical practitioners to be able to write a note to be able to get this medical leave started for these families is a great step in the right direction and was a very productive amendment made, and I commend the committee and the government for making that amendment.

Also, adding chronic and episodic illnesses—in fact, they're probably the majority of the cases, I think. I think we all look at our own families and friends, and we can think of examples of where chronic and episodic illnesses are kind of a regular feature in our lives. Some of us even deal with them ourselves, so they really hit home. So for these to be added I think just kind of speaks to the reality of the bill and what this bill is really trying to do, and it speaks to the genuine nature of what this bill is supposed to do. That's the nice part about this bill: It's that this is something I think we can all get behind, and it's something that we've all experienced at one point in our lives or another. To be able to actually do something about it and to be able to help these people, even if it's in some sort of small way—like I said before, putting your foot in the door to try to help these families out in one way or another shows the compassion, I think, that we need to be known for and that, as leaders in our communities, is expected of us to deliver. It kind of gives me a little bit of faith in the human condition when we can come to an agreement on a bill like this that actually helps people out.

My background is in human resources and labour relations. I can tell you, from my experience dealing with employees from large corporations that I've worked with in that capacity, the number and the varying instances of people who need leave—there are so many different variations of this that come across your desk as an HR manager in a large company, and the need for this can't be understated. The number of people who come to you—every one is almost a new situation, and to be able to address that in a very comprehensive way, which this bill does, really gives us a great opportunity to help those people out.

I'm lucky in my own family. I have a large extended family. We've been able to care for each other when any of these opportunities have come up. I speak from my own personal experience. My own mother, just a few years ago, had a tragic accident—I'm sure she wouldn't mind me talking about this—where both her Achilles tendons were snapped in a fall she had. My mom was fairly young when this happened. This wasn't a woman in her senior years who had this happen. Our whole family was pretty much put on hold to make sure that she

was taken care of, to the point where my 85-year-old grandmother actually came up from Kitchener to stay with my mom to take care of her. We were lucky we had that sort of background. Her sisters and myself and my brother and our wives all pitched in to help.

That's not always the case, and that's not always an option, to have that many people in your family stand by. So to be able to have this option for people who don't have that privilege of having such a large family who can be there when you need them is very, very helpful.

I had another instance where a very good friend of mine had a son who was born with a very, very severe physical disability that was very tragic and very difficult for this family to deal with. Both he and his wife had burgeoning careers and had to put them on hold, both of them, at one point or another to help deal with their son who had—I can't remember the name of the condition, but it was one of the most severe things I've ever been exposed to, and very traumatic even to witness. I will report, though, that five or six years later, this child is actually doing quite well and is functioning, although at a great challenge. If you want to talk about getting a sense of someone who has really got staying power and gives you encouragement, you look at this kid at that age and the strength and perseverance he's shown through his family's ability to be with him through these years; it's really, really enlightening. It gives you a lot of confidence when you think about how tough life is for us sometimes and you look at this little guy and you see how he's made out at such a young age. He's deaf and blind and functioning at a very high level for someone who has these sorts of disabilities, not to mention his physical disabilities as well.

This sort of leave provides families like that with an opportunity to continue their careers and to be able to care for their children or to care for their parents or for the sick relative that they may have that they have to take care of.

I know it's so difficult for parents. I think all of us have constituents who come into our offices at different times and have all sorts of different stories about the difficulties they are having. Many times, it's because their employer doesn't have the capacity to allow them to take the time off or doesn't want to give them the time off. It's quite sad to see.

You look like you're about to stop me. I'll defer to the Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): Thank you very much.

Third reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bas Balkissoon): This House stands adjourned until Monday, 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1800.

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McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires
McNaughton, Monte (PC)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Milligan, Rob E. (PC)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Moridi, Hon. / L'hon. Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Murray, Hon. / L'hon. Glen R. (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Minister of Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Infrastructure Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Naqvi, Hon. / L'hon. Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Natyshak, Taras (NDP)	Essex	
Nicholls, Rick (PC)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pettapiece, Randy (PC)	Perth–Wellington	
Piruzza, Hon. / L'hon. Teresa (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
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	
Sergio, Hon. / L'hon. Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre délégué aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Singh, Jagmeet (NDP)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Smith, Todd (PC)	Prince Edward–Hastings	
Sousa, Hon. / L'hon. Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	
Takhar, Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	
Taylor, Monique (NDP)	Hamilton Mountain	
Thompson, Lisa M. (PC)	Huron–Bruce	
Vanthof, John (NDP)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Walker, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Wong, Soo (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Agriculture and Food / Ministre de l'Agriculture et de l'Alimentation Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Première ministre Leader, Government / Chef du gouvernement Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	
Yurek, Jeff (PC)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	
Zimmer, Hon. / L'hon. David (LIB)	Willowdale	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
Vacant	Niagara Falls	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Taras Natyshak
Laura Albanese, Steve Clark
Mike Colle, Joe Dickson
Rob Leone, Amrit Mangat
Taras Natyshak, Jerry J. Ouellette
Michael Prue
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs /
Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Soo Wong
Steven Del Duca, Victor Fedeli
Catherine Fife, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Douglas C. Holyday, Mitzie Hunter
Monte McNaughton, Michael Prue
Soo Wong
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on General Government / Comité
permanent des affaires gouvernementales**

Chair / Président: Grant Crack
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Donna H. Cansfield
Sarah Campbell, Donna H. Cansfield
Grant Crack, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Michael Harris
Peggy Sattler, Laurie Scott
Jeff Yurek
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité
permanent des organismes gouvernementaux**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Rick Bartolucci
Laura Albanese, Rick Bartolucci
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Percy Hatfield
Mitzie Hunter, Jim McDonell
Randy Pettapiece, Monique Taylor
Lisa M. Thompson
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Sylwia Przewdziecki

**Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de
la justice**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Phil McNeely
Teresa J. Armstrong, Steven Del Duca
Bob Delaney, Frank Klees
Jack MacLaren, Phil McNeely
Rob E. Milligan, Shafiq Qaadri
Jonah Schein
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tamara Pomanski

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Bas Balkissoon, Grant Crack
Vic Dhillon, Garfield Dunlop
Cindy Forster, Lisa MacLeod
Amrit Mangat, Michael Mantha
Todd Smith
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

Chair / Président: Norm Miller
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Toby Barrett
Toby Barrett, Lorenzo Berardinetti
France Gélinas, Helena Jaczek
Bill Mauro, Phil McNeely
Norm Miller, John O'Toole
Jagmeet Singh
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Peter Tabuns
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: John Vanthof
Donna H. Cansfield, Dipika Damerla
John Fraser, Monte Kwinter
Jane McKenna, Rick Nicholls
Peter Tabuns, John Vanthof
Bill Walker
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de
la politique sociale**

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Chudleigh
Bas Balkissoon, Ted Chudleigh
Mike Colle, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Ernie Hardeman
Rod Jackson, Helena Jaczek
Paul Miller
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Valerie Quioc Lim

**Select Committee on Developmental Services / Comité spécial
sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience
intellectuelle**

Chair / Présidente: Laura Albanese
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Laura Albanese, Bas Balkissoon
Cheri DiNovo, Christine Elliott
Mitzie Hunter, Rod Jackson
Sylvia Jones, Monique Taylor
Soo Wong
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